

# Irish

# Foreign Affairs

Volume 3, Number 2

April 2010

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

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## Nuclear Disarmament

There is talk of nuclear disarmament again. It is the Great Powers who are talking about it. When Powers that are Great by virtue of their armaments talk about disarmament we can be sure that it is with evil intent. Somebody is being fooled so that something dire can be done to somebody else. In the present instance we are being gulled into a state of mind which would enable us to look with moral complacency on an attack on Iran—even a nuclear one.

A kind of arms reduction agreement has been made between the USA and Russia. If it is implemented, each will retain enough nuclear armament to wipe each other out a couple of times over—but perhaps only three times over instead of ten.

President Obama accompanied the news of the arms reduction agreement with a policy statement. He said the US would not again make attacks with nuclear weapons on states without nuclear weapons.

Perhaps we have got the tenses and moods of his statement not quite right. The US does not care to dwell on the fact that it is the only state has ever used nuclear weapons in war, and that the populations against which it used them was not even suspected of being in the course of developing nuclear weapons.

This President says he will not make nuclear attacks on states without nuclear weapons, or (sotto voice) he will only do so to prevent them from acquiring nuclear weapons. That is to say, he retains the right to nuclear bomb Iran—or to let Israel do it, because Israeli weapons are *de facto* US weapons.

Iran is held to be in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, even though it is not known that it has got nuclear weapons—and the supervisory apparatus of the US is such that it would know if Iran had exploded a nuclear device. It is in breach because it is developing the means of producing electric power by the nuclear process, and the technical knowledge required for doing this might be applied to the production of weapons.

Israel has got nuclear weapons but it is not in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty because—because of what? Because it has not signed the Treaty? Because it plays coy and refused to say whether it has got nuclear weapons or not?—while the US makes no real pretence of not knowing that it has got them. Or because the US finds it expedient to have a proxy nuclear state whose actions it can, for the sake of appearances, disclaim responsibility for.

Obama's agreement with Russia about mutual reduction of nuclear weapons has Iran as its object. The Russian Government will agree to an intensification of UN sanctions on Iran if it sees it as being in its interest to do so, and likewise with China. (The nuclear Powers in the EU, with their Permanent Seats in the Security Council, count for nothing. France and Britain shot their different bolts,

essentially against each other, and are now compliant.)

It is extremely unlikely that Russia and China would agree to a USA and/or Israel attack on Iran, either with nuclear weapons or without. The attack would be unauthorised. But it would not be illegal. Nothing that any of the five Veto Powers cares to do can be illegal under the UN system—at least, not unless the perpetrator chooses to indict himself and find himself guilty.

The five Veto Powers conduct their relations with each other as if the UN did not exist. They carefully constructed the system in 1944-45 so that things should be like that—or the US, UK and USSR did. France and China were accorded Great Power status within the UN system later: China, because in 1945 the USA looked on it as its client state.

One often hears it discussed whether the invasion to destroy the state of Iraq—for which Ireland provided minor facilities—was legal or illegal. It was neither. It was outside the UN system of international law. Discussion of its legality is entirely hypothetical—i.e. would it be illegal if certain ideals or principles proclaimed in connection with the formation of the UN had been forged into a system of world law to which all were subject, and within which there was the means of forming indictments against any member, conducting trials and passing judgment. But the UN was deliberately constructed so that that should not be the case.

If Iran is attacked by the USA or Israel the attack will not be illegal, whatever else it might be.

The case against Iran is sometimes presented in a way that suggests that the reason it is at fault in developing the technology which would enable it to make nuclear weapons is that it promised no to by signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That is a mere debating point of course, but let's consider it.

The Iranian Government that signed the Treaty was an authoritarian puppet Government installed by the USA and Britain after they overthrew the democratic Government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq. Why was Mossadeq overthrown? Because of his policy of establishing Iranian control over Iranian oil for purposes of national development.

Iran was invaded by Britain in the First World War, causing a major Famine. It was invaded again in the Second World War. Churchill, who ordered the World War 2 invasion, expressed impatience with those trifling states, like Iran and Iraq, which went and changed the names they had been given. Which of them was Persia? It didn't really matter. He invaded both and brought both of them into his war.

And when the propaganda ideology of the war seemed to be bearing fruit in the form of a Constitutional Government in Iran that was tending to the national interest on behalf of the people, it was overthrown by the Free World and a Shah installed. And the Shah signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty on behalf of a nation he did not represent.

On the occasion of the agreement between America and Russia to reduce the stockpiles of nuclear weapons—which it is reasonable to assume will be met by discarding obsolescent weapons—the *Irish Times* published an article by Noel Dorr about the history of the NPT under the title, *How Ireland Sowed Seeds For Nuclear Disarmament*.

International Agreements usually include Utopian flourishes which have nothing to do with the substance of what is agreed. Neither the NPT nor the arms reduction agreement proposes or implies disarmament, nuclear or otherwise.

The Irish delegation at the UN, of which Dorr was a member, played a marginal part in preparing the ground for the NPT. It is unusual for a small, unarmed, state to achieve anything at all in the tight Great Power structure of the UN, and it is natural that Dorr should bask in the glory of it. But, if the NPT achieved anything that would not have happened in any case, it was to consolidate the nuclear monopoly of the Great Powers by weaving a benevolent ideological aura around it. The Great Powers themselves were never going to be deceived or influenced by this, but others might be.

The NPT might have been made obligatory upon the world as a Great Power arrangement with effective supervisory power. The UN asserts sovereignty over the world, regardless of whether states join it or not. (Switzerland was the only state that refused to join.)

It asserted its sovereign will which need take no account of the wishes of peoples by awarding the greater part of Palestine to the Jews of the world, most of whom did not live there, at the expense of the Palestinians who did live there, and in defiance of all the Governments in the Middle East.

There was nothing it might not do. It chose not to establish an open, binding arrangement of Great Power nuclear monopoly. It chose instead to allow Ireland to spin some Utopian ideology in the matter.

The UN is, for all practical purpose, the five Great Powers. These Powers were in a fundamentally hostile relationship with each other. The UN itself, and the fundamental antagonism between its founders, were the product of the accidental and unprincipled alliance against Germany that came about as a consequence of Britain's

frivolous declaration of World War against Germany in 1939.

It was frivolous because Britain had no intention of fighting the war which it declared. It had ample time to make credible preparations for war during the six months between the Polish Guarantee and its declaration of war, and the 14 months between the Polish Guarantee and the outbreak of hostilities in France. It might have fought a war of containment in actual alignment with Poland in September 1939, but chose not to do so. What it chose to do was let the Poles fight the Germans unassisted, having encouraged them with a military guarantee to refuse to negotiate a settlement of the Danzig issue. Instead of fighting in defence of Poland, it declared a general war on Germany which was to be fought as a World War, and mainly fought by others.

Britain's strategy was to involve the whole world in war and it came close to achieving it. What came out of the maelstrom was the world dominance of the two states which had fought the war most effectively and the British Empire reduced to a hulk, but still with the semblance of world power.

These three states decided to set up a world organisation to serve their interests and decorate it with the Utopianism of the war propaganda. And, in setting up this world organisation, they exempted themselves off from its authority, leaving themselves free to do as they pleased. And so it remains.

If Russia had not quickly developed nuclear weaponry after 1945, it would have been the victim of America's second nuclear war. Influential figures in Britain urged the US to deal with Russia while it had a nuclear monopoly. The US delayed for too long, and so there was peace between the USA AND RUSSIA.

What preserved peace between the three real founders of the UN was not the UN but the crude power-balance.

Britain, which had refused to negotiate a hard alliance WITH RUSSIA in 1939, suffered a drastic relative loss of power with relation to Russia in the World War, which it brought about without being willing to undertake the main burden of fighting it. It had the will, but not the power, to carry on the war against Russia when Germany surrendered. US policy was disoriented by the death of Roosevelt, who had, apparently, kept his Vice-President in ignorance of his intentions about Europe.

Truman carried on the war against Japan, and finished it with a couple of acts of genocide. His uncertainty about Europe was reinforced by the British change of Government. Churchill preached a war which could only have been waged by the USA. When it became too late for war directly on Russia, he became an advocate of Cold War co-existence.

The UN had nothing to do with that crucial post-war peacekeeping. It was not allowed to interfere in the major business of the world. Great Power relations were exclusively for the Great Powers.

*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](http://www.atholbooks.org)  
Price per issue: €7 (Sterling £5)  
Annual postal subscription: €28  
Annual electronic subscription: €20

All correspondence, orders:  
[philip@atholbooks.org](mailto:philip@atholbooks.org)

## The Katyn Syndrome

A plane carrying the leaders of the Polish Government crashed in Russia on the way to a joint commemoration with the Russian Government at which it was expected that the Russian leadership would give an explanation or apology for the execution of Polish officers in Russia in May 1940 in the Katyn Forest.

The *Irish Times* carried an editorial on the Katyn executions on April 9th:

"In among the birch and pine trees of the Katyn forests of Smolensk lie the bodies of thousands of dead, anonymous victims of Stalin's brutality. Specifically honouring the 20,000 Polish officers massacred there 70 years ago, Vladimir Putin on Wednesday became the first Russian prime minister to admit the role of his predecessor's secret police in the killings. In doing so he took a significant step, as Polish Prime minister Donald Tusk acknowledged at the joint ceremony, towards patching up the tense relationship between the two countries.

But in also drawing attention to the many Russian casualties of the purges who also lie there Putin carefully sidestepped the necessity for what many Poles believe is overdue, an official apology. "In this ground lay Soviet citizens burnt in the fire of the Stalinist repression of the 1930s; Polish officers shot on secret orders; soldiers of the Red Army executed by the Nazis", he argued.

Mr. Putin, who has yet to sanction full access to the files to Polish historians, condemned the "cynical lies that have blurred the truth about the Katyn shootings"—notably, of course, Russian insistence for half a century on Nazi responsibility. But he insisted that "it would also be a lie and a manipulation to place the blame for these crimes on the Russian people".

That the Russian government should not want to shoulder responsibility for the crimes of the Stalinist era is understandable, but Mr. Putin's words will strike many Poles as deeply disingenuous. His own political power base rests on his articulation of a strong Russian nationalism that is busy reclaiming the country's "glorious" history from the "foreign" naysayers. In the process it has played on deeply ambivalent attitudes to Stalin's role among many citizens.

His government has sponsored history textbooks describing Stalin as "the most successful Soviet leader ever" and an "efficient manager", and Mr. Putin, told history teachers in 2007 that "all sorts of things happen in the history of every state. And we cannot allow ourselves to be saddled with guilt. . ." He has brought Soviet flags and songs back into public life. And although he has often expressed sorrow over Stalin's victims Mr. Putin has also described the destruction of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century".

As the Russian historian Mikhail Gefter once wrote, it is no good blaming everything on Stalin, when the real power and legacy of his reign of terror was "in the Stalinism that entered into all of us". Mr. Putin, included."

If Stalinism has entered all of them, British Imperialism has equally entered all of us. Russians live in the civilisation brought into being by the Communist Party during the period of Stalin's leadership, and we live in the civilisation of the British Empire.

It was impossible to live in Russia from the mid 1920s to the early 1950s and not be part of the constructive effort that is called Stalinism. And it was impossible to live in Britain from the mid-19th century (at the latest) and not be a participant and beneficiary of British Imperialism, and this applied to Ireland only a little less than to Britain.

The business of civilising is a messy and painful business. It involves much destruction, much regimentation, and the encouragement of certain ways of living by the purposeful infliction of pain. We thought the way Saddam Hussein was civilising Iraq was evil—didn't we? Isn't that why we went in. And look at all the mayhem we have brought about—because we are perpetrators in this matter, if only little ones—in a mere six years, with no end in sight to the killing we instigated.

Iraq is a minor episode for Britain, which has done this kind of thing a hundred times, and intends to carry on doing it as the occasion presents itself. But it should be a big issue for us. We are new to it.

Stalin civilised Russia in much the same way as Britain civilised Kenya in the 1950s, with the difference that Stalinism was an internal Russian civilising process, conducted entirely by elements of Russian society in a purposeful effort of economic construction, while British action in Kenya—in which it is reckoned that a third of a million Kenyans were killed—was an external operation conducted on Kenya for an external purpose.

We cannot recall any *Irish Times* editorials on the Kenya atrocities when survivors have tried vainly to bring the perpetrators to court. British Imperialism has become part of us.

The Stalinist terror constructed the state which brought Nazi Germany to book, when Britain, after supporting it for six years, made war on it ineffectually.

If we take the word 'criminal' seriously as a legal term, that brings up the Nuremberg Trials at which the Germans were indicted for Katyn. We are not suggesting that the Germans did it. But the American and British Governments agreed that the Germans should be charged with it. And it must be presumed that Britain knew very well that the Russians did it, when agreeing that the Germans should be charged with it.

If the Germans did it, it was a crime: if the Russians did it, it wasn't. That was the rule in the system of international law established on the defeat of Nazism.

The Russian state presumably had a reason for executing these soldiers. We do not know what it was. Britain had a reason for the fire-bombing of the undefended city of Dresden in 1945. We do not know what that was either. But if one is going to speak emotively of "*crimes*" in connection with these things, without any reference to any system of law under which they might be dealt with as crimes, then the indiscriminate killing of civilians in the undefended city of Dresden at a time when the defeat of the German state was certain, was at least as much a crime as the killing of a lesser number of Polish military officers in Russian captivity.

We know what the purpose of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was—or was said to be. It was to speed up the surrender of Japan by killing Japanese civilians *en masse*, and saving the lives of American soldiers. And that is something that the Geneva Convention said absolutely must not be done.

But it was not a crime, because the Security Council system of the UN has precedence over all else, and the killing of undefended civilians to save the lives of soldiers could only be criminalised with the consent of the US Government.

And, as to the opening of archives: sections of the British archives relating to Irish affairs twenty years before Katyn remain closed and are not listed for opening for another generation.

## Acts of Contrition – Irish and Turkish

by Pat Walsh

“*Who remembers the Armenians?*” That is the famous quotation attributed to Hitler - even though he may never have said it. But that is beside the point, surely, because it is too good a story to discard just because it does not stand the test of reliability or factual rigour.

If Hitler actually uttered those words he was terribly mistaken in his belief. The Armenians are widely remembered today. Much more so than the large and successful genocides that the Anglo-Saxon world achieved in the name of progress, but which are forgotten today because there is no one left to tell the tale.

Hitler was a great admirer of the British Empire and determined to emulate its racial theories and geopolitics. So it is surprising that he could not think of a better example of genocide than the Armenian case. But maybe he did and it was not reported, or else he kept it to himself in deference to his object of admiration.

But perhaps it was really because Hitler, himself, was a product of the world Britain made that he remembered the Armenians and forgot the others.

The remembering of the Armenians, or the ‘Armenian genocide,’ to be more accurate, has returned to the news. A Congressional committee has recommended that Congress vote on it and this has caused something of a stir between Turkey and the US, after the stir between Israel and the Turks.

We can only presume after this event that the Armenians are a political matter because they keep turning up when Turkey becomes important to the West. So nothing really changes there.

It seems that a war on Iran is on the cards. And Turkish airspace will be greatly useful to those who wish to return Iran to the Stone Age by bombing. So, the Armenian genocide has appeared ‘stage left’ in a congressional committee ready for the floor of Congress, if needed to twist the Turkish arm.

Turkey is a sovereign independent state and has been since the time of Ataturk. It has an independent mind and has managed its foreign policy with great skill. But it always has the Armenian allegations hanging over it since they were placed on the shelf after the Great War.

Robert Fisk, in a recent debate with Turkish historians, attempted strenuously to get them to admit the killings of Armenians during the Great War as being an act of ‘genocide’. The Turkish historians resisted, complaining that the West was trying to impose its own narrative on their history. Where have we encountered this before?

### Chanak and the Treaty of Lausanne

Ataturk and the Turkish War of Independence produced the independent Turkish State with a mind of its own. This was the reality that the major power in the world at that time, Britain, had to take account of. After being at war with Turkey for a decade, England, after the humiliation of Chanak and the Treaty of Lausanne, had to forget all its propaganda and make friends with the country it tried to grind into the dust. And so it dropped its Greek allies with a bang and forgot all about the Armenians and their desire for a state. And it set its foremost historian, Arnold Toynbee, who had produced fierce propaganda against the Turks in the propaganda department of Wellington House, the task of

rewriting the history of the region so that the Turks could be rehabilitated and the Greeks damned.

Toynbee was writing for the purposes of State—a thing that English historians do almost as a reflex. And, for reasons of State, all concerns for the Armenians, and talk about the ‘Armenian genocide’, were dropped, put on a shelf somewhere, for another day, when they might be useful again.

Perhaps a dusting off is imminent.

We should be familiar with the rewriting of history here in Ireland. And we should be in a position to warn the Turks about it because we know, all too well, that whilst England urges the rest of the world to forget, it will always remember, despite giving the impression that it no longer cares.

During the last forty years there has been a conflict in Northern Ireland. That conflict has largely been the responsibility of Britain’s policy in 1920-1. However, somehow, the notion has developed in Ireland that it is primarily the Irish that are at fault for this state of affairs. And various ‘Peace Pledges’ have been urged on us, and set in stone at the sites of the Great War killing fields, to chastise us for our sins and make us not be so bothersome to Britain again - so she can get on with her business in the world, undiverted.

### Northern Ireland

The Northern statelet was created by Britain to establish leverage on the rest of the island. England thought this leverage was required when its influence seemed to be lost, with the development of an independent Irish mind from 1916. The Treaty was a partial recovery for England but Ireland then gradually set off in another direction after those who had opposed the Treaty recovered and came to power. For about half a century the leverage that England built into the system it established was largely undetectable because DeValera effectively resisted it by preventing the north becoming an obstacle to independent development for the south. But beginning with the Lemass overtures to the North in the mid-1960s the leverage began to do its work again, as it had been designed to do.

Since then this leverage has become all too apparent as Ireland has allowed its history to be rewritten by Britain as part of the great Act of Contrition that it has engaged in since ‘the Troubles’.

The Catholic Church in Ireland is in meltdown today but the contrition it urged upon us is all the rage. The Act of Contrition that it is obligatory to engage in is now in the form of Remembrance and it has taken us (or at least our head of state, plus Imperialist entourage) again to the shores of Gallipoli.

Gallipoli, although an isolated and disconnected event in the memory of the Great War, due to the loss of context, is the connecting point between Ireland and Turkey.

But it should not be if Ireland knew its history, because there are much more substantial and progressive connecting points than the one which involved Irish men invading the land of the Turk and attempting to kill him. However, it is a measure of how we understand the Great War now that Gallipoli is the only connecting point between Irish and Turk that lies in view.

Remembrance commemorates the common cause of Imperial expansionism, in whose service Irish Catholic and Ulster Protes-

tant died, but it ignores the common struggle of Ireland and Turkey against Imperial rule. There are much more relevant connecting points to the history of Ireland and Turkey but they have been wiped from memory, like other events that disrupt the British narrative of history.

Some Irish Republicans were great admirers of Ataturk. *The Catholic Bulletin*, a periodical that supported the Republican cause, and whose editor was close to Eamon DeValera, took a great interest in events between the end of the Great War and the successful conclusion of Turkey's war of independence. It supported Turkey in its struggle against Britain and the other imperialist powers and also defended the Turkish position in relation to the Greek irredentism that acted as British catspaw, when most of the Western Christian press were pro-Greek.

*The Catholic Bulletin* publicised Ataturk's great achievement in defeating the British Empire and saw it as an inspiration to other countries in the world resisting the great powers. It was particularly impressed with the Turkish negotiating skill at Lausanne and contrasted it to the Irish failure in negotiating with the British in the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 that left the country part of the British Empire. The Turks had successfully achieved independence and *The Catholic Bulletin* described Ataturk as the 'man of the year' and the only cause for optimism in the world.

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

*The Catholic Bulletin* warned through the 1930s that the war of independence was not over. And it was not speaking of the north. It argued that the war of ideas continued and Ireland needed to keep up its guard against British attempts to rehabilitate itself in the country. Various members of our current academic establishment laughed off its crude combativeness in this area. But who can really argue that it wasn't correct?

Gallipoli does have one important connecting point between Ireland and Turkey that has been lost to the memory. That connecting point is the Armenians. That is because it was the arrival of the Irish and the rest of the British Empire in the invasion force at Gallipoli that helped set off what happened to the Armenians.

## **The Rebirth of Turkey**

*The Rebirth of Turkey*, by an American journalist, Clair Price, published in 1923, provides food for thought about what happened to the Armenians. Most of all it provides context, something that our modern historians have sought to eliminate from history.

In a chapter entitled *The Armenian Deportations of 1915* Price provides a picture of the Armenian population in the region:

"The Armenian population before the late war consisted of about 1,500,000 in the Ottoman Empire, about 1,000,000 in the Russian Empire, about 150,000 in Persia and about 250,000 in Egypt, Europe and the United States. Although small colonies of them were to be

found in all parts of the Ottoman Empire, the bulk of them lived in the eastern provinces, a mountainous tableland on which, with their Turkish neighbors, they formed a sedentary peasantry among a nomadic population of Kurds.

In none of these eastern provinces did they constitute a majority of the population and in this respect they differed sharply from the Greeks and Bulgarians of the old Balkan provinces. This was not due to the Ottoman conquest, for the last of the independent Kingdom of Armenia Major had disappeared in the Seljuk invasion of 1079, and the Egyptians put an end to Armenia Minor in Cilicia in 1375. It was not until 1514 that the Ottoman Sultan Selim I, in his campaign against the Persians, occupied the modern eastern provinces and brought their tangled populations into the Ottoman Empire. In accordance with the tolerance which distinguished the great Sultans, the Gregorian Church to which the Armenians belonged, was made a recognized community in full enjoyment of its ecclesiastical and cultural liberty. Unlike Greeks and Bulgarians in Europe who did possess majorities and who consequently had within themselves all the elements of nationhood, the Armenians enjoyed in their community institutions the only degree of autonomy which they could have enjoyed. It was comparatively easy for Greeks and Bulgarians, once Western ideas of nationalism had reached them, to enlarge the autonomy of their own community institutions into territorial independence, but any attempt to transfer Armenian autonomy from a religious to a territorial basis was quite another matter. The population of the modern eastern provinces was such that a resuscitation of the old Armenian Kingdom was impossible and it would have remained impossible until some means had been discovered of re-writing ten centuries of history." (pp.78-9)

When the Great War began, the Armenians and Turks had been living together for around 800 years. The Armenians of Anatolia and Europe had been Ottoman subjects for nearly 400 years. And the Armenians did well, on the whole, under Ottoman rule. In every Ottoman province the Armenians were better educated and more prosperous than the average Moslem and, with the Greeks and Jews, formed what then existed of an Ottoman bourgeoisie. They were one of the non-Moslem groups that the Ottomans entrusted many important positions to in their Empire – a thing that England saw as a generosity that was tantamount to race suicide.

The Armenians, who did not live in a distinct geographical area in the Empire, were treated in the only way they could have been by the Ottomans and in most respects enjoyed a favourable status within the Empire. Price notes that any hardships the Armenians might have complained about under Ottoman rule were experienced in much the same way by the other peoples of the Empire, including the Turks themselves.

But the position of the Armenians was complicated toward the end of the nineteenth century by the Russian expansion into the Caucasus:

"Having broken through the barrier of the Caucasus Range and established its provincial administrations in Trans-Caucasia, Russia had transferred large numbers of Armenians from Ottoman to Russian sovereignty, had stripped them of the autonomy of their community institutions and had kept them in order with an iron hand. In the Russo-Turkish War of 1876, its Armies had halted their march toward Alexandretta at Kars whence they overlooked the Ottoman Armenians in the eastern provinces. The Treaty of San Stefano which closed the War of 1876 was quashed and in the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, Russian provision for reforms to be applied to the Armenians was agreed to by all the signatory Powers. In the Cyprus Convention of 1876, however, Great Britain had bound itself to maintain the Sultan's realm against Russia, and the eastern provinces, now the most difficult and the most important provinces in the outer Empire, became the theatre of directly opposed British and Russian policies. But Russia, despite its resentment at the loss of the San Stefano Treaty, had won at Berlin. The Armenian clauses in the Berlin Treaty

reinforced the Armenian disposition to secure redress of their wrongs independently of their Turkish neighbors who were equal sufferers with them under the Hamidian regime. This tendency presently found further reinforcement in the Nihilist movement which developed in Russia after the Russo-Turkish War. The persecuted Armenians of Russian Trans-Caucasia joined the Nihilist movement, but their headquarters at Tiflis were stamped out by the Czar's police and the Armenian revolutionists fled to Switzerland, Paris, London and New York.

Relations between Turks and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had thus far been generally peaceful ... and even when Westernism was alienating the Bulgarians in Europe, the Armenians in the eastern provinces were still 'the loyal community.' But the Armenian revolutionists in the West, instead of confining their work to Russian Trans-Caucasia, sought to raise funds in the Ottoman Empire as well, and the ancient Turco-Armenian relationship began to be poisoned. Armenian committees succeeded in giving the Turks the impression that 'the loyal community' was no longer loyal..." (pp.81-2)

This complication would not have been a problem for the Armenians if England had held to her traditional policy of blocking Russian expansionism, as part of the 'Great Game'.

Price notes that it was England's strategic re-orientation, in acquiring Russia as an ally during 1907 - in the project to encircle and destroy Germany - that placed the Armenians in an ambiguous position in relation to the Ottoman State:

"In 1907, the eastern provinces became the scene of an about-face in Anglo-Russian relations. Under the Anglo-Russian Treaty of that year, the two Powers effected an immediate partition of Persia and envisaged a future partition of the Ottoman Empire in which the eastern provinces would go to Russia and Mesopotamia would go to Great Britain ... So Russian annexation of the eastern provinces became the common programme of Great Britain and Russia alike, and from that date Russia adopted a policy so liberal toward its Armenians in Trans-Caucasia that a small Russian annexationist group soon appeared among the Armenians in the eastern provinces. The fact must be emphasized that there has never been any Russian population in these provinces and that the Armenians constituted Russia's only ground for intervention and eventual annexation." (pp.81-2)

So the 1907 agreement produced a situation whereby both England and Russia required "*the loyal community*" of Armenians to be a fifth-column within the Ottoman State so that a justification for the conquest of Moslem lands by the Christian Powers could be made.

However, at that moment an unwelcome development occurred which required a response from the Powers and interests looking to break up the Ottoman Empire. It involved a progressive development which the Western Powers had always called for but which was, now, against their interests:

"The Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 was quickly followed by the Young Turkish Revolution of 1908. Turks and Armenians alike rejoiced at the downfall of the Hamidian regime. An Armenian bloc was formed in the new Parliament and the Committee of Union and Progress entered into apparently amicable relations with it. The bulk of Armenian opinion in the Empire seemed to be willing to work the revived Constitution and to begin, in common with its Turkish neighbors, the reforms of which all the Ottoman races stood in the direst need. But the Armenian revolutionaries in the West had already planted independence committees in the Empire and drilled them in the technique of revolution." (p.82)

According to Price, there was still considerable goodwill between Turk and Armenian when Russia and Britain declared war on Turkey and began military operations against the Ottoman State. This was despite a Turkish/Armenian conflict that occurred in Adana in 1909, when Armenian revolutionary groups,

encouraged by the signals coming from the Anglo-Russian entente, had risen up in the hope of provoking Western intervention. This event should have acted as a deterrent both to the Armenian revolutionaries and the Western Powers in demonstrating the precarious position of the Armenians in the event of a Christian assault on the Ottoman Empire. But it didn't and it undermined Armenian efforts to preserve the stability of the Empire that gave them their security:

"It may be assumed that the Armenian deputies in the Parliament were still willing, despite the disappointments of the Enver regime, to work the Constitution with the Turkish deputies. The independence committees, however, found their inspiration in the West and their program was electrified by the professed concern for Armenian independence with which the Allied Powers began the war. The Russian annexationist group was similarly affected. In their view, Russia's opportunity to 'liberate' the eastern provinces was at hand.

Under the 1908 Constitution, the Enver Government had a right to mobilize Armenians of military age as well as Turks, but armed opposition broke out at once, notably at Zeitun, a town of Armenian mountaineers who had long enjoyed an almost complete local independence. Along the eastern frontier, Armenians began deserting to the Russian Armies and the Enver Government, distrusting the loyalty of those who remained, removed them from the combatant forces and formed them into labor gangs whose commissariat, to put it mildly, worked even more decrepitude than that of the combatant troops.

With this situation in his rear, Enver Pasha crossed both the Russian and Persian frontiers but in January, 1915, he was thrown back behind his own frontier by the Russian victory at Sarykamish. This victory fired the annexationist hopes and armed bands of Armenian volunteers began operating behind the Ottoman Armies. In April, Lord Bryce and the 'Friends of Armenia' in London appealed for funds to equip these volunteers, and Russia also was presumably not uninterested in them. Seeing that both Great Britain and Russia were at war with the Ottoman Government, it would have been surprising if so obvious a move had been overlooked. These volunteer bands finally captured Van, one of the eastern provincial capitals, late in April and, having massacred the Turkish population, they surrendered what remained of the city to the Russian Armies in June. The news from Van affected the Turks precisely as the news from Smyrna affected them when the Greeks landed there in May, 1919. The rumour immediately ran through Asia Minor that the Armenians had risen.

By this time, the military situation had turned sharply against the Enver Government. The Russian victory at Sarykamish was developing and streams of Turkish refugees were pouring westward into central Asia Minor. The British had launched their Dardanelles campaign at the very gates of Constantinople, and Bulgaria had not yet come in. It does not seem reasonable to assume that this moment, of all moments, would have been chosen by the Enver Government to take widespread measures against its Armenians, unless it was believed that such measures were immediately necessary. Measures were taken. The provincial governors in those parts of the Empire which were exposed to the enemy, like the eastern provinces and the Mediterranean coast where British and French men of war were maintaining a patrol, were ordered to assemble their Armenians and march them south into the Arab country for internment. If these deportations were to be carried out in an orderly fashion, the strongest and most reliable police arrangements were necessary but these arrangements the Enver Government either could not or would not make. In general, the deportations only gathered the Armenians together and exposed them without protection to a population alarmed and angered by the news from Van. They broke down into a dreadful business in which Armenian men of military age were shot down in batches and the remnant of women, children and old persons who had not already made their way as refugees into Russian

Trans-Caucasia, were finally interned in Mesopotamia and Syria under conditions of the direst want. This business deprived Russia of its sole claim to intervention in the eastern provinces, and the British Foreign Office which shared in the Anglo-Russian program of partitioning the Ottoman Empire as Persia had already been partitioned, has naturally made the most of it. Lord Bryce's estimate of the number of Armenians who died in the course of it was 800,000." (p.86-8)

I make no claim to know the truth of the Armenian issue - one way or another. All I can do is point out the context of it, as Clair Price attempted to do. During the Great War and the Allied invasion of Turkey, the infrastructure of life in the Ottoman Empire, which had been seriously weakened as a result of the conflicts in the Balkans, was almost completely destroyed.

In the process of this destruction up to one third of the population of the Ottoman Empire perished (Further information on this can be found in a book by Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks*). In the main war zones, in Macedonia and Thrace, western Anatolia, the north-east and south-east, that percentage was as high as two thirds - a much higher number of fatalities suffered than in any other country that was involved in the War.

In the decade between 1912 and 1922, as a result of the effects of Allied pressure on the Empire and ethnic cleansing and massacre resulting from it, in the areas seceding from it, the Ottoman Empire was deluged by millions of Moslem, Jewish and even Christian refugees coming into the State. These people were fleeing the pure nationalisms that the Western Powers encouraged in the Balkans as a means of destabilising the Ottoman State. And the effects of this process were compounded by the Great War.

It should be understood at this point that it was in the interest of the Ottoman State to preserve the peace and stability of its multi-ethnic Empire whereas the powers that sought its break-up were determined to break it apart through promoting ethnic conflict within it.

### **The British blockade of the Empire**

The British blockade of the Empire, which began even before the formal declaration of war, was carried out with the intention of starving Ottoman citizens to force them into surrender and encouraging a general collapse of Ottoman society into anarchy. A similar blockade was organised against neutral Greece to encourage regime change and her enlistment in the Allied ranks. The spread of typhus and cholera was one of the major reasons for the high level of Armenian and other deaths and food also became very scarce in Eastern Anatolia.

The successful destruction of civil society caused by the blockade and by the invading Allied armies was the major factor in turning the position of Armenians and other Christian groups from one of mainstays of the commercial infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire and "*the loyal community*" into a malevolent element within it. And since the objective of the Allies was the destruction of the commercial life of the Ottoman State through invasion and blockade what future, indeed, had the Armenians in it?

Thousands of people moving around as refugees from the invading armies of Britain and Russia and the Royal Navy blockade, in chaotic conditions, with the transportation system collapsing, with bandits preying on them under the collapse of order, with the general shortage of food and with primitive sanitation conditions leading to famine, hunger and disease, inevitably resulted in a general reverse to a state of nature in much of the outlying areas of the Empire, particularly in Eastern Anatolia, the war zone between Russia and the Turks.

It is not clear whether more Turks and Kurds died at the hands of Armenians and their Russian backers than Armenians died at the hands of Ottoman Moslems. The only comparable situation I can see would be in the Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe during 1941-2 when society there was reduced to its elements, when people did not know under what authority they might live the next day, and different groups did what they had to for the purposes of sheer survival.

The invading Russian armies brought with them Armenian groups armed with Allied weapons whose main purpose was to kill Moslem Turks and Kurds - which they proceeded to do. British and Russian agents circulated amongst the Armenians behind Turkish lines and provided them with weapons and money to enable them to create general disorder. In the Armenian capture of the city of Van and the general massacre of Moslems that followed, Ottoman soldiers were diverted and prevented from reaching the front to fight the invading Russian forces. All these factors must have influenced the Ottomans to relocate the Armenian population from the area.

And along with the Armenian relocation there was also a relocation of up to 800,000 Moslems from the war-zone. But when the Ottoman authorities moved various peoples out of the war zones they became prey to other groups with scores to settle, such as the Kurds on the Armenians. Moslem civilians faced similar problems as they fled the attacking Russian armies only to be harassed by armed Armenian bands. And I have seen figures of up to 500,000 Moslems killed by Armenians, with extensive lists of names and modes of death recorded by the Ottoman authorities.

The Armenians in cities in the west, like Smyrna, Constantinople and Ankara were not subject to the same relocations because the Ottomans only wished to remove those in the general area of the war-zone and Russian penetration.

A decade and a half before the Turks relocated the Armenians, the British relocated the Boers and Africans away from the war-zone in the Transvaal - into concentration camps. It did so in stable conditions, controlling the seas around South Africa, under no pressure of blockade, with plentiful food supplies, in a localised conflict fought in a gentlemanly way by their opponents. And yet they still managed to kill tens of thousands of Boer and African women and children in the process.

It was called "methods of barbarism" at the time but I have never seen it called "genocide" (except perhaps by Michael Davitt and John Dillon at the time).

It was the object of Britain to win the Great War, no matter what the consequences. That is why the war lasted so long and why it was so destructive. It was spread across the world when there proved to be no way through in Europe and the Russian Steamroller ran out of steam. The fact that other peoples were caught up in it was neither here nor there for England. If they could be used to win the war, or if their deaths could add to the propaganda that would help win it, all the better. In the end they counted for nothing in Britain and were dropped when they had served their usefulness.

If the deaths of Armenians are seen as 'genocide' the power that was most responsible for it was Britain. In the interests of destroying Germany and conquering the Ottoman territories, it made the Ottoman State, in the space of a few months, an impossible place for Armenians to live, after they had lived in it peacefully for centuries.

This was all part of the British tactic of breaking up multi-national Empires of rival powers by sowing the seeds and cultivating the harvest of nationalism in them (whilst repressing it closer to home). So the clearance of Armenians from eastern

Anatolia can only be seen, within the British scheme of things, as a progressive development, since it was the culmination of the general process that England encouraged with regard to the Ottoman territories and elsewhere in the world, in its 'nation building.'

And they were probably happy to see the Armenians suffer in the process to create propaganda in the United States that would bring that country into the war – a war that the Entente were in danger of losing without America's help.

Lord Bryce had been for neutrality at the outbreak of War and had only become an enthusiast for British participation when he read accounts of the 'violation of Belgium' written by Tom Kettle, the Redmondite propagandist, amongst others. He became the British Ambassador to Washington and had many connections in the American political elite. But he was merely a figurehead for the real authors. The writing of his book, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (more widely known as *The Blue Book*), was actually done by Arnold Toynbee and it was issued as a companion volume to the Report on German atrocities in Belgium.

Toynbee himself was the named author of three books on the Armenian issue: *Armenian Atrocities - The Murder Of A Nation*, *The Murderous Tyranny Of The Turks* and *Turkey: A Past And A Future*. The Bryce Report and Toynbee's books became the basis for Wellington House propaganda against the Turks that constructed the lasting negative image of the Turk in the Western mind.

The propaganda against the Turks utilised the American missions in Armenia, who concentrated their activities on converting the Armenians to Protestantism, and whose work was threatened by the Russian/Turkish conflict. Nearly half the sources used by Bryce and identified as "foreign residents" were, in fact, unnamed American missionaries. But they were not identified as such, leading readers to believe they were simply independent and trustworthy foreigners with no interest in the matter. The American missions then helped the process in two ways: they provided the information for the propaganda and helped distribute it in America.

The other sources for *The Blue Book*, presented as those of objective individuals, were largely collected from Armenian nationalist organisations, with an axe to grind against the Ottomans.

England latched on to the fact that anti-Turkish feeling already existed amongst some sections of the American public due to the pre-War accounts of their missionaries in Armenia. These people had characterised the Turks as persecutors of Christians (when the Ottomans had, in fact, rather liberally, tolerated the presence of these proselytising and disruptive Christian missions in their Empire). The Christian missionaries had often been presented as long-suffering martyrs in the American media and Britain saw a chance to utilise the sympathy they engendered in the public to use as a lever to help bring America into the War.

There never was a formal retraction by the British Government of the contents of *The Blue Book*, even though Toynbee later described it as "propaganda" in his *Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (p.50) - in 1922 when the issue was dead, the Greeks had been cast adrift, and the British were keen to make peace with Ataturk.

A British historian, Trevor Wilson, recently put it like this:

"Bryce did not have the choice of telling the truth or telling falsehood. If he proved so scrupulous in his investigations that he might have to deem the tales of sadistic crimes unproven - then,

inadvertently but inescapably - he would be helping to propagate a much larger untruth: that the whole notion of deliberate and calculated atrocity by Germany on Belgium was unfounded." (Lord Bryce's Investigation Into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, *Journal of Contemporary History*, July 1979, p.381)

Liberal propagandists for the War felt it was their duty to publish unfounded tales in the service of the War effort because not to do so would nullify the reasons for the War itself - and their own support of it. By telling lies about the Germans and Turks in the service of the State they were salving their own Liberal consciences about having become warmongers.

But the British Government did attempt to try 144 Ottoman officials interned in Malta during 1920-1 on the basis of its evidence. After a two year investigation the Prosecutor released the prisoners due to the lack of concrete evidence, even though the information on the sources used in *The Blue Book* was readily available to the prosecution.

It was, however, important that England convince the American public that Ottoman rule was the most murderous and despicable in existence because the U.S. was not enamoured by the idea of British or French Imperialists extending their rule into the Near East. America had to be persuaded that the advance of Imperial armies into the area was a moral imperative and the establishment of Colonial administrations was immensely preferable, and indeed an altruistic act, on the part of Britain. Especially when whilst England cried out for American help in its 'war for civilization' against Germany it was itself diverting its own armies away to conquer land in the East.

After the Great War, Britain had it in her power to bring about an Armenian state and to try those it had accused and detained in connection with the Armenian 'genocide.' But, despite attempting many things in the world that were immensely more difficult, at the time it decided not to follow through with these two measures, as if it did not take the claims it made against the Turks as seriously as it pretended to, during the war.

And the U.S., which joined the Great War on Germany in 1917, and which had substantial connection with the Armenians through its missionary activity amongst them, did not even feel it important enough to declare war on the Turks or take the mandate for organising an Armenian state, after Britain had tried palming it off to them. It evidently felt that its "war for civilization" did not need extending to encompass the Turks. There is, in fact, another event that occurred around the same time that has a much greater right to be called 'genocide' than what happened to the Armenians - but it is as little known about in the world as the Armenian one is well known.

### ***The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919***

Dr. Mohammad Gholi Majd in his book, *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919* exposes what he calls an 'Iranian holocaust' where 8 to 10 million Iranians perished as a result of British policy in the latter stages of the Great War. A large proportion of Iranian crops were seized by Britain and used to feed their occupying forces, leaving Iranian people to die from hunger, malnutrition and disease. Gholi Majd argues that the British Government were the main cause of this famine and genocide that occurred by preventing food imports from neighbouring Mesopotamia and India, which were under its control, and where there was an abundance of grain. (Now that sounds familiar!) The Great Iranian Famine of 1917-19 is almost unknown despite being possibly the largest genocide of the twentieth century. According to documents in the U.S., Persia's population in 1914 was 20 million and as a result of the famine it was

reduced to 11 million, by 1919. About 40% of the Iranian population died in the space of two years during the military occupation of Persia by Britain.

At the same time Britain had the huge revenues of Persian oil at its disposal, to pay for food imports for the starving people. But these funds were diverted to the British Treasury instead to subsidize military operations elsewhere in the world.

By all accounts Dr. Mohammad Gholi Majd had great difficulty in getting his book published in the U.S. and whilst other publications dealing with 'genocides' were eagerly put on the market (such as that in Rwanda), the subject of an Iranian genocide produced by British agency was considered untouchable by the same publishers.

Documents from the British War Office relating to the occupation and famine in Iran/Persia are still being withheld from scholars by today's Government in Westminster.

We live in a world where successful 'genocides' perpetrated by those who have the control over the writing of history are largely unknown and the acts of those that might be of use in the political scheme of things become the news. If the term 'genocide' is bandied about as a tool of propaganda it becomes too good a term to be applied to the activities of the masters of the world in creating their own backyards.

### **Postscript: The 'Armenian Genocide' – the lost view of the first Armenian Prime Minister**

After completing the article above an interesting document came into my possession. It is a report submitted by Hovhannes Katchaznoui, the first Armenian Prime Minister of the Armenian Republic (1918-19), and one of the founders of the Dashnags, the revolutionary Armenian group which organized the political and military activities against the Ottoman State.

It was issued to the *Dashnagzoutiun* 1923 Party Convention to explain the situation and was something of an apologia, which must have taken great guts to deliver. At the point at which this report was given, the Armenians had got a state, but it had been provided by the Bolsheviks, rather than the Anglo-French Entente. The Entente had abandoned the idea of an Armenian state in Anatolia when they failed to hold the Turks to the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Armenians had to be content with autonomy under the Soviet State.

This report was actually published in a book in Tbilisi in 1927 - which was quickly banned in Armenia. Copies seemed to have been located and destroyed after that. However, a copy was rescued from the Lenin Library in Moscow and re-published in Turkish and English recently. It is entitled *Dashnagzoutiun Has Nothing To Do Anymore* after the view of Hovhannes Katchaznoui that the Dashnags had exhausted their function and should be wound up.

The book has also a number of Armenian documents, one an account of the speech made by the military representative of the Party to the National Congress, held in Tbilisi during February 1915 (before the deportations). This speech was interesting in describing the objectives of the Armenian revolutionary groups in relation to the Allied invasion of Turkey:

"As is known, the Russian government donated 242,900 rubles at the beginning of the war to make preparations to arm the Turkish Armenians and to incite revolts in the country during the war. Our volunteer units need to break the defense line of the Turkish forces and to unite with the rebels and to create anarchy on the front and behind the lines and by these means help the Russian armies pass through and capture Turkish Armenia." (*Analiz Basim Yayin Tasarim Gida Ticaret Ve Sanayi, Dashnagzoutiun Has Nothing To Do Anymore*, pp. 17-8)

Katchaznoui's account is mostly interesting because it also, along with Price's, places what happened to the Armenians in its real context - in this case, the efforts of Armenian revolutionaries to utilize the Great War and Allied forces invading Turkey in their own political pursuits. It evaluates the tragic incidents as instances of war and declares that the Armenians have been tools in the hands of foreign powers, been let down by them, and suffered defeat and disaster through their own miscalculations.

Katchaznoui's account begins just before the Great War:

"At the beginning of the autumn of 1914 when Turkey had not yet entered the war but had already been making preparations, Armenian Revolutionary units began to be formed in Transcaucasia with great enthusiasm and, especially, with much uproar ...

In the fall of 1914 Armenian volunteer units organized themselves and fought against the Turks because they could not refrain themselves from organizing and refrain themselves from fighting. This was an inevitable result of the psychology on which the Armenian people had nourished themselves during an entire generation: that mentality should have found its expression, and it did so ...

The winter of 1914 and the spring of 1915 were the periods of greatest enthusiasm and hope for all the Armenians in the Caucasus, including, of course, the Dashnagzoutiun. We had no doubt that the war would end with the complete victory of the allies; Turkey would be defeated and dismembered, and its Armenian population would at last be liberated.

We had embraced Russia wholeheartedly without any compunction. Without any positive basis of fact, we believed that the Czarist government would grant us a more or less broad self-government in the Caucasus and in the Armenian vilayets liberated from Turkey as a result of our loyalty, and efforts and assistance.

We had created a dense atmosphere of illusion in our minds. We had implanted our own desires into the minds of others; we had lost our sense of reality and were carried away with our dreams ... we overestimated the ability of the Armenian people, their political and military power and overestimated the extent and importance of the services our people rendered to the Russians. And by overestimating our very modest worth and merit, we were naturally exaggerating our hopes and expectations.

The deportations and massacres which took place during the summer and autumn of 1915 were mortal blows to the Armenian cause. Half of historical Armenia - 'the same half where the foundations of our independence would be laid according to the traditions inherited by European diplomacy' - that half was denuded of Armenians; the Armenian provinces of Turkey were without Armenians. The Turks knew what they were doing and have no reason to regret today. It was the most decisive method of extirpating the Armenian question from Turkey.

Again, it would be useless to ask today to what extent the participation of volunteers in the war was a contribution to the Armenian calamity. No one can claim that the savage persecutions would not have taken place if our behaviour on this side of the frontier had been different, as no one can claim to the contrary that the persecutions would have been the same even if we had not shown hostility to the Turks.

This is a matter about which it is possible to have many different opinions.

The proof is, however - and this is essential - that the struggle began decades ago against which the Turkish government brought about the deportation or extermination of the Armenian people in Turkey and the desolation of the Turkish Armenia.

That was the terrible fact!...

The second half of 1915 and the entire year of 1916 were periods of hopelessness, desperation and mourning. The refugees, all those who had survived the Holocaust, were filling Russian provinces by tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. They were famished, naked, sick, a horrified and desperate flood of human-

ity, flooding villages and cities. They had come to a country which was itself in ruins and famished. They piled upon each other, before our own eyes, on our threshold dying of famine and sickness.

And we were unable to save those precious lives. Angered and terrified, we sought the culprits and quickly found them: the deceitful politics of the Russian government ...

Our volunteer units were naturally trying to capture Van and Mus without any waste of time. They headed for these places to save the Armenians. However, Russians did not only consist of Armenians and they had other intentions. This sluggishness and uncertainty to act which we evaluated as disloyalty is explainable by the customary ineffectiveness of the Russian command (which was witnessed many times on other fronts as well) or other general military conditions unknown to us now ... By extraordinary mental aberration, we, a political party, were forgetting that our cause was an incidental and trivial phase for the Russians, so trivial that, if necessary, they would trample on our corpses without a moments hesitation.

I am not saying that we did not know the circumstances. Of course we knew and understood and so we started when it was necessary to explain the situation. Deep down in our hearts, however, we did not grasp the full meaning of that word formula; we forgot what we already knew and we drew such conclusions as though our cause was the center of gravity of the Great War, its cause and its purpose. When the Russians were advancing, we used to say from the depths of our subconscious minds that they were coming to save us; and when they were withdrawing, we said they are retreating so that they would allow us to be massacred ...”

Katchaznoui then deals with the second opportunity that presented itself to the Armenian revolutionary groups - after Turkey had seemed defeated after the armistice in 1918, and was invaded and occupied by Allied armies.

But first there was a shock in store for the Armenians:

“In November a general peace was declared. Germany and its allies lost the war. The German troops left Georgia in haste. Turks also receded back into their old territory. Towards the end of the month, British troops - the troops of our allies - entered the Batoum. We started to entertain new hopes. It appeared as if our situation in Transcaucasia would radically change, for the victorious and those which replaced the German troops in Tbilisi were our allies. We had fought against the common enemy. We certainly would attain the privilege of special friendship of the British, compared to the Georgians who had flirted with the Germans and the Azerbaijanis who had openly gone over to the Turkish side. We were once more wrong. The British saw no difference among us. They acted as if either they did not know that we had been their ally or had forgotten this. The generosity they showed towards the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis was unexpected and incomprehensible. We certainly did not like this attitude of the British and thought they were disloyal ... We contended that they were unfaithful and we were relieved. We did not examine the reasons for this unfaithfulness.”

What is striking about his account is that Katchaznoui concedes that it would have been better for the Armenians to have made a deal with the Turks in 1920 than to have trusted in the military power of the Allies. In doing so Katchaznoui embraces the view of the conflict between Armenian and Turk as that of a civil war rather than what would normally be understood as “genocide”.

“The Armenian-Turkish war which broke our back began in the fall of 1920.

Would it have been possible to evade it? Probably not.

The crushed Turkey of 1918 had recovered during the two years. There came forward patriotic, young officers who formed a new army in Asia Minor. They saw the necessity of attacking in the Northeast, and also in the Southwest against the Greeks which they could not do without first crushing their flank on the Armenian front...

Despite these hypotheses there remains an irrefutable fact. That we had not done all that was necessary for us to have done

to evade war. We ought to have used peaceful language with the Turks whether we succeeded or not, and we did not do it ... this was the fundamental error. We were not afraid of war because we thought we would win. With the carelessness of inexperienced and ignorant men we did not know what forces Turkey had mustered on our frontiers. When the skirmishes had started the Turks proposed that we meet and confer. We did not do so and defied them.

I should point out that in Autumn of 1920 we were not a negligible quantity in the eyes of the Turks. The terrible incidents of the past years were forgotten. Our people were well rested and our Army was well armed with British arms. We had sufficient ammunition. We were holding a very important fortress called Kars in our hands. Finally there was the Sèvres Treaty and it was not simply a piece of paper in those days, it was an important gain against the Turks. We could easily believe we could be heard, because Turks were considered the defeated party.

We did not make an attempt ...

We now see that if we had agreed on a settlement with the Turks directly (in spite of the Sèvres treaty) we might have gained a lot. But we could not see this at that point ... it is also a reality and an unforgivable reality that we did not do anything to avoid war but did just the opposite; we created excuses for it. What is unforgivable is that we had no idea about the military power of Turkey and neither did we know our own army ...

The war resulted in our indisputable defeat. And our Army was well fed and well armed and dressed but did not fight. The troops were constantly retreating and deserting their positions; they threw away their arms and dispersed to the villages.”

In 1920 the Bolsheviks seized power in Armenia and Katchaznoui was arrested as a counter-revolutionary. He fled Soviet Armenia in 1921, but returned to live there until his death in 1938.

See also Documents:

A Redmondite on the Armenians p. 35

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## Upheaval in Central Europe in a quarter of a century.

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Maps published in a popular illustrated magazine, *l'Illustration*, on 16 September 1939, see centre pages and comments p. 34

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## The Birth of Irish Foreign Affairs

by Pat Walsh

At the moment there is debate in Ireland as to the true nature of Irish-Turkish relations during the period of the foundations of the two states, and how they should be perceived today. The focus has been the contact between soldiers at Gallipoli. But there are more important and substantial points of contact between the two nations that should be paid attention to.

We feel obliged to draw attention to an early contact between the independent Irish Dáil and the independent Grand National Assembly of Turkey, established by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk at Ankara. This communication is something unique since perhaps for the first time in history two fighting and two founding parliaments established contact in their national struggles against a common colonizing empire. This contact was made through the Dáil's *'Message to the Free Nations of the World'* delivered to the revolutionary Grand National Assembly at Ankara, presumably on a date following 10 August 1921 (as the extract from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs reproduced below suggests). The Dáil's Message was addressed to the "elected representatives" in a few dozen countries. The last Ottoman Monarchical Parliament was dissolved by Britain on 18 March 1920 and the only elected body in Turkey was the Turkish Grand National Assembly which was inaugurated on 23 April 1920. In early 1919 Britain began to suppress the Irish democracy which came into being after the 1918 election. About a year later it did the same in Turkey. The Ottoman Sultan, a virtual prisoner of the British in Constantinople, had been persuaded to send Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) to Eastern Anatolia, to control Turkish forces that were preparing to resist the establishment of an Armenian State, to get him out of the way. But having got there Kemal resigned from the Army, united with these forces, and signed the *Amasia Protocol* on June 9, 1919 declaring the intention to resist the occupation and also the Sultan, as its instrument. This was a rival source of power to the puppet regime in Constantinople and became the nucleus of a new Turkish national development.

Ataturk presided over a National Congress at Erzurum, in Eastern Anatolia, held in July; and then in Sivas in September 1919. From these conferences was issued the *Milli Misak* or National Pact. This pact proposed a settlement with the British on the basis of self-determination for the Arabs south of the Armistice line; the opening of the Straits to free commerce; full rights for non-Turkish minorities; the retention of all non-Arab Moslem-majority areas of the Empire (Anatolia, Eastern Thrace and Mosul included); and abolition of the Capitulations.

In January 1920 the Ottoman Parliament in Constantinople, which conducted its business within range of the Royal Navy's guns, declared support for the National Pact. The British occupying power viewed this development with concern and told the Sultan to repress it. As Churchill candidly put it:

"The Allies were loyal to the principle of representative government: accordingly the Turks had voted. Unhappily, they had almost all of them voted the wrong way." (David Walder, *The Chanak Incident*, p.76)

To force the Ottoman government to submit to Allied demands and to control events in Turkey the British authorised a full military occupation of Constantinople on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1920 – against the terms of the Mudros armistice. British forces marched into Constantinople, arrested Turkish nationalist leaders in the

city and occupied the various Ottoman Ministries. The leading Deputies and leaders in the Constantinople Parliament were arrested by British Intelligence Officers and it was shut down. Many of the representatives of the Turkish democracy were sent to internment in Malta.

A week later Mustapha Kemal opened the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, which was attended by, amongst others, those Deputies who had managed to escape the Allied repression of its parliament in Constantinople.

So in 1920-1 both assemblies, in Dublin and Ankara, were assailed by British occupying forces determined to shut them down, and prepared to use military force to do so.

The Dáil, in its first act of foreign affairs, sent out this message to the other free nations of the world (including Turkey's new national development) declaring the existence of an independent Irish Government. It was read out, in Irish, to the Dáil by J.J.O'Kelly, the editor of *The Catholic Bulletin*, which was subsequently to publish sympathetic accounts of Ataturk and the Turkish struggle for independence:

### **"MESSAGE TO THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD.**

To the Nations of the World! Greeting.

The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled in the Irish Capital on January 21, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress.

Nationally, the race, the language, the customs and traditions of Ireland are radically distinct from the English. Ireland is one of the most ancient nations in Europe, and she has preserved her national integrity, vigorous and intact, through seven centuries of foreign oppression: she has never relinquished her national rights, and throughout the long era of English usurpation she has in every generation defiantly proclaimed her inalienable right of nationhood down to her last glorious resort to arms in 1916.

Internationally, Ireland is the gateway of the Atlantic. Ireland is the last outpost of Europe towards the West: Ireland is the point upon which great trade routes between East and West converge: her independence is demanded by the Freedom of the Seas: her great harbours must be open to all nations, instead of being the monopoly of England. To-day these harbours are empty and idle solely because English policy is determined to retain Ireland as a barren bulwark for English aggrandisement, and the unique geographical position of this island, far from being a benefit and safeguard to Europe and America, is subjected to the purposes of England's policy of world domination.

Ireland to-day reasserts her historic nationhood the more confidently before the new world emerging from the War because she believes in freedom and justice as the fundamental principles of international law, because she believes in a frank co-operation between the peoples for equal rights against the vested privileges of ancient tyrannies, because the permanent peace of Europe can never be secured by perpetuating military dominion for the profit of empire but only by establishing the control of government in every land upon the basis of the free will of a free people, and the existing state of war, between Ireland and England, can never be ended until Ireland is definitely evacuated by the armed forces of England.

For these among other reasons, Ireland—resolutely and irrevocably determined at the dawn of the promised era of self-determination and liberty that she will suffer foreign dominion no longer—calls upon every free nation to uphold her national claim to complete independence as an Irish Republic against the arrogant pretensions of England founded in fraud and sustained only by an overwhelming military occupation, and demands to be confronted publicly with England at the Congress of the Nations, in order that the civilised world having judged between English wrong and Irish right may guarantee to Ireland its permanent support for the maintenance of her national independence.” (From Dáil Éireann Debates - Volume 1 - 21 January, 1919)

Of course, Versailles and the peace conference were to prove a great disappointment to the Irish and the Turkish. Ireland found its representations vetoed by England and the Turks got the punitive Treaty of Sèvres, which partitioned Turkey and the Moslem lands of the Ottoman Empire amongst the Western Christian Powers.

Some background to the Dáil declaration - and the subsequent establishment of a Foreign Affairs Department, a prerequisite of independence - is given in a Department of Foreign Affairs Report of 10 August 1921. It suggests that although the message was read to the Dáil in January 1919, the difficult circumstances in which it operated did not lead to its delivery to other nations, with supporting information, until 1921:

“On his return from America, the President having in view the importance of strengthening and increasing our representation in foreign countries, the co-ordination of the work of our Foreign Representatives and the necessity of getting these representatives in closer touch than was hitherto possible, deemed it wise to establish a separate office for the department of foreign affairs.

The work of this department had hitherto been centred in the office of the General Secretary, who had done splendid work in spite of the fact that he could only give the Department a fraction of his time. The new office was established in February of this year and since then a good deal has been done in the matter of co-ordinating the work of our Foreign Representatives and of keeping them closely informed on the situation at home. Special envoys have been sent to Germany, Russia, South America and South Africa, an accredited representative has been appointed in Germany; press bureaux have been established in Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Rome and the organisation of similar bureaux in South Africa, Australia, Chile and the Argentine is under way. In addition the organisation in the United States has been put on a new basis ...

One of the first duties of the Department was the preparation of the material accompanying the 'Address to the Representatives of Foreign Nations', which was adopted at the January Session of An Dáil. This document was forwarded to our Foreign Representatives with instructions to have it translated into the different languages and delivered to each elected representative in the following countries: - France, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Austria, Czecho Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Switzerland, Turkey, Jugo Slavia, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Russia, Japan, China, Philippines, the British Colonies and all countries on the American Continent. A great deal of this work has already been done. Arrangements have been made to have the Address read before the United States Senate and it is hoped that the same may be done in many other countries.”

In view of the above, there is now a decision to be made and this involves either denying or honouring the past – in ‘commemorating’ an isolated point of conflict between Ireland and Turkey at Gallipoli or celebrating the substantial points of contact between two nations fighting and establishing their independence and democracy against a common Imperialist enemy.

## Two letters in the Irish Times 16/4/10

### Kevin Barry's last letter

Madam, – Perhaps it is indicative of where we are at as a society that the sale of historical documents such as Kevin Barry’s last letter merit little serious analysis or debate in your paper beyond its potential market value (Home News, April 13th). It is a given that public institutions will enter into the fray to bid for such items, but surely an argument should be made for the preservation of our historical record rather than for its commercial dispersal. Our historical record might indeed be a little more complete if owners, vendors and/or purchasers were at the very least required to submit details of all such sales to a central cultural repository so that the final location of any “lot” can be formally recorded. It should be noted that our French colleagues, who have the fortunate resource of much more extensive institutional collections, may define such records, either private or public, as “historical archives” and therefore as items of public interest. Such records become the property of the state and the previous owner is paid indemnity. – Yours, etc, CRÓNÁN Ó DOIBHLIN, Head of Special Collections, Archives and Repository Services, Boole Library, University College Cork, College Road, Cork.

### Marking the 1916 anniversary

Madam, – It is notable that coverage by RTÉ of the 1916 ceremony at the GPO on Easter Sunday was the last item on the 9pm news. One more breaking news story and it would have slipped off the radar completely. This is indicative of a carefully fostered attitude over many years past on the part of “official Ireland” to the question of remembering and understanding the revolution. That attitude is to revise it, ridicule it, take the breath out of it, bury it. On the April 24th, 1916 my grandfather, Volunteer John Stokes, said goodbye to his wife and children, not knowing if he would ever see them again, and walked away to join his comrades in Boland’s Mill. Over the next five days he, and they, faced down the military might of the British Empire knowing that the odds were heavily stacked against them. Why would a rational man, a loving husband and father, walk away from the life he loved and towards potential disaster for himself and for his family? Because he believed that we Irish should enjoy the status of living as free citizens of an enlightened republic and not be forced to live as subjects of a feudal monarchy. That the Irish State subsequently failed to vindicate the Republic is not John Stokes’s fault, or the fault of any of his comrades of 1916. They set the test for us in paragraph four of the Proclamation. Thus far, we have failed the test. The proof of this lies all around us. John Stokes survived the revolution to rear his children. At the age of 58 he died rescuing a young woman from drowning at the Shelley Banks. A brave and honourable man to the last, a good citizen. I will remember him and all of his comrades of 1916 on April 24th. That is, for me, Republic Day. – Yours, etc, TOM STOKES, Season Park, Newtownmountkennedy, Co Wicklow.

## CHARLIE DONNELLY ON IRISH NEUTRALITY AND BRITAIN'S 1935 WAR PLANS

### [Introduction by Manus O'Riordan:

The 22 year old Tyrone-born poet Charlie Donnelly was killed in action on February 27, 1937 during the Spanish Anti-fascist War's battle of Jarama. Due to the earlier deaths of Galway volunteer Mick Kelly and Belfast volunteer Bill Henry, at the time of Donnelly's own death he was acting commander of the James Connolly Unit of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Brigade's Abraham Lincoln Battalion. Two years previously, on June 8, 1935, the following article had been published by the Communist International in its journal *Imprecorr*, otherwise known as *International Press Correspondence*. He was introduced by *Imprecorr* as "Charlie Donnelly, Irish Republican Army", but that was both misleading and untrue. In 1934 Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan had split from the IRA to form the anti-fascist Republican Congress. Donnelly was chairman of the London branch of that same Republican Congress and co-editor, together with the Dublin Jewish Republican Leslie Daiken, of its publication *Irish Front*. Donnelly gave that paper a sharp anti-fascist character. In the September 1935 issue he wrote:

"The germs of Fascism are present in Ireland; organisations, institutions and sentiments which could be welded into a fascist movement, for example, Anti-Semitism... General O'Duffy may seem a joke at present. The joke is merely that he is without a paymaster... If the General can create a movement worth taking over, his unemployment may only be temporary."

And in the October 1936 issue he also wrote:

"On Sunday, October 4th, the London working class dealt a blow to the aspirations of Fascism. Thousand of Jewish, Irish and English workers in the East End of London came together and by their united efforts prevented Sir Oswald Mosley and his Fascist army from staging a provocative march through the Jewish quarters."

Charlie Donnelly was both an anti-fascist fighter and thinker. And precisely because he was such a thoroughgoing one, he adamantly refused to countenance any "anti-fascist" gloss being put on the stratagems of British imperialism. Furthermore, although a Marxist, Donnelly never became a member of either the CPI or CPGB, being too independent a thinker to subject himself to any Communist Party control. Such independence was evident in his attempt to capture the mindset of Roger Casement in an article, simply entitled "Connolly and Casement", published in the July 1936 issue of *Left Review*. In a fictional dialogue, Donnelly surmised what he believed were the reasons why Casement had in fact rejected the very real offer made by [the still alive in 1936] George Bernard Shaw to script the defence case for his 1916 trial on the charge of high treason:

SHAW (for the defence): "The fact that I served England well enough to have my services publicly acknowledged and especially rewarded shows that I have no quarrel with England except the political quarrel which England respects and applauds in Poland, Italy, Belgium, in short, in every country except those conquered and denationalised by England herself."

CASEMENT: "Yes I have. I deny England's claim to India and Egypt even as I deny her claim to Ireland – on the very ground that what I claim for one country I should not withhold from others, and not aid them, too, to obtain. I am not only an Irish nationalist, but an anti-imperialist."

SHAW (for the defence): "If you persist in treating me as an Englishman you bind yourselves to hang me as a traitor before the eyes of the world. Now, as a simple matter of fact, I'm neither an

Englishman nor a traitor; I am an Irishman captured in a fair attempt to achieve the independence of my country, and you can no more deprive me of the honours of the position than the abominable cruelties inflicted 600 years ago on William Wallace in this city ... My neck is at your service if it amuses you to break it; my honour and reputation are beyond your reach. I ask for no mercy, pardon or pity."

CASEMENT: "Shaw's version is all right: but he does not understand one tenth-part of the issue the Crown had in view. They are not after me – except in so far as they have to keep in with public feeling. They are out to befoul Germany first of all; to show up the 'German plot' and 'Clan-na-Gael' plot and then to belittle me personally and point to the trio as fine guides and helpers for the Irish people. The reaction is to have this effect – glorification of goodwill of the Irish fighters who fought and died in Ireland – misled and deceived by Germany and me – but contempt and scorn for those who misled them and later (in the aftermath of a hopeless delusion) to get all the Irish Nationalists into the war on England's side, and satisfy 'legal Irish Nationality' by some promise of Home Rule – that nauseous fraud – when the common enemy, Germany, is beaten."

Despite a similar originality of analytical thought in much of the *Imprecorr* article that follows, I have nonetheless omitted the final few paragraphs where Donnelly does in fact fly off on a traditional leftist tangent, culminating in thus accusing de Valera:

"The agenda of the Free State Government today has as its main aims: Capitulation in the Economic War, surrender to the war aims of British imperialism, and increased repression of the revolutionary advance."

I cannot say if such a judgment would have survived if Donnelly had not been killed at so young an age. But I can speak of Frank Ryan, whom Donnelly had goaded into leading a contingent of Irish volunteers to defend the Spanish Republic against Fascism, before he himself also went out to fight in Spain. See [www.irelandscw.com/docs-Ryan2.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/docs-Ryan2.htm) and [www.irelandscw.com/org-RyanComm.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/org-RyanComm.htm) where I have dealt in detail with Frank Ryan's enthusiastic work on behalf of de Valera's wartime policy of neutrality. See [www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-CollectedCD.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-CollectedCD.htm) and [www.irelandscw.com/docs-Division.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/docs-Division.htm) for more on Charlie Donnelly. In the article below, square brackets are used for those interpolations that are mine; the round brackets are in Donnelly's own text.]

### Text by Charlie Donnelly:

On May 30 [1935] Mr. JH Thomas, eulogising the unity of the Empire in preparation for war, boasted how from "even the Free State" came no discordant note. [On May 31 the *Irish Times* had directly quoted Britain's Colonial Secretary Jimmy Thomas – a bombastically imperialist National Government renegade and deserter from the Labour Party – as emphatically declaiming in a banquet speech: "*Irish Free State, even – make no mistake about the significance of the last word*" – M.O'R] At a conference on Imperial Defence (held on May 23, the day following the announcement in the House of Commons of the trebling of the British Air Force), the Free State representative [High Commissioner John Dulanty] got up and said:

"We endorse the British policy. We want to proclaim to the world that, if they assume, because of internal differences at the moment, they can use the Free State as a gate to attack England, then we, regardless of our political differences, hereby proclaim that that they are deceived."

On the day following this declaration the political correspondent of the *Daily Herald* reported that the British government was engaged in informal conversations designed for the improvement of trade relations between the two countries. Anxiety for a settlement with the Free State is strong in the British press. The *Herald* in a leading article supports the rapprochement, declaring that: "Mr. de Valera has removed one of the main obstacles to a fundamental understanding by his unequivocal declaration that no Free State government would allow Ireland to be used as a base for hostile operations against Britain in the event of war."

The *Daily Express*, of whose friendship Irishmen have hitherto been curiously unaware, proclaims its editorial desire "to bury for ever all feuds with Ireland, ancient and modern".

There could not be a greater mistake, however, than to imagine that this sudden desire to end the Economic War means the slightest change toward the one definite and unchanging demand of the Irish people – **the demand for national independence**. The real meaning of the "settlement" talk is exposed by the reactionary *Express*, which naively writes:

"Wherever such deep divisions exist within the Empire the business of good citizens is to remove them and build instead the common front. Every day that the world moves along its present course the need for Empire unity increases."

The desire to settle the Economic War is dictated by the approach of international war and the necessity of securing Ireland as a war base. There is no change in the British attitude, no mention of a concession to Republican feeling. Today, as from the very beginning of the Economic War "there can be no settlement of the Irish question" except on the basis of Commonwealth acceptance and Irish alignment with imperialist war plans. The meaning of the settlement talk is simply that the near approach of war makes it necessary for imperialism successfully to conclude its attempt to break Republican resistance and secure Ireland as a war base, and that the statements of the Free State

Government show that, as far as it is concerned, the economic collapse of the Free State under its policy has made the time ripe for an imperialist victory.

On both sides of the Channel the way is being skillfully prepared for a surrender of the Free State to imperialist war plans. It is appropriate that the Labour Party *Daily Herald*, foremost propagandist of the [anti-] Hitler alliance, should here also be the most active spreader of confusion in the interests of the British warlords. The issue, according to the *Herald*, is simply Irish neutrality in the event of war.

The guarantee that, an Irish Republic once allowed, "the Irish people would use all their resources to see that no attack should come to Britain across Irish territory" has been repeatedly offered to the British Government by Mr. de Valera – and repeatedly and completely ignored. The guarantee in question now is not a guarantee of Irish neutrality in war – it is a proposal for an offensive and defensive alliance with Britain.

There can be no question of Irish neutrality while part of Ireland is garrisoned by British troops. And while the strategic positions of the Free State coast are in British hands. Only an independent Republic could have neutrality. The whole policy of British imperialism has been directed to preventing Ireland securing the right to neutrality in a war in which Britain is engaged.

Irish Republicans support the statement of de Valera that a free Ireland would not allow its territory to be used for an attack on Britain. They are no more friendly to the war plans of any other imperialist power than they are to those of Britain. But there can be no question of neutrality until Ireland is free. Any settlement made with Britain on the present political basis, involving, as it would, the identification of the Free State with British war interests, will be repudiated and fought not only by the Republican movement, but by everybody who wishes Ireland to escape the horror of participation in an imperialist war in which she has no interest.....

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## MEXICO'S SAN PATRICIOS AND SPAIN'S IRISH AND BRITISH INTERNATIONAL BRIGADERS HONOURED

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by Manus O'Riordan

In the brief space of a fortnight this Spring of 2010, three different commemorative events took place that each contained both Hispanic and Irish anti-imperialist reverberations: the release of the "San Patricio" CD on March 9, preceded by a Charlie Donnelly commemoration on February 27 and followed by a Jack Jones commemoration on March 13.

### REMEMBERING THE SAN PATRICIO BATTALION OF MEXICO

In April 1846 the USA invaded Mexico and waged a colonialist war of conquest to seize California and New Mexico. Appalled by what was being asked of them, a contingent of Irish conscripts deserted the U.S. Army and volunteered to fight in defence of Mexico under the banner of the San Patricio Battalion. Captured in battle, 48 of them were brutally put to death by the US military commander in September 1847. Their memory has, however, lived on as heroes of Mexico and, in their honour, the Mexican Army continues to have a San Patricio pipe band in its ranks. See [www.historyireland.com/volumes/volume5/issue4/features/](http://www.historyireland.com/volumes/volume5/issue4/features/)

[?id=113320](#) for "The Irish Soldiers of Mexico", by Michael F.X. Hogan, "History Ireland", Winter 1997.

In July 1998 my father Micheál O'Riordan, as an International Brigade veteran of the Spanish Anti-fascist War, was chosen to lead the European contingent of the US Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan that was acting in breach of the US blockade by bringing medical goods to Cuba. [See [www.siptu.ie/bulletin/pdf/cubareport.pdf](http://www.siptu.ie/bulletin/pdf/cubareport.pdf) †p14 and [www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,10884,en.html](http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,10884,en.html) re Ireland/Cuba] He travelled to Cuba via Spain and Mexico, and in the San Angel district of Mexico City, that July 20, he had an initial act of solidarity to perform - to place a bouquet of flowers at the San Patricio memorial, along with this dedication:

"Homage to the San Patricio Battalion – the heroic Irish who fought in defence of Mexico in 1847 – from an anti-fascist soldier of the Irish Connolly Column of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Brigade who fought in defence of the Spanish Republic in 1938 – and who today is an Irish caravanista fighting against the blockade of Cuba. Michael O'Riordan (aged 80), Dublin, Irlanda."

In 2005 Niamh Parsons, accompanied on the guitar by Graham Dunne, recorded a powerful tribute to the San Patricio Battalion, penned by the Cork songwriter Ron Kavana and entitled “The Men That God Made Mad”. At the annual general meeting of the International Brigade Memorial Trust held in Dublin’s Liberty Hall on October 15, 2005, they performed that song in honour of the four International Brigade veterans present – Bob Doyle, Micheál O’Riordan, Jack Jones and Jack Edwards. See [www.nme.com/video/id/FqBcSwk1yFo/search](http://www.nme.com/video/id/FqBcSwk1yFo/search) for their performance of this song on Basque Radio Euskadi on May 12, 2006 – 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the execution by the British Government of the Irish Socialist leader and Vice-President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic proclaimed by the 1916 Rising, James Connolly.

In his epic poem “The Ballad of the White Horse” G.K. Chesterton had written:

For the great Gaels of Ireland  
Are the men that God made mad,  
For all their wars are merry,  
And all their songs are sad.

But there was nothing merry about their wars, and Ron Kavana’s lyrics in honour of the San Patricios, provided an appropriate corrective:

Far, far from Clifden’s rocky shore o’er the broad Atlantic sea  
The Battalion of St. Patrick tired of harsh brutality.  
“No more abuse or bigotry!” their angry cry wholehearted.  
Near Matamoros lives were lost, that’s when the fighting started.

CHORUS:

Who were those men, what was their crime  
For which their lives were wasted?  
Did they rob or rape, or was their fate  
As the poet once related?  
Were those great Gaels of Ireland  
The men that God made mad?  
Their wars were never merry  
But all their songs were sad.

“Land of the Free” meant liberty to the U.S. Army’s Irish  
Till James K. Polk he sent them south to civilise the Spanish.  
In a war to extend slavery and unjust exploitation  
They’d not repeat what Cromwell did to their poor Irish Nation.

CHORUS

At l’Angustura, Irish blood drenched the sun-baked clay  
And Mexico still honours those brave men who died that day.  
But the worst was yet to come in the hour that war was ended  
When General Scott hung the Irishmen to celebrate with vengeance.

CHORUS:

Were those great Gaels of Ireland  
The men that God made mad?  
Their wars were never merry  
But all their songs were sad.

Now, in 2010, Paddy Moloney, founding leader of the world famous Irish folk ensemble the Chieftains – and previously the piper with the late Seán Ó Riada’s pioneering Ceoltoir Chualann - has teamed up with Ry Cooder of the USA to bring together a host of Mexican performers – including the San Patricio pipe band – for a unique album in honour of the Irish Battalion martyrs.

Simply entitled “San Patricio”, and launched on March 9, it carries the following observations by Paddy Moloney:

“To this day the story of the San Patricios is a little discussed and even less understood footnote in the greater panorama of American Westward expansion. During the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 Captain John Riley and a small battalion of soldiers abandoned their pasts and futures in the burgeoning United States of America and followed their conscience – or their fortune perhaps – across the Rio Grande to fight side by side with the Mexican army under the command of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana. Reviled by the Manifest Destiny minded America of the day as traitors and deserters, they have largely been forgotten in the retelling of history. But to generations of Mexicans and Irish they are remembered to this day as heroes who bravely fought against an unjust and thinly veiled war of aggression... The majority were Irishmen recently arrived in America. Driven from their homeland after years of oppressive occupation and the devastating effects of the Irish Potato Famine, pressed into military service by poverty and circumstance, they often found themselves obliged to serve under officers with the same English and Protestant leanings they had suffered under at home; mistreated and maligned as unwelcome and asked to fight in a war few understood... Ultimately for Mexico and the San Patricios it was a war of tragedy and great loss. After distinguishing themselves for skill and bravery in many hard-fought battles the battalion found themselves making their last stand at the fort of Churubusco alongside their embattled Mexican comrades. Knowing their fate would be sealed in defeat they fought on against the inevitable, some say captured only after their ammunition had been exhausted, refusing to surrender... court-martialed for treason and made to pay the final price on the gallows...”

See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6KnV7J1NBk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6KnV7J1NBk) for a wonderful video about this album and <http://concordmusicpress.com/releases/San-Patricio/> for associated text. As the Mexican Army’s San Patricio pipe band plays the stirring “March to Battle” composed by Paddy Moloney himself, the internationally renowned actor Liam Neeson [the title role in “Michael Collins” among his many film appearances] recites the following verses penned for the album by Brendan Graham:

We are the San Patricios, a brave and gallant band.  
There’ll be no white flag flying within this green command.  
We are the San Patricios, we have but one demand,  
To see the Yankees safely home across the Rio Grande.

But when at Churubusco we made our final stand,  
No court of justice did we have in the land of Uncle Sam.  
As traitors and deserters all, we will be shot or hanged  
Far from the green, green shamrock shore across the Rio Grande.

We’ve disappeared from history like footprints in the sand,  
And our song is in the tumbleweeds and our love is in this land .  
But if in the desert moonlight you see a ghostly band,  
We are the men who died for freedom across the Rio Grande.

## REMEMBERING CHARLIE DONNELLY, JAMES CONNOLLY UNIT, ABRAHAM LINCOLN BATTALION, 15<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE

Following the death in action at the battle of Jarama of Mick Kelly, commander of the James Connolly Unit, the Irish poet Charlie Donnelly briefly, if unofficially, assumed command, until he himself was killed in action on February 27, 1937. See [www.dfa.ie/uploads/documents/embassy/Madrid%20EM/charlie%20donnelly.pdf](http://www.dfa.ie/uploads/documents/embassy/Madrid%20EM/charlie%20donnelly.pdf) —for the address by the Irish ambassador to Spain, Justin Harman, at the unveiling of a Jarama

memorial to Charlie Donnelly on his 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, February 27, 2010. See [www.elpais.com/fotografia/madrid/Homenaje/poeta/brigadista/internacional/Charlie/Donnelly/elpfot/20100228elpmad\\_5/Ies/](http://www.elpais.com/fotografia/madrid/Homenaje/poeta/brigadista/internacional/Charlie/Donnelly/elpfot/20100228elpmad_5/Ies/) for a photo of that Jarama ceremony. See [www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-CollecteCD.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/ibvol-CollecteCD.htm) for more on Charlie Donnelly and [www.irelandscw.com/docs-Division.htm](http://www.irelandscw.com/docs-Division.htm) for how he came to be in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion.

## **JACK JAMES LARKIN JONES COMMEMORATION, MARCH 13, 2010**

For an account of International Brigader Jack Jones and fellow Liverpudlian veteran Jack Edwards singing along with James Connolly's "Rebel Song" in Catalunya to commemo-

rate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1916 Rising on Easter Sunday, 2006, see [www.siptu.ie/Resources/SIPTUPublications/ArchivedSIPTUPublications/Name.4047.en.html](http://www.siptu.ie/Resources/SIPTUPublications/ArchivedSIPTUPublications/Name.4047.en.html) and see [www.albavolunteer.org/2010/03/celebrating-the-life-of-jack-jones/](http://www.albavolunteer.org/2010/03/celebrating-the-life-of-jack-jones/) for the publication of my report on the March 13 Jack Jones commemoration in "The Volunteer". See also <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs071/1102805358929/archive/1103190210248.html> for its publication in "Liberty Online" [SIPTU], under the heading of "Connolly's 'Rebel Song' in Imperial War Museum". This report also has a photo of Micheál O'Riordan [1917-2006], Bob Doyle [1916-2009] and Jack Jones [1913-2009] outside Dublin's Liberty Hall at the IBMT agm on October 15, 2005 – the last weekend all three of these International Brigade veterans teamed up together. For an exposure of MI5 dirty tricks, see [www.atholbooks.org/jackjones\\_MI5.pdf](http://www.atholbooks.org/jackjones_MI5.pdf) to access my dossier on the British intelligence smear campaign against Jack Jones.

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## **US-Israel Relations: Tiff or Tipping Point?**

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**by David Morrison**

General David Petraeus is the head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), whose area of responsibility (AOR) stretches from Egypt to the borders of China, covering a large swathe of the Muslim world. As CENTCOM commander, General Petraeus is in overall command of US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

On 16 March 2010, he presented a report on CENTCOM activity to the US Senate Armed Services Committee [1]. In it, he listed a series of factors that "can serve as root causes of instability or as obstacles to security" in the CENTCOM area. First on the list is "insufficient progress toward a comprehensive Middle East peace", of which he wrote:

"The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the AOR. Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas."

General Petraeus made similar remarks in the equivalent report in April 2009, saying:

"The [Arab-Israeli] conflict has created a deep reservoir of anti-American sentiment, based on the perception of US favoritism for Israel." [2]

The clear message here is that the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians – and the US alliance with Israel – is detrimental to US relations with the Muslim world and generates support for al-Qaeda and similar groups, which threaten Americans, and American interests, at home and abroad. In other words, the US is acting contrary to its own interests by allying itself closely with Israel, while Israel has not made peace with the Palestinians and other Arab states.

### **A recruiting sergeant for al-Qaeda**

This conclusion by General Petraeus is rather obvious: an Israeli state in conflict with Palestinians is a recruiting sergeant for al-Qaeda. But it is rarely acknowledged publicly in the US. Instead, across the political spectrum, Israel is portrayed as the US's sole reliable ally in the Middle East in its "war on terror" against al-Qaeda and much else besides, a portrayal that Israel itself is at pains to accentuate.

Speaking to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington on 22 March 2010, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said that today Israel "is helping America stem the tide of militant Islam" [3]. In reality, Israel is enhancing "the tide of militant Islam" by adding to the anger in the Muslim world on which al-Qaeda thrives.

What benefit does the US get from its close relations with Israel, which costs it \$2.5 billion tax dollars a year? Unlike the Muslim world, Israel has no resources such as oil to which the US would like access on favourable terms. As regards population, Israel is tiny compared with the Muslim world – 7 million or so compared with upwards of 1.5 billion – so the scope for US trade and investment is much less. It makes no sense for the US to ally itself so closely with this tiny state and thereby alienate 1.5 billion people to such an extent that al-Qaeda profits and Americans are killed, the more so when Israel continues to add to the alienation by its ceaseless confiscation and colonisation of Palestinian land. Clearly, in its own interests, the US should apply whatever pressure is necessary to force Israel to make peace with the Palestinians by agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. Or, failing that, it should terminate its alliance with Israel – and save \$2.5 billion a year in tax dollars.

### **Obama's initiative**

When President Obama embarked on his Middle East initiative, shortly after his inauguration in January 2009, it looked as if he might be prepared to apply the necessary pressure to Israel.

First, he stated repeatedly that such a settlement was in the US "national security interest" [4], and so did George Mitchell [5], his Special Envoy to the Middle East. In other words, the US was

taking this initiative, not out of a passing concern for the plight of Palestinians, but in pursuit of concrete national interest. While he did not spell out the message as Petraeus has done that the ongoing conflict was making the world less safe for the US, that was the implication in the phrase “national security interest”.

Second, the initiative was accompanied by declarations by President Obama that he wished to improve US relations with the Muslim world, for example, in his speech in Cairo on 4 June 2009. A key element in that process had to be the US using its muscle to bring about a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, along the lines proposed by the Arab League in Beirut in March 2002 [6], and later endorsed by Muslim states in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. This Arab initiative envisages the creation of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and, in the event of a comprehensive settlement being reached, the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab state members of the League.

A settlement on the lines of this Arab initiative brought about by the US would do wonders for US relations with the Muslim world.

## Obama backs down

Initially, President Obama demanded that Israel freeze all settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, prior to the start of negotiations, as required by the Road Map. This fuelled expectations that this time a US president intended to stand up to Israel and force it to cease its confiscation and colonisation of the land which is supposed to belong to a Palestinian state at the end of the negotiations.

Both the President and his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, made unusually blunt demands of Israel that settlement building should cease. For example, on 27 May 2009, Hillary Clinton laid down the law in the following terms:

“With respect to settlements, the President was very clear when Prime Minister Netanyahu was here. He wants to see a stop to settlements – not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions. ... That is our position.” [7]

But, when Israel said no, the President capitulated and last September settled for an Israeli promise of “restraint” in settlement activity outside East Jerusalem lasting 10 months. That the US had backed down was bad enough; that, standing beside Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem on 31 October 2009, Hillary Clinton described this ill-defined “restraint” as “unprecedented” made matters worse [8]. In practice, the Israeli “restraint” has made no identifiable difference.

Hopes that had been raised had now been dashed and, understandably, the PLO refused to accede to US pressure to enter into negotiations with Israel. If the US was unwilling to force Israel to cease its confiscation and colonisation of Palestinian land even for a limited period, what hope was there that the US was going to force Israel to abandon its colonies on Palestinian land and withdraw to the 1967 borders so that a Palestinian state could be established?

## US condemns Israel

In March 2010, with the blessing of the Arab League, the PLO yielded to pressure and agreed to indirect talks with Israel, in which George Mitchell was to act as an intermediary. However, just as these talks were about to begin, it was announced on 9 March 2010 that 1,600 housing units were to be built at Ramat Shlomo in East Jerusalem.

The US vice-president, Joe Biden, who is proud to call himself

a Zionist, was in Israel at the time to launch the talks and reassure Israelis publicly of Washington’s “absolute, total, unvarnished commitment to Israel’s security”, to quote from his remarks as he stood beside Netanyahu on 8 March 2010 [9]. The announcement took Biden by surprise and a rare event occurred in US-Israel relations – the US uttered the word “condemn” in respect of an Israeli action. In a statement, Biden said:

“I condemn the decision by the government of Israel to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem. The substance and timing of the announcement, particularly with the launching of proximity talks, is precisely the kind of step that undermines the trust we need right now and runs counter to the constructive discussions that I’ve had here in Israel.” [10]

Why this action merited such unusually harsh words is not clear, since Israel had never agreed to exercise any “restraint” whatsoever in respect of settlement building in East Jerusalem. Apparently, Biden spoke extremely harshly to Netanyahu in private. An account of their conversation appeared in the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* on 11 March 2010, in an article headed *Biden: You’re Jeopardizing Regional Peace* [11]. Here’s an extract:

“While standing in front of the cameras, the US vice president made an effort to smile at Binyamin Netanyahu even after having learned on Tuesday [9 March] that the Interior Ministry had approved plans to build 1,600 housing units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo. But in closed conversations, Joe Biden took an entirely different tone. ...

“People who heard what Biden said were stunned. ‘This is starting to get dangerous for us’, Biden castigated his interlocutors. ‘What you’re doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. That endangers us and it endangers regional peace.’

“The vice president told his Israeli hosts that since many people in the Muslim world perceived a connection between Israel’s actions and US policy, any decision about construction that undermines Palestinian rights in East Jerusalem could have an impact on the personal safety of American troops fighting against Islamic terrorism.”

At the time of writing (6 April 2010), the dispute between the US and Israel is ongoing and there are no plans for negotiations to begin. The PLO has reverted to its original position that it will not enter into negotiations of any kind with Israel until it freezes all settlement activity, as required by the Road Map.

## East Jerusalem is “occupied” territory

In the interim, speaking to AIPAC in Washington on 22 March 2010, Netanyahu reasserted Israel’s absolute right to build Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem – on the grounds that Jews were building there 3,000 years ago [3].

Israel regards East Jerusalem as an integral part of its territory, having annexed it in 1967 shortly after occupying it by force. This annexation is in breach of Security Council resolutions 252, 267, 271, 298, 476 and 478 that demand its reversal.

East Jerusalem is therefore “occupied” territory, within the meaning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, like the rest of the West Bank, and Israel is the Occupying Power.

Building Jewish settlements there, and in the West Bank, is contrary to Article 49(6) of the Convention, which forbids an Occupying Power from transferring its citizens into the territory

it occupies. Nevertheless, Israel continues to build settlements despite Security Council demands in resolutions 446, 452 and 465 that it cease and remove the existing settlements.

At this time when Israel is refusing to freeze settlement activity as a prelude to negotiations, it is important to note that, if Israel complied with Security Council resolutions, as it is supposed to do as a UN member state, there would be no Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the latter would not be annexed to Israel.

### Gates on US national security interests

General Petraeus' political master, Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, was asked to comment on his remarks at a press conference on 25 March 2010. He responded:

"... the lack of progress toward a ... Middle East peace is clearly an issue that is exploited by our adversaries in the region and is a source of certainly political challenge. ... there is no question that the absence of Middle East peace does affect US national security interests in the region, in my view." [12]

Other US foreign policy specialists have been blunter in their assertion that a settlement in the Middle East is essential for US national security. Listen to this:

"Osama Bin Laden did not commission attacks in New York and Washington, DC to 'free Palestine'. Yet tens of millions of young men and women in the Arab world and the Muslim world beyond – the products of demographic 'youth bulges' in challenged economies – are targeted for recruitment by al-Qaeda and its affiliates partly on the basis of ongoing defeat, injustice and humiliation in the Arab-Israeli context. Some of these recruits have found their way to Iraq. Others no doubt await opportunities to strike at American interests and persons ... .

"... it is essential that the incoming administration make Arab-Israeli peace a high national security priority from the beginning. A comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace will not erase al-Qaeda. Yet it would help drain the swamp in which the disease thrives and mutates."

This is from a document entitled *A last chance for a two-state Israel-Palestine agreement* [13], addressed to the incoming Obama administration from a bipartisan group of ten former senior government officials, both Republican and Democrat.

These included Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisers to, respectively, President George HW Bush and President Jimmy Carter; Lee Hamilton, vice-chairman of the 9/11 Commission; and James Wolfensohn, former head of the World Bank and Tony Blair's predecessor as Special Envoy for the Middle East Quartet.

General Petraeus isn't a lone voice in saying that an Israeli state in conflict with Palestinians is a recruiting sergeant for al-Qaeda.

Since 9/11, protecting the US homeland, and US interests abroad, from al-Qaeda has been the major priority for the US. If bringing about a settlement in the Middle East comes to be seen as a means of reducing this threat, then it would be difficult for Israel and its supporters in the US to hold back a determined effort by the US to force Israel into allowing a Palestinian state to be set up.

We haven't reached this tipping point yet, but it is difficult to believe that the current dispute between the US and Israel is merely a tiff which will blow over and allow relations to resume on the same basis as before. And the awful truth is out: the US is acting contrary to its own interests by allying itself closely with

Israel, while Israel has not made peace with Palestinians and other Arab states.

### The *status quo* is not sustainable, says US

Another straw in the wind indicating a shift in US policy is the recent emphasis by the US administration that "the *status quo* is not sustainable" for demographic reasons. This has been a consistent line from the administration of late.

In a speech at Tel Aviv University on 11 March 2010, a couple of days after his "humiliation", vice-president Biden said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, the *status quo* is not sustainable.

"It's no secret the demographic realities make it increasingly difficult for Israel to remain both a Jewish homeland and a democratic country in the absence of the Palestinian state. ... For Israel, then, this is about both preserving your identity and achieving the security you deserve, lasting security." [14]

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that the US has spelt out publicly to Israel the uncomfortable message that it is impossible to have a Jewish state encompassing the whole of mandate Palestine – because Jews are in a minority in that area.

Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, reiterated this uncomfortable message in a speech to AIPAC on 22 March 2010:

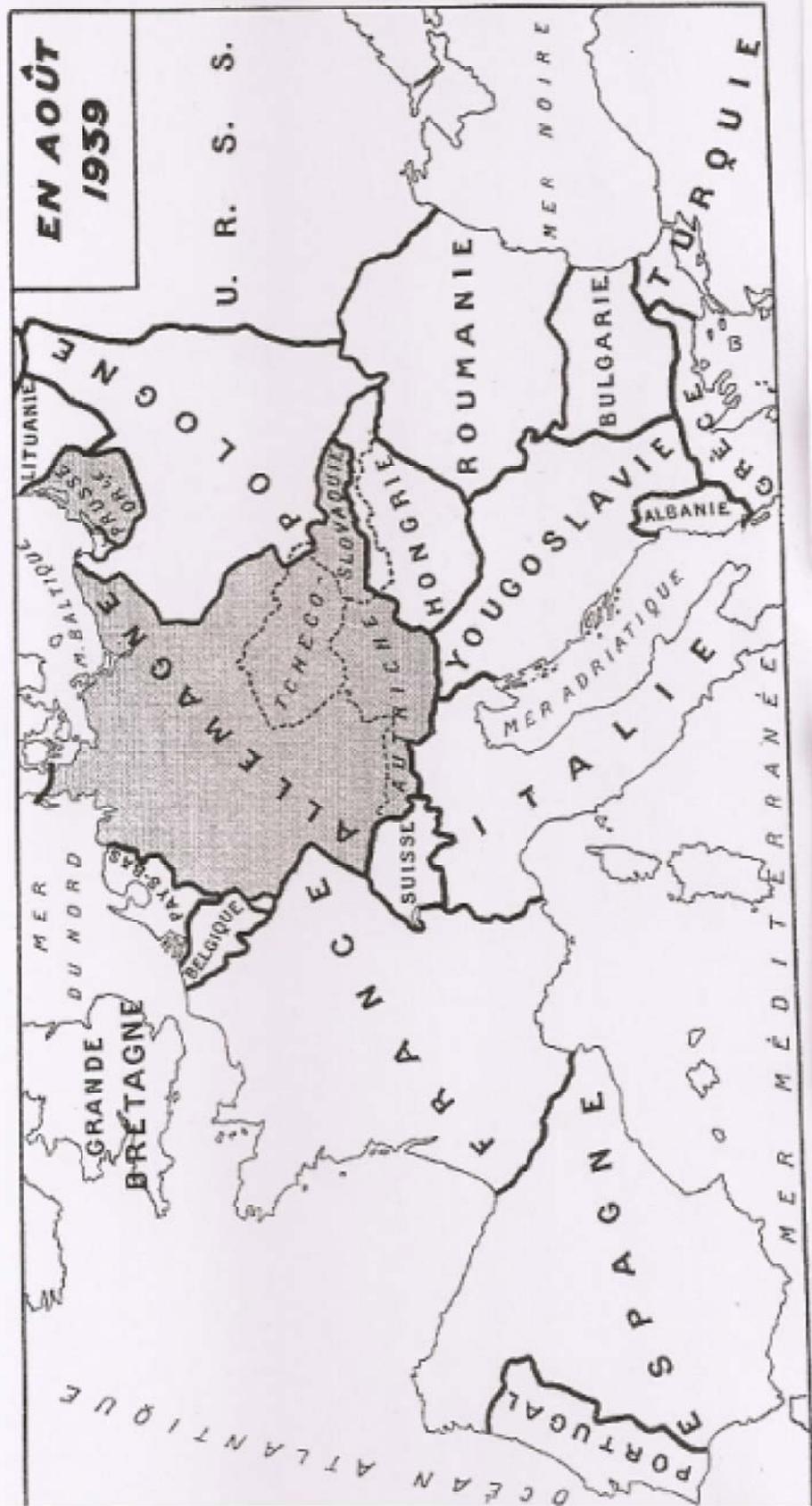
"... there is, I think, a belief among many that the *status quo* can be sustained. But the dynamics of demography, ideology, and technology make this impossible. First, we cannot ignore the long-term population trends that result from the Israeli occupation. As Defense Minister Barak and others have observed, the inexorable mathematics ... of demography are hastening the hour at which Israelis may have to choose between preserving their democracy and staying true to the dream of a Jewish homeland. Given this reality, a two-state solution is the only viable path for Israel to remain both a democracy and a Jewish state." [15]

That comes close to saying that Israel's claim to be a democracy is bogus, while it rules over millions of Palestinians in the occupied territories and these Palestinians are unrepresented in the Israeli institutions that govern them.

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A Quarter of a Century of Upheaval in Central Europe  
 Maps published in the popular illustrated magazine, *l'illustration*, of 16 September 1939

## OECD: Approving Israeli illegality?

by David Morrison

Israel is expected to be granted membership of the Organisation for European Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the near future, perhaps as early as next month (May 2010).

30 of the richest nations in the world are OECD members. Most of them are European, and include Ireland, but the US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and Turkey are also members. Membership has no significant economic advantage, but it would confer on Israel additional international legitimacy as a member of an exclusive club of nations – which is why Israel has been seeking membership for nearly 20 years.

Israel's accession to the OECD is set to go ahead even though Israel is in breach of the rules that the OECD applies for the presentation of national statistics - its statistics cover, not just the territory west of the Green Line that is internationally recognised as belonging to Israel, but also the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The OECD Committee on Statistics has acknowledged the breach, but is nevertheless recommending that Israel be admitted to membership.

This is revealed in a leaked OECD report, titled *Accession of Israel to the Organisation: Draft formal opinion of the Committee on Statistics* [1]. The OECD normally insists that members adhere to the UN-approved standard for the presentation of national accounts, 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA), but the leaked report states plainly that “to the extent that economic activity is measured according to a criterion of nationality, Israel's data is at variance with one of the basic concepts of the SNA” (paragraph 19). The data is at variance because it includes the economic activity of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, but not that of Palestinians.

### Approving illegality

Israel is unwilling to conform to the OECD rules for the presentation of national accounts, but nevertheless is being recommended for admission.

The accounts that the OECD bureaucracy deem acceptable include territory which Israel seized by force in 1967 and which is not recognised internationally as part of Israel. If Israel is allowed into the OECD on that basis, then the existing OECD members (all of whom must approve its admission) will be party to Israel's continuing illegal occupation and colonisation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 amounts to the acquisition of territory by force, which is contrary to the UN Charter. Israel has maintained this annexation in defiance of countless demands from the international community to reverse it, for example, in Security Council resolutions 252, 267, 271, 298, 476 and 478.

Likewise, Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981 and holds on to it in breach of Security Council resolution 497.

The OECD is happy for Israel to provide accounts that include these illegally acquired territories and also the Jewish settlements on other parts of the West Bank. These are in breach of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, which forbids an Occupying Power from transferring its citizens into the territory it occupies. Nevertheless, Israel continues to expand these settlements in defiance of Security Council resolutions 446, 452 and 465 demanding that it cease.

All this illegality will receive the seal of approval of OECD members, if Israel is admitted on this basis – in which case they will have no further grounds to complain about Israel building Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, because they will have accepted Israel's claim that all of Jerusalem is as much a part of Israel as Tel Aviv.

### OECD fundamental values

In December 2007, the OECD agreed a “roadmap” towards membership [2] with Israel. According to this, the OECD has “fundamental values” to which members must adhere. These include “a commitment to—pluralist democracy based on the rule of law and the respect of human rights”.

Israel has ruled over millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1967, without according them any democratic rights – only Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories can vote in Knesset elections. That demonstrates a 40-year record of contempt for democracy rather than a commitment to it and is akin to the voting system that operated in apartheid South Africa.

As for respecting human rights, Israel discriminates systematically against its Arab minority in a variety of ways, and has done so since the foundation of the state. In education, for example, a recent OECD report *Israeli Child Policy and Outcomes* [3] states:

“... government spending per child is much lower in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector. This financial gap is reflected in different ways: First and most directly, average spending per child in the Arab localities is estimated to be 36.8% lower than in Jewish localities.”

In employment, former Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, described the discrimination against Arabs as “deliberate and insufferable” in evidence to a parliamentary commission of inquiry on 11 November 2008 [4]. Clearly, Israel's internal policy towards its Arab minority is not guided by respect for the human rights that is a requirement for becoming an OECD member.

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## Review: *Le Monde Selon K.* by Pierre Péan (*The World According to K.*)

by John Martin

It can be quite depressing to observe how some journalists in Ireland delight in denigrating aspects of our history and culture. Defence of the Independence struggle is seen as being backward. We are urged to celebrate British imperialist traditions such as the “poppy”. And the willingness of some Irish people to accept baubles from the British Queen is considered a sign of our maturity.

It is tempting to conclude that this characteristic of self-loathing is a psychological condition. Perhaps it is. But it is noticeable that the neurosis fits in with a coherent Anglo-American view of the World. And unfortunately, as this book shows, this tendency is not confined to Ireland.

The “K” in the title of the book refers to Bernard Kouchner, who was – and may still be – one of the most popular politicians in France and is currently the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the government of Nicolas Sarkozy. The author’s opening scene is set in a restaurant in 2007. The diners are watching a television screen showing the rugby players of France and England arrive on the pitch of the Stade de France for the semi final of the World Cup. As the opening strains of *God Save the Queen* are heard, Kouchner jumps up from his seat and stands to attention with his right hand on his heart. To the astonishment of his fellow diners he resumes his seat when the *Marseillaise* begins.

From there the author traces Kouchner’s political engagement from the late 1960s to the present with particular emphasis on his record in recent years. As a young man in 1967 he volunteered for the Red Cross to relieve the suffering of the people of Biafra in their struggle for independence from Nigeria. This reviewer vaguely remembers pictures on collection boxes of the distended stomachs of starving Black babies from Biafra, and talk that Irish priests had become too involved. The sense I had as a child was that Irish priests had taken political sides and that this was frowned on by Rome. It was therefore interesting to read Péan’s description of this conflict with the perspective of 40 years.

Biafra wanted independence from the rest of Nigeria, but this was not just a local conflict. The secessionists occupied territory that was rich in oil reserves, which did not go unnoticed among powerful interests outside the country. Britain supported the Nigerian government against the secessionists because BP and various Anglo-Dutch multinationals, such as Shell and Unilever, were closely involved with the Nigerian government. The US and, curiously, the Soviet Union, which had a lucrative arms trade with Nigeria, also supported the central government.

Biafra was supported by Salazar’s Portugal, Franco’s Spain and de Gaulle’s France. These countries were fearful that a strong Nigerian State would undermine their ex-colonies. France also saw Biafran independence as a means of gaining a foothold on the region’s oil resources for her own Oil Company *Elf* at the expense of *Shell* and *BP*.

Another important element in the conflict was the fact that the central government was largely Muslim whereas the Biafrans were Catholic. This might explain why a young Irish boy in that more innocent time was under the impression that the Biafrans were on the side of the angels!

Along with other doctors in Biafra, Kouchner was tending to the wounded around the clock. The lack of medical resources

meant that such doctors had to make heart-breaking decisions as to who would be treated and who would not. Kouchner and his colleagues were frustrated by what they perceived as the bureaucracy of the Red Cross. All donations were routed through its head quarters in Geneva and from there it was decided which part of the world would benefit. De Gaulle attempted to short circuit this process by giving French State aid directly to the Red Cross in Biafra. In effect, he wanted to make the Red Cross an instrument of the French State.

Also many of the medical volunteers brought the situation in Biafra to the attention of the media. However, it was not just presented as a humanitarian catastrophe, but a conflict in which one side was good and the other side was evil. This was a completely different approach to that of the Red Cross, whose policy is to remain independent of political conflict. Arising from this philosophical difference *Médecins sans Frontières* was founded. This organisation has become associated with Kouchner, but he was just one among many people who founded the organisation. However, he acquired the habit of speaking on its behalf without consulting with the organisation. For this reason he was expelled and founded a new organisation called *Médecins du Monde* in 1980.

Kouchner’s experience in Biafra had a formative influence. His conclusion was that the distinction between humanitarian relief and political activism should be dissolved. But whereas in Biafra his actions had served the interests of the French State, all subsequent engagements have been in favour of US foreign policy.

Normally such a person could be dismissed as a “right winger” or “neo-con”, but Kouchner was a Communist in his youth. He has a long association with the French Socialist Party and was considered as a possible Presidential candidate for that party. His pro-American positions have been supported by French intellectuals such as Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksman. The author thinks that Kouchner - and not Sarkozy - is the real man of “*rupture*” in French politics. [*Rupture* = radical break, here break with traditional French positions in the world.]

Kouchner supported the first Gulf war in the early 1990s and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the 1990s he supported the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. The author exposes many of the lies that were told during that conflict. He quotes from Alia Izetbegovic, the leader of the Bosnian Muslim, who admitted that there were no extermination camps run by the Serbs. But Izetbegovic knew that such allegations would facilitate NATO bombardment. The author also refers to a US public relations firm and its role in the conflict. The spokesman for the firm was particularly proud that it had won the support of the American Jewish lobby against the Serbs. This required a degree of skill since the Bosnian Muslims had a strong fundamentalist element and the Croats were proud of their support for the Nazis during the Second World War.

Kouchner was High Commissioner of the UN and for a brief period had quasi-dictatorial powers in Kosovo. During his time there he denounced and exaggerated Serbian killing of Albanians, but took an extremely understanding view of Albanian atrocities against the Serbs. The author quotes him saying that

Albanian vengeance was an “antidote” to the ravages of war. Kouchner also was not too concerned about the trafficking of the organs of dead Serbs by the head of the Kosovar Government Hashim Thaci.

As the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kouchner has taken a close interest in Darfur. The situation there resembles that of Biafra in the late 1960s. The government of Sudan is Muslim and the secessionists are Christian. The country is also rich in oil reserves. But there the resemblance ends. In the case of Darfur, the US along with the Christian right in that country and Israel support the secessionists. Jacques Chirac was sceptical of American intervention in Africa, but Sarkozy and Kouchner are much less critical. Kouchner has accused the Sudanese government of genocide in Darfur. However, this has been contested by an International Commission, under the Italian Judge Antonio Cassese, which concluded that the Sudanese government was not conducting such a policy.

In June 2007 after the election of Sarkozy and the appointment of Kouchner as Minister for Foreign Affairs, the French organised an international conference on Darfur. Although Condoleezza Rice was invited, representatives of the Sudanese government and the African Union were not. China, which is a close ally of the Sudanese, was invited. Sudan supplies 7% of China’s oil needs. This reviewer thinks that China’s involvement in Africa provides a good “antidote” (to use a Kouchner word) to the activities of the Americans.

In 2008 the Americans had secret negotiations with the Sudanese government in Khartoum. By a strange “coincidence” after the talks had collapsed the International Court of Justice found the Sudanese regime of Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir guilty of “genocide”.

Kouchner has been the most bellicose of world politicians on Iran. He has made inflammatory comments such as “prepare for the worst”. He has also warned the Obama administration not to prolong negotiations with this country as Iran is only indulging in delaying tactics. The author suggests that the Americans must be bemused at the *volte-face* in French foreign policy. Under Chirac, France urged the Americans to remain negotiating with Iraq to avoid war, but under Sarkozy and Kouchner she has become more neo-con than the neo-cons of the Bush administration.

The author is particularly critical of Kouchner in relation to Rwanda. The French State under Mitterrand took a constructive role in this tragic country. It encouraged movement towards a power sharing democratic government. But such a development was destroyed following the shooting down by the minority Tutsi militia of an aeroplane carrying the Hutu Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi as well as French citizens. This sparked one of the most vicious civil wars in history, which culminated in the coming to power of the Tutsi leader Paul Kagame with the backing of the United States. Since coming to power the Rwandans started a war in Zaire leading to the deaths of between 4 and 5 million.

A few years ago a French judge found the Tutsi militia responsible for the shooting down of the plane. In response to this the Rwandan Government has accused the French State of complicity in genocide: an allegation which has no factual basis.

Incredibly, Kouchner has begun the process of restoring full diplomatic relations with Rwanda and since this book was published has co-operated with the Rwandan authorities in the arrest of the assassinated Hutu President’s wife, who is resident in France. The author considers that this restoring of relations shows complete contempt for French State policy and the integ-

riety of its judicial process. It is also yet more evidence of Kouchner’s propensity to abase the French State to American foreign policy.

Rwanda has accused the following French Statesmen of complicity in genocide: Francois Mitterrand, Dominique de Villepin, Edouard Balladur, Alain Juppé, Paul Dijoud and Hubert Védrine. These names do not have a political party in common, but all of them – unlike Kouchner - believed in an independent foreign policy.

The author refers to Kouchner’s own book on international affairs in which the latter recalls a conversation he had with Hubert Védrine (a foreign Minister in Lionel Jospin’s Government). Kouchner says:

“The right of interference in countries’ sovereignty is growing. International consciousness of the rights of man has developed a globalisation of energy.”

Védrine replied:

“I distrust this. Nations remain key, not the emotions of television viewers”.

Elsewhere, in the book Kouchner is quoted as saying:

“Today our ambition for the future is to strengthen our transatlantic partnership, not against the rest of the world but with it.”

Imperialism always has sweet sounding words to justify its actions!

This book suggests a profound philosophical difference between the world view of Kouchner and Sarkozy on the one hand and the more traditional independent line of de Gaulle and Mitterrand on the other. This division cuts across party lines and may be more significant than any other political division. If France continues to subordinate herself to the interests of the US, her influence in the world will inevitably diminish.

Irish readers will have no difficulty in identifying a similar division in the politics of this country. This book is highly recommended because it gives an invaluable French perspective, enabling the reader to place our own native variety of anti-nationalists in an international context.

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“To understand historical reality, it is sometimes necessary not to know the end of the story.” Pierre Vidal-Naquet

## The Fall of France, The Nazi Invasion of 1940

OUP 2003

By Julian Jackson, Professor of Modern History at Queen Mary and Westfield, University of London

### Review by Cathy Winch

This is a book about the military campaign of 1940 that led to the fall of France. You could almost read it in one sitting, except that you might need to stop every few pages to get over the surprises he presents the general reader, for example, that *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) is not the right word for what happened in 1940. He revises a lot of what is taken as fact about the period.

The French themselves have not written much about 1940, but more about its aftermath. After the war historians concentrated on the Resistance, later they wrote about Collaboration. Some military historians have written about the defeat but they are not considered part of mainstream history writing.

Official history strangely followed the Vichy regime in attributing blame; leaving aside who they blamed, it is the instinctive reaction 'there must be an explanation, there must be someone to blame' that clouded the thinking at the time and for a long time after, even to this day.

Jackson shows that you can always work backwards and interpret events preceding a catastrophe as causing the catastrophe. He asks us to imagine that France was beaten in 1914 (which in fact nearly happened); he then marshals facts about French society in the years leading up to 1914 and presents them in a way that shows how you could 'prove' that politicians of the time caused the defeat. He uses the same counterfactual method to imagine the defeat of Britain in 1940. He then lists politicians who supported alliance with Hitler to show how you could make a case that British society was so rotten that it could not resist Hitler. He thinks that in both examples the case is spurious, and therefore it is spurious too in the case of France in 1940.

French historians however followed the Vichy regime in attributing blame to the politicians of the Third Republic, like Blum and Daladier. [The Third Republic (1875-1940) was established after Napoleon III and the defeat of 1871.] In fact, under the shock of the defeat these politicians did accept the responsibility for the defeat and they did hand over the government of the nation to a man, Marshall Philippe Pétain, who had not been part of the political body of the 1930s, except as a diplomat, and who was associated with a minority right wing view of politics.

After the Armistice, Parliamentarians voted Pétain full powers to alter the Constitution. The 'left' secularist government of the thirties thought it had led the country to defeat. It was time for it to admit its responsibility and give the right wing the chance to put the country back on its feet. In reality, says Jackson, the defeat was a military collapse, and

"there was no need to invoke rottenness in the body politic" (p 167).

Politicians and Generals were put on trial by Vichy to account for their part in the defeat; by then, Blum and Daladier had recovered their senses and they defended themselves so effectively that the trial was abandoned after two months. General Gamelin, head of the Army in 1940, refused to speak throughout the trial. However, Blum and Daladier were not 'exonerated' after the war, when politics intervened to prevent clearing their names, and the responsibility of the Third Republic remained as given.

Jackson takes a step back from the question of blame and asks, what actually happened, and how did it happen?

The first part of the book is a military account of the German attack in May 1940.

The French army was taken by surprise in 1914, but then there was time to correct initial mistakes. In 1940, after the initial surprise, there was no time to correct the situation; the French army was like someone stunned by a punch who doesn't have the time to get back on his feet before the *coup de grâce* is administered.

The Allied strategy was for a long war accompanied by a blockade of Germany. The war to be fought in Belgian territory and on no account on French territory. The best French units were therefore in Belgium when the attack came through the French border.

The German army came in through the Ardennes forest; it was very difficult terrain, units of soldiers got thoroughly entangled with each other, there was a terrific jam and the Germans were extremely vulnerable for a time; French planes had observed this but their observation reports were not acted upon. The thick mass of Intelligence was like a fog the French were unable to see through. Reports of a possible German attack through Switzerland, for example, were given so much credence that substantial resources were employed to counter it.

The crossing of the Meuse with rubber dinghies and temporary bridges also exposed the Germans to enormous risk; Rommel actually led such a crossing of the Meuse; without his extraordinary example, the manoeuvre might not have worked.

Guderian led the army west then northwards, cutting off the best French units who had gone into Belgium and stretching German units away from the body of the German army; the result was described as resembling a turtle sticking its neck out very far and making itself very vulnerable. But the French High Command was unable to see what was happening and could not react speedily enough.

This was the working out of a plan that was predesigned but worked beyond expectations. Guderian exploited the situation. This is why it was not strictly a *Blitzkrieg* strategy.

"Blitzkrieg in fact emerged in a rather haphazard way from the experience of the French campaign, whose success surprised the Germans as much as the French. [...] The victory in France came about partly because the German High command temporarily lost control of the battle. The decisive moment in this process was Guderian's decision to move immediately westward on 14 May, the day after the Meuse crossing, wrenching the whole of the rest of the army along behind him." (p 215)

This is all explained in detail with lots of maps. Then Jackson compares the two armies. (Note that he does not compare the three armies, even though France and Britain were supposed to be fighting together. He mentions

"the simple fact that the British could only offer very limited help in the early stages. Ironside [Chief of the Imperial General Staff] commented on 17 May: I found that Greenwood was inclined to say 'these bloody gallant Allies'. I told him that we had depended upon the French army. That we had made no Army and that therefore it was not right to say 'these bloody Allies'. It was for them to say that of us." (p 214)

The French army had mobilised massively (over 2 million men) but it was badly prepared. There were too many reservists, both among soldiers and among officers. Jackson quotes Hitler who, in a letter to Mussolini on 25 May 1940, said that many French active units fought desperately, but

"the reserve units are for the most part obviously not equal to the impact of battle on morale." (p180)

Most units had never trained together. During the Phoney War mobilised units were disrupted more often than they were welded together: industrial workers were returned to their factories, armament factories in particular, where production had slowed with the mobilisation. This caused resentment among agricultural workers who remained at the front.

Equipment was insufficient and badly designed, for example in the case of tanks. French heavy tanks were solidly armoured and as a result required frequent refuelling, which was difficult to organise on the battlefield. Their main gun was placed on the body instead of on a turret, and the whole tank had to be manoeuvred to point the gun. On the other hand

"the French armaments industry was in many areas out-producing the German". (p 217).

The defeat was not a foregone conclusion. The German army was not entirely mechanised either:

"The truth is that the German army in 1940 was more dependent on horse-drawn transport than the French one. Only sixteen of the German army's 103 divisions were fully motorized; and each infantry division required between 4 000 and 6 000 horses to transport its supplies from the railhead to the troops". (p217)

The French people were not keen on the war in 1939; mobilised troops on their way to the front marched past acres of white crosses of the military cemeteries of the previous conflict, and through places with names like Chemin des Dames and Verdun. Their families and themselves in the case of the reservists remembered vividly the sufferings of WW1.

The Germans had also been at Verdun, obviously. The population of Germany was no more keen on war than the French. Jackson quotes reports by William Shirer and another observer in support of this idea, along with reports of the German security police between 1933 and 1939

"which suggested that the Germans were 'not in an aggressive warlike mood but full of resignation, fear of war and longing for peace'" p217.

The German High Command had not been impressed by the lack of fighting spirit demonstrated by certain units in Poland in 1939.

"It was for all these reasons that the German military leaders, even Guderian, saw the victory of 1940 as a 'miracle'." (p 219)

Jackson then has a chapter about the consequences of the defeat. The main consequence was that the war became a world war:

"The war that had broken out in September 1939 had not been a world war but a European conflict involving France, Britain, Germany, and (briefly) Poland. It is at least possible that if the Allies had succeeded in holding off the initial German attack, a stalemate might have ensued, resulting in some kind of negotiated peace. [...] The Fall of France, however, transformed the international balance of power, sucking other powers into the conflict until by the end of 1941 the war had become a truly global one." (p 236)

Italy and Japan, which had stood on the sidelines indecisive about which camp to join, joined the winning camp. Hitler was emboldened to try the *Blitzkrieg* in Russia.

Hitler allowed Britain to escape unscathed from its continental adventure, and to continue the war to defend itself and its empire. Hitler stopped his army 24 km south of Dunkirk, and the British Expeditionary Force of 200 000 men, which is all the British had committed to the Continent, was allowed to embark over ten days (26 May-4 June)—albeit under bombardment—and save the bulk of itself.

Why did Hitler do this? Jackson examines the idea that Hitler wanted to finish the war with the West and give Britain an opportunity to make peace. Jackson dismisses the idea, preferring to think that Hitler had cold feet; but what was there to have cold feet about? Where was the extra risk?

In fact the signing of a negotiated peace is what the French expected would happen and the reason why they could sign an armistice that among other things consigned their one and a half million prisoners to German POW camps until peace was signed with Britain.

The declaration of war by Britain, then France, in September 1939, was a response to the invasion of Poland by Hitler; yet as Jackson says clearly,

"There was never any intention of saving Poland, at least in the short term." (p 75)

So Britain made an empty gesture towards Poland, which led to the defeat of France which led to a World War.

Jackson does not draw the conclusion that Britain brought about the World War through its foreign policy.

He does not examine either the responsibility of the French government in its relations with Britain and Hitler in the thirties; French politicians could have resisted British pressure and stopped the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938. No wonder they felt responsible in 1940!

Historians should not look so much at social and economic factors in France as leading to the disaster, but at French foreign policy, and the influence of Britain on French foreign policy.

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## SIPTU MEETS MINISTER MARTIN ON CUBA

On March 11 a SIPTU delegation met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin to present him with a report of their visit to Cuba, to argue for a stronger Irish stand against the U.S. blockade and to advocate greater Irish – Cuban cooperation. See <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs071/1102805358929/archive/1103156564954.html#LETTER.BLOCK16†> for an account of this meeting, [www.siptu.ie/bulletin/pdf/cubareport.pdf](http://www.siptu.ie/bulletin/pdf/cubareport.pdf) for the SIPTU Cuba Report and [www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,10884,en.html](http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,10884,en.html) for the joint SIPTU/Cuban commemoration of James J. O'Kelly, the Fenian leader who had published an eyewitness account of Cuba's first War of Independence in 1874.

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## British war strategy, the SOE and the IRA

By Philip O'Connor

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was established in 1940 to support or create resistance movements in Europe and organise widespread “sabotage and subversion” as an extension of the British war effort. It was consciously outside and contrary to the “Rules of War” and was accompanied by military coups and sabotage raids organised by other branches of the secret services in pursuit of British war aims. The Anglo-German War of 1939-41 gave way in summer 1941 to a much wider and very different war, which, as a former leading operative of SOE described it, led to

“an upsurge of anti-Fascist resistance throughout Occupied Europe on a scale hitherto undreamed of by SOE.” (P.A. Wilkensen, J. Bright Ashley, 1993, p. 94)

At the peak of the war, according to its former commander, SOE consisted of about 10,000 personnel,

“but we were controlling as it were very large numbers of patriot forces; 16,000 perhaps in Denmark; 20,000 in Norway; 100,000 in France; 18,000 in Burma, and so on.” Gubbins, Sir Colin, 1974, p. 105)

### Unfortunate Irish inspiration

M.R.D. Foot – in WW2 a British intelligence officer involved in clandestine activities - was commissioned by Harold McMillan to write the official history of the SOE in France, and went on to write numerous books and articles on the subject. He delivered a lecture in Dublin in 1969 to the Military History Society on ‘Michel Collins and Irregular Warfare’. Present at the lecture – he subsequently noted – was

“an alarmingly large number of former participants [in the Anglo-Irish War] ... including Collins’ chief of staff in the Troubles, subsequently commander-in-chief of the Irish Army ...; three silent survivors of the ‘Twelve Apostles’; his personal bodyguard; and two former members of the detective division in Dublin Castle, who had doubled their official task by acting among his leading intelligence agents.”

Also present, though Foot does not mention it, was the British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, a former counter insurgency specialist and senior intelligence officer.

Foot said some interesting things, including that in 1914 the United Kingdom had been on “*the verge of civil war*” over Ulster, pre-empted at the last minute only by the Britain’s declaration of war on Germany. On the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-21 he expressed his admiration for the IRA as a sparsely resourced guerrilla movement, its underground state, and its intelligence-based insurrection.—

“Ireland,” he said, had become “a world model of how to conduct a successful insurrection against an occupying colonial power.”

He also stated:

“... the British drew an offensive as well as a defensive lesson from the Irish difficulties, learning how to stimulate resistance to an occupying army when engaged in another kind of anti-imperialist struggle themselves.”

Lessons (or personnel) from the “*goings-on in Ulster in 1913-14*” played no role in “*subversive British activity in the war of 1939*”, but:

“what Collins did in Dublin had a noticeable impact ... through two of his junior but intelligent opponents, [Major] J.C.F. Holland and [Major] C. McV. Gubbins... Both were profoundly impressed with the powerlessness of regular troops against the resolute gunmen who could rely on the local population not to give them away ... both saw the advantages, in economy of life and effectiveness of effort, of the Irish guerrilla they could not see. And both were determined that next time, if there had to be a next time, guerrilla should be used by the British instead of against them.”

Later at the War Office J.C.F. Holland undertook a special study of “*irregular warfare*” and was put in charge of the secret service unit set up to work on it in 1938, - “General Services (Research)” or GS(R). When offered the chance to pick an associate, he chose his old colleague Colin Gubbins. In early 1939, and building on their Irish experience, they proposed a comprehensive plan for an army of “*sabotage and subversion*” to operate outside the laws of war in taking on the enemy through flying columns, civic disobedience, the execution of traitors and enemy agents, explosions and intelligence. In 1940 they were tasked with establishing the Special Operations Executive (SOE), which General Gubbins later went on to command. Foot concluded:

“The Irish can thus claim that their resistance provided an originating impulse for resistance to tyrannies worse than any they had had to endure themselves.” (M.R.D. Foot, 1973, pp. 57-69.)

Foot, of course, may have been a man on a mission and may have had grounds to want to flatter such an impressive audience. 1969 was a year of intense British activity in Ireland. When the North erupted in August, Gilchrist, who had experience of postings in many trouble spots around the world, acted as a go between to the Foreign Office and Downing Street for Major Tom McDowell, himself a former British intelligence officer. McDowell wanted to place his newspaper, *The Irish Times*, under the direction of London, as its editor, Douglas Gageby, a former wartime Irish Army intelligence officer, was, according to McDowell, “... on Northern questions a renegade or white nigger.” (See John Martin, 2008.) But Foot – who knew personally many of those involved at the top of SOE – repeated his thesis of the Irish inspiration for the SOE in more depth in later publications, sometimes in even more emphatic terms. (E.g. M.R.D. Foot, 1981, p. 185.)

Foot’s views on this issue have come under attack. That post-war British military officials might have second thoughts about legitimizing a source of terrorism and insurgency like the SOE, as has been argued, for example, by military historian John Keegan, is hardly surprising. The IRA inspiration for SOE strategy is regularly played down in British accounts of SOE (Foot is an exception), and this is hardly surprising – Britain is not in the habit of announcing to the world that it learns anything much from Ireland. After fighting “insurgencies” for centuries, to be promoting and organising them, as they did in WW2, was a novelty. And, after the war, Britain was to return to its more accustomed role of wide scale counter-insurgency operations in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, Aden and elsewhere. Indeed, when SOE was dissolved on January 15, 1946, 260 of its key intelligence agents and various of its underground networks were moved to MI6 precisely for this purpose. (John Keegan, 2003.)

Eunan O’Halpin, “Bank of Ireland Chair of Contemporary Irish History at Trinity College Dublin”, writes extensively about

Ireland and British intelligence. In his most recent book, he decisively throws cold water on the notion of an IRA/Sinn Féin inspiration for SOE, or indeed the idea that Britain learned anything from its war in Ireland:

Few British military thinkers sought to draw wider lessons from the Irish War of Independence. A number of officers who were to make their names as intelligence or irregular warfare specialists, such as J.C.F. Holland of the War Office think-tank GS(R), which in 1939 developed into MI(R), Colin Gubbins of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Kenneth Strong, Eisenhower's chief of intelligence in 1944-5, had served in Ireland between 1919 and 1922 (Gubbins commanded the detachment which provided the field gun with which the Provisional Government troops shelled the Four Courts at the commencement of the Civil War, and was also in charge of the handover of the gun-carriage lent to the Irish to bear the remains of Michael Collins).

Undue emphasis has been placed on the importance for such officers of the experience of Irish rebellion and counter-insurgency. In 1969, M.R.D. Foot, the official historian of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in France, presented a celebrated lecture in Dublin on 'Michael Collins and Irregular Warfare'. Amongst his audience was the British Ambassador, Andrew Gilchrist, himself an old SOE hand, who thought the lecture brilliant. So too did Gilchrist's closest Irish friends, Colonel David Nelligan and Major-General Sean Collins-Powell, respectively Collins's 'spy in the Castle' in 1920 and 1921, and Collins's nephew. Gilchrist bemoaned the absence of a single politician from the ruling Fianna Fáil party at the lecture. But perhaps the Fianna Fáilers were right to doubt the weight of the speaker's argument, because a survey of inter-war British military thought and planning yields very few references to the intelligence, counter-insurgency, or irregular warfare lessons of the Irish campaign of 1919-21. (Eunan O'Halpin, 2008, pp. 26-7.)

O'Halpin's colleague, Keith Jeffery of Queen's University Belfast, who also specialises in British intelligence and has been appointed to head the team writing the official history of M16, drew the same lesson as O'Halpin, though twenty years earlier, with regard to the Irish "counter-insurgency":

Scarcely any lessons with regard to counter-insurgency campaigning generally were drawn from the Irish experience... M.R.D. Foot has, however, asserted that in the persons of J.C.F. Holland and C. Mv. Gubbins, both of whom had served in Ireland, the experience of that campaign was not entirely lost, at least in its contribution to SOE. (Keith Jeffery, (1987), no. 1, pp. 118-147.)

But he is not as cock sure as O'Halpin in dismissing this influence, and quotes one book used in staff colleges – Col. H. J. Simpson, *British Rule and Rebellion* (Edinburgh, 1937) – which described the "Sinn Féin campaign in Ireland in 1920-21" as the "one most skilfully managed by the other side". The main lesson Simpson drew was that

"It is better to win first and then give, as we did in South Africa, than do as we did in Ireland in 1921 and are doing now in Palestine." (Jeffery, 2006, pp. 32-53.)

(Although these seem to the present writer to be pretty clear "lessons", Jeffery gives a clue as to the political reasons why there was a reticence to talk too much about the "Irish experience" in 1930s Britain, the era of "appeasement" towards Ireland -:

"In the standard inter-war text on what is now called 'low intensity conflict', *Imperial Policing*, Sir Charles Gwynn 'thought it inadvisable to draw on experiences in Ireland, instructive from a military point of view as many of them were'..." (Jeffery, 1987)

## British war strategy in 1939

The beginnings of the SOE lay not in anti-fascist struggle but in British war planning of the 1930s.

British "appeasement" strategy in the 1930s was one which sought to come to terms with the weakening of the British Empire. It was first adopted towards Indian demands for Home Rule and then towards De Valera's Ireland. It was a policy which had few friends at the Foreign Office or the Imperial General Staff. Churchill was the most vociferous opponent of appeasement, particularly towards India. Another leading anti-appeaser was Leo Amery, a former Colonial Secretary and Governor of India. While disagreeing with Churchill's hard line on India, he supported him on Ireland. Amery had been a die-hard during the Irish War of Independence ("I had been opposed to Irish Home Rule from first to last"), (Leopold S. Amery, 1953, p. 245.) and opposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1938 as a sell out of imperial interests. The agreement settled the issue of Land Annuities and agreed a final British military withdrawal from the Irish Free State. Like Churchill, Amery was a supporter of Zionism as a project of British imperial expansion, despite expressing a dislike of Jews and recalling

"the great deal of shirking of conscription among Jews in the East End of London" in WW1. (Leopold S. Amery, 1953, p. 245.)

In 1919 Churchill had defended the anti-Jewish pogroms being committed by Deniken's 'White Army' in Russia and went on to denounce the Soviet Union as a "world wide communistic state under Jewish domination." He later championed Mussolini and Fascist Italy as a world bulwark against Soviet Russia, defended the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, the Japanese onslaught on China and Franco's rebellion in Spain. On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1937 he told the House of Commons:

"I will not pretend that if I had to choose between Communism and Nazism I would choose Communism." (See Manus O'Riordan, April 2010.)

The opposition of Churchill, Amery and others to the "appeasement" of Germany in allowing it to reverse the armament and territorial aspects of the Versailles Treaty was from the perspective of the weakening of British power, not because of any aversion to fascism. They equally opposed the "appeasement" of the Soviet Union.

Imperial circles in Britain, who had supported German rearmament – culminating in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 – as a counter-balance to France and a bulwark against Soviet Russia, moved in 1936 to a strategy of containment of Germany. As developed in that year by the Imperial General Staff, this strategy did not foresee large scale involvement in a land war, but instead, in the words of the Imperial General Staff, would start with

"weakening Germany and Italy by the exercise of economic pressure and by intensive propaganda, while at the same time building up our major strength until we can adopt an offensive strategy. Command of the sea would then confer freedom of choice in striking at the enemy's most vulnerable points."

Germany, which depended on imports of critical materials, would collapse through these measures. The doctrine of 'economic warfare', in addition to blockade, embraced the air bombing of industrial targets combined with "sabotage and psychological warfare". In pursuance of this strategy, armament investment in the 1930s was concentrated on Bomber Command and the Royal Navy, and the development of propaganda and subversion techniques. (David Stafford, 1980, pp. 10-11.)

Following the German absorption in February 1939 of the

Czech rump of Czechoslovakia (the Slovak part went on to establish a separate state and was not occupied), Britain was put on a war footing and activated the strategy of the Imperial General Staff. Partly to forestall an imminent Polish-German Axis, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1939 Britain (and France) declared a unilateral “Guarantee” to defend Poland in case of attack. The surprised Polish Foreign Minister, Jozef Beck, rushed to London and on 6<sup>th</sup> April and signed a military alliance of mutual assistance in case of attack by “a European power”, with a secret protocol defining this as Germany. A week later Britain followed this with similar unilateral guarantees to Romania and Greece, also thought to be dangerously on the verge of concluding co-operative agreements with Germany. Poland, which had rejected Soviet proposals for a common security agreement, now secure in its alliance with Britain stalled its talks with Germany. Up to the British guarantee Germany had sought an agreement with Poland over the matter of a link to its East Prussian province across the two-mile Polish corridor.

### The role of Poland in British strategy

When Britain and France issued their “Guarantee” to Poland, they had no intention of defending it. In fact, British military planners had already written it off. On the eve of Chamberlain’s announcement of the “Guarantee”, the Imperial General Staff in March 1939 concluded that in a Polish-German conflict, fighting would last two to three months and, while Germany would win, its army would suffer considerable losses and be severely depleted. This would put the French army at a major advantage over Germany and enable it to box it in. They assumed the British military would be unable to render any assistance to the Polish Army. Defending Poland was not the aim. Rather a German attack on it would act as the trigger for war to be executed against Germany until its destruction. In May 1939 the French and British high commands met and agreed a “long war strategy”. This foresaw Poland being left to its own devices. But in July 1939 the French Chief of Staff, General Gamelin, informed his British counterpart, Lord Gort:

“We have every interest in the war beginning in the East and becoming a general conflict only little by little. We will thus have the time necessary to put on a war footing all Franco-British Forces.” (Nicole Jordan, 1992, p. 294)

The massive French army would hold the western front while British military and diplomatic actions throughout the continent and at sea would slowly strangle Germany until it was weak enough for an offensive against it. The British Embassy and Military Mission in Poland were ordered to keep the Franco-British plan of May 1939 secret from the Poles. (Andrzej Peplonski et al, 2005, pp. 172-5.) While France and Britain would go to war over Poland, that country was in fact simply to be a *causis belli* for a continent wide war on Germany.

The combined strategy of naval blockade, aerial bombardment and sabotage/subversion was an offensive strategy that, in the words of a German historian,

“Presupposed and aimed at the expansion and prolonging of the war.” (Gerhard Schulze, 1982, p. 37.)

Avoiding a war with Germany through agreement over the “Polish Corridor” or seeking to contain or end it should it start formed no part of the strategy. It was in this context that the Soviet Union moved to secure its exclusion from the war for as long as that was feasible. On 27<sup>th</sup> August 1939, Germany and Soviet Russia signed a wide-ranging Non-Aggression Pact dividing eastern Europe into “spheres of influence” and committing the parties to extensive economic, political and military cooperation.

The role of Poland after its (presumed) defeat was to continue a harassing war of sabotage from the underground against Germany. To lay the groundwork for the underground war, Colin Gubbins of the secret planning unit of the War Office travelled to Romania and Poland in May 1939 – four months before the Polish war actually started - where, he later reported, he organised instruction in partisan and sabotage tactics in case of German occupation, and also tried to organise pre-emptive sabotage missions in Romania to break off oil supplies to Germany. He knew Poland well. Up to the change of British strategy in 1936 he had organised joint covert actions with Poland across the Polish border into Soviet Russia. In May 1939 a British Military Mission was established in Warsaw and the Poles were again assured in July that in case of a German attack

“the Government of His Majesty will provide immediate assistance on the ground, in the air and at sea.” (Peplonski, p. 174.)

In the event, following the German-Soviet Pact (27<sup>th</sup> August) and the German invasion on 1<sup>st</sup> September, the formal declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France on 3<sup>rd</sup> September was followed solely by the forceful implementation of the blockade already established in Britain’s war strategy. It prepared to move an expeditionary army to France and set about preparing the ground for warfare throughout Europe. In a farewell speech to Polish military leaders on 17<sup>th</sup> September – as the Red Army moved in to occupy eastern Poland up to the Curzon Line of 1921 - Gubbins, as instructed, solemnly promised the Poles that

“Britain would fight on until Poland was once more free and its territory restored.” (E.D.R. Harrison, 2000, no. 4, p. 1073.)

The Poles had believed that with their “Guarantee” they were poised for victory. They massed their army in the Poznan salient west of the Vistula believing that the promised French offensive in the west against the numerically inferior German army, combined with promised British bombing of Germany, would cause a German collapse and enable the Polish Army break through and march on Berlin. But nothing of the sort happened and in three weeks it was all over. When the Red Army occupied eastern Poland on 17<sup>th</sup> September under the terms of the Soviet-German Pact, the Poles pleaded for the west to declare war on the Soviet Union. Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, coolly responded that Britain had no obligation to do so under the “Guarantee”, which referred exclusively to Germany. (Quoted in Anita J. Prazmowska, 1995.)

### What Britain was fighting for

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, Britain and France launched a war of encirclement and blockade against Germany. France instituted a system of government by decree and banned and began to arrest members of the communist party. Before its defeat, Poland since the mid-thirties had been evolving rapidly towards a fascist state, with Government sponsored anti-semitic persecution. Until early 1940 Britain hoped to gain fascist Italy, Romania and Greece as allies, especially after Mussolini attacked the Soviet-German Pact as a betrayal of the “*principles of fascism*”. In 1939 Germany was a fascist state – it arguably became something different in the course of the “Second World War”. But in 1939 it was one fascist state among very many in Europe, some of which were allies of Britain. Germany’s anti-semitic laws and legal and economic squeezing of its Jewish population aimed at inducing their emigration (and a large proportion had emigrated by 1939) were not of themselves uniquely exceptional in Europe. Nor were they ever mentioned as a cause for war on the part of Britain and

France. The problem with Germany was not that it was fascist, or anti-semitic, but that it was Germany, and that it was resurgent. Of the myriad "independent states" that emerged in the backwash of the 1914-21 catastrophe, the Irish Free State was virtually alone in still being a parliamentary democracy in 1939. And virtually every state in Europe, from Spain to Lithuania, Hungary to Norway, Ireland to Romania, declared their neutrality following the opening of the Anglo-French war on Germany, presuming it to be a struggle between the powers to re-arrange the balance of power between them.

What Britain's public, propagandist, war aims should be – beyond its obvious imperial interests in defeating Germany – was briefly a matter of confusion to itself. The American author and historian, Lynne Olson, describes the agitation on this issue among Britain's ruling circles in the months following the defeat of Poland as follows:

"If Britain was not going to defend Poland, people wondered, why on earth were they still at war? Was there any other reason to continue this supposed conflict? If so, Chamberlain's government never said what it was, despite pleas from Commonwealth leaders and others to tell them what Britain's war aims were... "

There was an urgent need to define some noble war aims, as unease and industrial unrest were spreading rapidly in the population, with the communist interpretation of the war as another round of inter-imperialist juggling winning widespread sympathy:

When Lord Halifax asked Lord Cadogan what he thought Britain's war aims should be, Cadogan replied that he saw "*awful difficulties*" in anything that might be proposed.

"I suppose the cry is 'Abolish Hitlerism,'" Cadogan wrote in his diary. "But what if Hitler hands over to Goering? Meanwhile, what of the course of operations? What if Germany now sits tight? ... What do we do? Build up our armaments feverishly? What for? ... Time is on our side..."

Churchill was included in the government and remained a loyal supporter of Chamberlain until Amery engineered a reshuffling of the Government in May 1940. With Churchill, the British cause found its voice. In his first speech as First Lord of the Admiralty on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1939, Olson reports,

"he savaged Hitler 'and his group of wicked men, whose hands are stained with blood and soiled with corruption', and promised that Britain, as the 'defenders of civilisation and freedom,' would fight to the end." (Lybbe Olsen 2007, pp. 241-2, 263.)

It was 1914 all over again, with 'Hitlerism' replacing 'Prussianism', a new Great War of Good versus Evil.

## The Anglo-German war 1939-41

Under Churchill the strategy of the Imperial General Staff was not changed. Blockade, aerial bombardment and diversionary sabotage, subversion and raiding attacks ever widening the periphery of the war zone and engulfing state after state was pursued. The declared "neutrality" of states was regarded as immaterial. Germany had no plans beyond Poland and set about implementing its deal with Russia over spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, understood on the German side in economic terms. "Germanisation" and "ethnographical policy" focussed on transporting German minorities from East European countries "back to the Reich" or to occupied Poland. To deal with the Franco-British war against it, at the end of 1939 Hitler ordered plans be prepared to take on the French, whom he hoped to "knock out", conclude an armistice with them and then reach a peace with Britain. The military plan for attacking France developed in December 1939 included ignoring Belgian neutrality, but then so did the Anglo-French plans, which prepared for their

main battle with Germany to take place in Belgium.

In late 1939 Britain unleashed the naval war across the Atlantic Ocean, driving the much smaller German navy out of it, and began bombing German cities. By 1940, despite some spectacular successes by U-Boats, the German "blockade" of Britain amounted to twelve submarines in the North Atlantic. Britain and France considered intervening in the Finnish-Soviet war on the Finnish side, the British seeing it as an opportunity to strike into Sweden and halt ore supplies to Germany. The Finns, however, while accepting supplies of aid from France, did not want to be drawn into an ever expanding war strategy, and cut their losses by concluding a peace deal with Russia. Britain then decided on an audacious plan to mine Norwegian harbours and send raiding forces into Sweden bringing those countries into the war and completing the northern blockade against Germany. These plans were discovered by the Germans and precipitated a last minute and previously unplanned pre-emptive German occupation of Denmark and Norway.

British forces throughout the Empire backed up the blockade strategy by securing swathes of territories in Africa and Asia. After the German defeat of the Franco-British forces the French State signed an Armistice with Germany in June 1940. Britain simply rejected the legitimacy of the French agreement with Germany and proceeded to attack and sink much of the French fleet off the West African coast and to organise clandestine warfare in France in league with some French officers who refused to accept the defeat of the French state.

Despite the air war over Britain in summer 1940 there was no sense in British ruling circles of being on the point of defeat. Even while the "Battle of Britain" raged, military and underground operations were planned and executed in Abyssinia, the Mid East and the Balkans. It was widely believed in British government circles that the blockade would bring Germany to its knees. It secured massive economic and military aid from the American government and set about planning to bring the US into the war. In June 1940 Hugh Dalton, a Labour minister in the Churchill government, in his diary predicted that within six months Europe would be faced with

"famine, starvation and revolt, most of all in the slave lands which Germany had overrun"

and Sir Stephen King-Hall predicted in his newsletter that "in due course Field Marshall Famine may knock at Hitler's door."

George Orwell expressed similar sentiments and Harold Nicholson predicted starvation in Germany by 1941. (Stafford, p. 16)

Every step in the escalation of the war after the defeat of the armies of France and Britain was initiated by the British, who clung to the "long war" strategy, while Hitler persisted in his hopes of a peace with Britain and the preservation of the British Empire. In 1940 Britain's armies in North Africa inflicted defeats on the Italians, who had been busy trying to build a colonial niche for themselves there. In February 1941 Hitler felt obliged to send a diminutive force under Rommel to shore up his Italian ally and, to everyone's surprise, soon had the British in headlong retreat. As earlier with Scandinavia, Germany had no offensive plans with regard to the Balkans and, again as with Scandinavia, presumed their neutrality. Britain, however, supported an anti-German military coup and toppled the neutral Yugoslav government, and moved a large expeditionary force into Greece. British efforts at regime change in Romania were forestalled by military developments. Following the Yugoslav coup, the *Wehrmacht* turned south, rapidly occupying the Balkans and again ejecting the British armies.

## The SOE in the Anglo-German War

In 1938 Colonel J.C.F. Holland was appointed head of General Services (Research) – GS(R) – a section of the intelligence division of the War Office, tasked with researching and developing a comprehensive strategy for the war of subversion and sabotage foreseen in the planning of the Imperial General Staff for a renewed war on Germany. Holland, “*an enthusiast for guerrilla warfare since fighting the IRA in 1919-22*”, who also had experience in India and as an airman with T.E. Lawrence, and had studied “irregular warfare”, was brought in to head it. (Simon Anglim, 2005 pp. 631-653.) He recruited his old colleague, Col. Colin Gubbins, to assist him. Gubbins had served a year in Northern Russia in 1919 as adjutant to General Ironside’s expeditionary force sent to aid the anti-Bolshevik ‘White Army’ before being moved to Ireland in charge of an artillery unit. Gubbins described Holland as developing his theories of guerrilla warfare from his

“studies of Boer tactics in South Africa, of the Civil War in Spain, of the Sino-Japanese conflict and of his own experiences of the use made by the Irish of irregular troops during the ‘Troubles’”. (J. A. Ashley, 1971)

Exactly what Gubbins did in Ireland is unclear (beyond his formal posting as an artillery officer). His 250-page biography by close associates in intelligence, Peter Wilkenson and Jane Ashley, mentions in just a few lines the three years he spent in Ireland from November 1919. But, once there,

“he settled in to learn all he could about clandestine warfare and the intelligence without which it could not function.” (Wilkenson and Ashley, p. 26-7)

While he deeply disliked the forces opposing him in both Russia and Ireland, he was intrigued by the tactics of the IRA. Throughout the 1920-30s –

“his experiences in Ireland and North Russia making him an obvious candidate for intelligence”

– he was involved in covert anti-Soviet intelligence work both in eastern Europe and at the War Office.

The first product of Holland and Gubbins’ joint work at GS(R) was a proposal to the Imperial General Staff in May 1939 arguing that the German takeover of Czechoslovakia and diplomatic advances in the Balkans presented opportunities for

“an alternative method of defence ... to organised armed resistance ... based on experience we have had in India, Irak [sic], Ireland and Russia, i.e. the development of a combination of guerrilla and IRA tactics.”

In a later memo they argued that the lack of an indigenous resistance movement should not stop guerrilla activity being fostered pro-actively from the outside, perhaps initially against the wishes of the local population –

“Unless they arise spontaneously from within the countries concerned ... the organisation will have to be fostered from outside. This shouldn’t in the end prove impossible of achievement; the Irish revolt was largely fostered from the USA.” (Anglim, pp. 634-6.)

They proposed an organisation be established to direct and control a strategy of subversion in Europe. As M.R.D. Foot put it, Holland

“had conceived some such body as the SOE when in Ireland during the Troubles of the early 1920s.” (M.R.D. Foot, 1976, pp. 129)

Their proposals were enthusiastically received and they were immediately commissioned by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Lord Gort, to draft detailed manuals on guerrilla warfare. In mid-1939 – months before the start of the Polish war,

though in the context of the “long war” planned to commence with it - they delivered three handbooks –*The Art of Guerrilla Warfare*, *The Partisan Leader’s Handbook* and *How to Use High Explosives*. These set out the conditions for successful guerrilla war, including a supportive population, long-term strategies for making territories ungovernable, the development of underground quasi-government networks, the role of flying columns, the intelligence function of supportive populations, including especially women and children, the organising of small mobile groups and broader support networks, tactics in eliminating spies, informers and traitors, withstanding interrogation and torture, etc. The character, patriotic commitment, abilities and local popularity of partisan leaders, as well as efficient intelligence systems, are seen as the keys to success. (*The Art of Guerrilla Warfare* is available at [www.scribd.com/doc/12858042/The-Art-of-Guerrilla-Warfare](http://www.scribd.com/doc/12858042/The-Art-of-Guerrilla-Warfare))

These handbooks, which were distributed by the thousand in Europe, bear all the hallmarks – and shortcomings – of intelligent British understandings of what the IRA of 1919-21 was about. For example, they do not refer to how partisan movements are rooted in a political legitimacy – in the Irish case the 1918 elections and the IRA oath of loyalty to the elected D-til then under military onslaught by the British state. They also stay within the confines of British strategy, which foresaw such movements being tightly controlled from the outside by the greater strategy of the British military leadership and with British officers and trainers appointed to them. But they provide a detailed description of successful guerrilla warfare in nature more familiar from Ireland than Iraq or China. And reflect British counter-insurgency thinking from the 1919-21 war in how they describe probable counter-measures and also in the combination of underground warfare with ‘black’ and ‘white’ propaganda techniques. (See Brian P. Murphy 2006) M.R.D. Foot described *The Art of Guerrilla Warfare* as “*based on direct experience in Ireland and much reflection since*” and it is difficult to fault this assessment. (Foot, 1976, p. 137)

GS(R) organised the training of officers, operatives and agents in these techniques over the following months, and were also involved in some clandestine operations in Romania, Poland, the Balkans, Scandinavia and elsewhere, and planned partisan groups for the eventuality of an invasion of Britain itself, with Gubbins appointed to command them. Along with the naval blockade and the strategic bombing of Germany, implementing the planned “Irregular War” was a top priority of the British war strategy.

Gubbins and Holland were not the only officers with “Irish experience” to play a prominent role in intelligence and partisan tactics in the Second World War. Peter Hart, author of the now infamous *The IRA and its Enemies*, has expressed surprise that the British police chief in the Anglo-Irish war – General Hugh Tudor – chose as his Chief of Intelligence an artilleryman, the Anglo-Irish Colonel Ormonde de l’Epée Winter,

“who had no experience of intelligence or police work.” (Peter Hart 2002, p. 6 f.)

But Winter had risen to command a division in the Great War and Tudor himself came from the Royal Artillery, as did Gubbins. In fact it is surprising just how many British artillery officers serving in Ireland were involved in counter-insurgency/intelligence and propaganda roles and went on to play key roles in British intelligence operations in WW2. Col. Henry de Mountnorency, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat, was another artillery officer in WW1 who returned to Ireland as a bitter opponent of separatists and worked under Winter as the Intelligence Officer

of the Auxiliaries in County Westmeath. ('From Patriot to Spy' (Obituary), *The Irish Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1979). Dudley Wrangel Clarke was another one – in WW2 he was to be involved in setting up both the SAS and the Commandoes. Yet another was E.E. Mockler-Ferryman, Royal Artillery and intelligence, who rose in WW2 to intelligence chief in North Africa under Eisenhower and commander of SOE in North Western Europe. (Nicholas Rankin 2008, pp. 178 ff.)

Perhaps it was something to do with the uselessness of artillery in the situation the British found themselves in Ireland in 1919-21!

In July 1940, the Coalition Government headed by Churchill agreed the establishment of the Special Operations Executive. Josef Garlinski, an officer in the Polish underground Home Army and a close colleague of Gubbins in the war, wrote an account of matters in the 1960s. Reflecting on events in 1940 and the astounding cross-party unity constructed in Britain to secure "*survival and victory in yet another of Britain's wars*", he describes the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1940 when Churchill met with Ministers Anthony Eden and Hugh Dalton and announced his decision to launch a war of subversion and sabotage across Europe. Garlinski paraphrases Churchill from the surviving accounts:

"Precedents for this type of fighting were not lacking. Although it was centuries since Britain had had to resort to underground methods in their own country, they had had much to do with such movements in the course of battling to maintain their empire. One had only to remember the Sinn Fein organization which for years harried British troops in Ireland. If Britain, which was still free and at war, extended a hand to the conquered but subdued peoples of Europe, German troops and authorities could be effectively attacked by unseen enemies... Sabotage, propaganda, attack [sic] on the lives of key officials, the disruption of work and industry and a general stirring up of the occupied countries – such were the purposes for which it was proposed to set up a far reaching organization." (Josef Garlinski, 1969, p. 21.)

Churchill added, however, that such activities could not be left to local control, or

"isolated from what the [British] government and armed forces are doing. The secret operations must fit into the general military picture, and you must keep the Services informed of your plans in general terms."

After Churchill had outlined his plan at the meeting, Dalton asked :

"So, we are to go to work everywhere and with all available means",

to which Churchill responded,

"Set Europe ablaze!" (Churchill's comment is recorded in Dalton's diary. Entry for 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1940, p. 62.)

Dalton, the Labour Party "Minister for Economic Warfare", includes in his memoirs a letter he wrote that day to Halifax, the Foreign Minister, describing the "*war from within*" which he was now tasked with overseeing:

"We must organize movements in enemy occupied territory, comparable to the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, to the Chinese guerrillas now operating against Japan, to the Spanish Irregulars who played a notable part in Wellington's campaign or – one might as well admit it - to the organizations which the Nazis themselves developed so remarkably in almost every country in the world. We must use many different methods, including industrial and military sabotage, labour agitation and strikes, continuous propaganda, terrorist acts against traitors and German leaders, boycotts and riots ..." (Hugh Dalton, 1957, p. 368)

Following a long memo from Dalton, in August 1940 the plans were systematised for the SOE to "*co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage*" in German occupied areas, though controlled

"in step with the general [British] strategic conduct of the war." (Sir Colin Gubbins, 1974, pp. 74 ff. 'SOE Charter', quoted in Stafford, 1980, p. 26.)

Dalton imbued the strategy with left wing purpose, seeing it as the start of a "people's war" and believing, probably correctly, that Churchill had selected him to oversee the SOE because of the labour movement's left-wing connections in Europe.

But, during the course of the Anglo-German War, the strategy did not have much success. In September 1940 a British intelligence assessment of the potential for resistance was highly negative, particularly regarding France, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, where for the emergence of resistance movements beyond circles of former officers,

"much would depend on the policy adopted by the Germans in the occupied areas." ('Probable state of readiness and ability of certain countries to rise against the Nazi régime', report by MI(R) to the Chief of Staff Review of Future Strategy, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1940, reproduced in Stafford, 1980, pp. 213 ff.)

Countries found themselves occupied as a consequence of the cascading of events and believed – and, apart from Poland, and later Serbia, were initially treated – as though this was a temporary affair arising from a temporary power conflict between England and Germany. The great "Partisan War" for which the British secret services had planned was simply not happening, and British subversion activities virtually nowhere went beyond organising sabotage activities with underground groups of former military and intelligence circles in defeated states. During this period the sabotage function was developed through other special forces, such as the Special Air Services Regiment (SAS) and the Commandoes – so-called by their South African born commander after the raiding Boer Commandoes he had fought forty years previously.

According to Peter Wilkinson, a leading figure in SOE, and later biographer of Gubbins:

"The truth was that ... SOE had become the victim of a widely held fallacy that Occupied Europe was smouldering with resistance to the Nazis and ready to erupt if given the slightest support or encouragement. In reality, in these early days, most people in occupied Europe were still stunned by defeat and, except for a few ardent patriots, asked for nothing but to be left in peace. Compared with the horrors of invasion, the German Occupation, though disagreeable and humiliating, was as yet by no means intolerable, and most people were content for the time being to remain neutral, if only to survive." (Wilkenson, Ashley, p. 79)

As Colin Gubbins, the covert operations specialist who largely constructed the SOE, put it in 1940

"we may be able to provide for the T.E. Lawrences, we have also to find the Faisels and provide them with opportunities." (Ibid., p. 36)

## The anti-fascist War 1941-5

Britain's reckless war strategy since 1939 had resulted by June 1941 in German military control of much of Europe, though some countries preserved their neutrality and others had joined the German side. The Germans had never planned for anything of the sort to happen. Intoxicated by how things had transpired through the effects of the British "long war" strategy in engulfing the continent in the Anglo-German conflict, the Germans proclaimed a 'New Order' in Europe, one led by the Germanic race. German occupation regimes shifted in character in 1941 from the

temporary military ones of a 1940 to more long-term colonial-type systems. The course of events radicalised the German fascist regime and led to the ascendancy of the ideology of the SS-Police element which was rapidly expanded from a fringe existence into an all-embracing force for policing the occupied territories. Germany also now planned to attack and destroy the Soviet Union, an idea inconceivable a year previously. And the attack on Soviet Russia as a racial war unleashed many other things, including finally the Holocaust, also inconceivable a year previously.

When Stalin called in his famous radio speech of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1941 for the formation of partisan armies and a relentless war against the German invader, a struggle for the liberation of Europe from German fascist domination, the response was

“an upsurge of anti-Fascist resistance throughout Occupied Europe on a scale hitherto undreamed of by SOE.” (Ibid., p. 94)

### The SOE and Ireland

The anti-fascist movement in Ireland largely rejected taking sides in the Anglo-German war of 1939-41. For many the invasion of the Soviet Union changed all that, while for others it was the emergence of mass resistance movements that led to a change. An account from Irish anti-fascist circles reflects what was happening throughout Europe:

“For other Irish anti-fascists it was the emergence of Resistance movements across the Nazi-occupied countries of Europe that had begun to change the character of the War into an anti-fascist one some months before Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union. This was the position of Michael Lehane, three times a volunteer in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War of 1936-39, and as many times wounded. As he wrote to his now-interned comrade-in-arms of the Spanish War, Michael O’Riordan, he was convinced that Hitler had to be stopped. Since he could never put on the uniform of British Imperialism, however, he would serve in the Norwegian Merchant Navy. And it was as such an anti-Imperialist anti-Fascist that Lehane gave his life when torpedoed by a Nazi submarine on March 11, 1943.” (Manus O’Riordan, April 2010)

Similar emotional and political tensions were to plague the Resistance movements in Europe in their relations with SOE, and it is right for this article that active veterans of the IRA be quoted to express it. For, despite the Imperialist purposes for which it was founded in 1940, when the war developed its anti-fascist character the role of the SOE was to become indispensable in the development and supplying of the European Resistance. There were certainly problems in this regard in Asia, where in many countries nationalist liberation forces had no desire to replace the Japanese with a return of British colonialism. It was only in 1945 that the popular forces in Burma, under the influence of the communists, decided finally to join the anti-fascist war. In the context of lacking resistance, the SOE in Asia often retained the character it had had in Europe during the Anglo-German War, simulating resistance and sabotage operations in the absence of indigenous ones, or reduced to commando-style raiding missions.

In the anti-fascist war that spread across Europe in 1941, the partisan strategies developed by Holland and Gubbins on the basis of their Irish experience as seen through the blinkers of the British intelligence officers – in their own words “*a combination of guerrilla and IRA tactics*” – finally came in to their own.

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## Upheaval in Central Europe in a quarter of a century.

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Maps published in a French popular illustrated magazine, *l’Illustration*, on 16 September 1939 (see centre pages).

### August 1919

The Versailles Treaty stripped from Germany one-tenth of her people and one eighth of her territory; the country was split in two and Danzig separated from East Prussia.

Under the treaties of St Germain and Trianon the Austro-Hungarian Empire

“was cut into pieces to be distributed to the nations that had supported the Allies. Northern provinces went to the new Poland. Czecho-Slovakia, [...] was ceded rule over three and a half million ethnic Germans, three million Slovaks, one million Hungarians, 500 000 Ruthenes and 150 000 Poles.” Austrian South Tyrol was given to Italy, less territory than had been promised in secret treaties.

“Germans were handed over to Denmark, Belgium, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania without their consent. Plebiscites were granted to peoples who wished to break free of German rule. But in Alsace, Lorraine, Danzig, the

Corridor, Memel, Bohemia, and South Tyrol, Germans were denied any plebiscite or voice in choosing the nation to which they wished to belong. p 93

Rumania doubled in size, “acquiring Transylvania and the eastern Banat from Hungary, Bessarabia from Russia, northern Dobruja from Bulgaria, and Bukovina from the dismantled Habsburg Empire.”

Austria and Hungary were made into small countries. Hungary was reduced by two thirds.

“Three million Hungarians had been force-marched into new nations.” P 93

The result of the carve up was that

“...the new born nations baptized at Paris, ...were almost as multiethnic as the Habsburg Empire.” P94

Quotations from Patrick Buchanan *Churchill, Hitler and the Unnecessary War* 2008.

August 1939

Hungary regained some of her territory after German border changes, not all annexations, contrary to what the map shows.

[In the debate on the Treaty of Lausanne, T.P. O'Connor, one of the last remaining Redmondite MPs left in the British House of Commons, made an impassioned plea on behalf of the establishment of an Armenian State in Anatolia, which had been abandoned in the Treaty signed by the British Empire with the Turks.

The bulk of O'Connor's speech is taken up with quotations expressing support for the Armenians during the war and detailing the betrayal of the Armenians by the same Western Powers after it. However, the following sections in which O'Connor credits the Armenians with having played a vital role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, despite attempts by the Turks to gain their loyalty, is interesting in relation to the matter of context:]

### T.P. O'Connor's speech in the House of Commons

"Perhaps I ought to apologise to the House for turning from the subject now under discussion to an altogether different topic ... Some of our best hopes of the rescue of the Armenians have been falsified by the events at Lausanne. What are the facts? My charge against the world, against the Christian countries of the world, America included, is that the story of the treatment of the Armenians culminated practically in their desertion at Lausanne. It is a tale of perfidy.

Let us trace what happened to the Armenians during the War. Turkey was in a tight place. She made every effort to obtain the support, or at least the quiescence, of the Armenians. She offered them autonomy when assembled at a National Congress in 1914. She applied the condition that the Armenians should join Turkey in carrying on the War against the Allies. The offer of autonomy was, of course, very attractive, but the Armenians declined to accept it. The result—and they must have anticipated it—of the refusal of the Armenians to fight for the Turks and against the Allies, ourselves included, was the greatest and the most systematic massacre of the Armenians even in their bloodstained history. Two-thirds of the population of the Armenians in Asia

Minor were destroyed—about 700,000 people in all, men, women, and children. There were a great many Armenians under the dominion of Russia, who, with all her faults (and she had many faults under the late Czarist system), at least preserved the property and lives of her Armenian subjects.

An effort was again made by Turkey to win the Armenians to their side, and they proposed to the Armenians that they should help to create an insurrection in the Caucasus, which, of course, would have been a tremendous weakening of the Russian front. Not only did the Armenians refuse this insidious offer, but they actually sent 200,000 Armenian soldiers to fight the battle of Russia, then one of our Allies, and it was their splendid resistance, when the Russian army broke down, to the Turks in the Caucasus which helped us finally to win the War. I believe I am right in saying that nearly 200,000 Armenian soldiers lost their lives fighting for the Allies during the War. If it makes no appeal to our humanity, I think that enormous sacrifice in face of immense temptations gives the Armenians a supreme right to our gratitude ...

Armenia has the sympathy, at least the lip sympathy, of every country in the world. I was in America for 13 months during the War, and I knew no sentiment which appealed more forcibly and which got more assistance from the American people than that of the Armenians. There was not a little Sunday school up and down that immense country where the little boys and girls did not carry round their subscription lists every week to get money to relieve the Armenians ...

How has it all ended? They ask for a national home. Is that an unnatural request? Those parts of Asia Minor were in the hands of the Armenians centuries before the Turks invaded Asia Minor ... The Armenians have been a cultured and civilised race for centuries. Every one of them to-day could become prosperous and safe on the one condition that they foreswore the gospel of Christ and took up the Crescent. I am proud to have lived still to say a word for the protection of this noble, this fine race." (House of Commons Debates, 28 March 1923, vol. 162 cc630-43)

### A forthcoming genocide.

[Genocides that lie in the past are discussed much more than genocides that are in the process of happening. But if you only complain about genocides once it is too late to do anything about them and if you do nothing to stop new ones that could be averted, how serious are you?

In India now ancient societies are under threat of destruction.

Minerals lie under forested hills in India, where people have lived for centuries. Exploiting the minerals means taking over the peoples' land and destroying their villages, way of life and religion, which are inseparable from the land. Even if the villagers survive the expulsions, they will be destroyed as a people.

This will be a successful genocide. The Indian state has given permission for private exploitation to go ahead. The State has declared that the Maoists, who are defending the tribal people, are now the 'gravest internal security threat' in India. When the struggle against the genocide is reported in the media, if it is, it won't be described as such; we will hear instead about the rebel Maoists causing unrest.

In the following article, the Indian novelist Arundathi Roy says that everyone knows that developed countries have taken away peoples' land and existence in order to exploit resources:

"If the flat-topped hills are destroyed, the forests that clothe them will be destroyed, too. So will the rivers and streams that flow out of them and irrigate the plains below. So will the Dongria Kondh. So will the hundreds of thousands of tribal people who live in the forested heart of India, and whose homeland is similarly under attack.

In our smoky, crowded cities, some people say, 'So what? Someone has to pay the price of progress.' Some even say, 'Let's face it, these are people whose time has come. Look at any developed country – Europe, the US, Australia – they all have a 'past.' Indeed they do. So why shouldn't 'we'?"

By not calling the extermination of the original populations of America, Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania genocides, we help bring about the further destruction of irreplaceable societies: if Western developed countries can commit successful genocides and still assume moral leadership in the world, what's to stop others? C.W.]

## Indian Rebels and Developers by Arundathi Roy

The heart of India is under attack

To justify enforcing a corporate land grab, the state needs an enemy – and it has chosen the Maoists.

from: guardian.co.uk, Friday 30 October 2009

The low, flat-topped hills of south Orissa have been home to the Dongria Kondh long before there was a country called India or a state called Orissa. The hills watched over the Kondh. The Kondh watched over the hills and worshipped them as living deities. Now these hills have been sold for the bauxite they contain. For the Kondh it's as though god had been sold. They ask how much god would go for if the god were Ram or Allah or Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the Kondh are supposed to be grateful that their Niyamgiri hill, home to their Niyam Raja, God of Universal Law, has been sold to a company with a name like Vedanta (the branch of Hindu philosophy that teaches the Ultimate Nature of Knowledge). It's one of the biggest mining corporations in the world and is owned by Anil Agarwal, the Indian billionaire who lives in London in a mansion that once belonged to the Shah of Iran. Vedanta is only one of the many multinational corporations closing in on Orissa.

If the flat-topped hills are destroyed, the forests that clothe them will be destroyed, too. So will the rivers and streams that flow out of them and irrigate the plains below. So will the Dongria Kondh. So will the hundreds of thousands of tribal people who live in the forested heart of India, and whose homeland is similarly under attack.

In our smoky, crowded cities, some people say, 'So what? Someone has to pay the price of progress.' Some even say, 'Let's face it, these are people whose time has come. Look at any developed country – Europe, the US, Australia – they all have a 'past'. Indeed they do. So why shouldn't 'we'?

In keeping with this line of thought, the government has announced Operation Green Hunt, a war purportedly against the 'Maoist' rebels headquartered in the jungles of central India. Of course, the Maoists are by no means the only ones rebelling. There is a whole spectrum of struggles all over the country that people are engaged in – the landless, the Dalits, the homeless, workers, peasants, weavers. They're pitted against a juggernaut of injustices, including policies that allow a wholesale corporate takeover of people's land and resources. However, it is the Maoists that the government has singled out as being the biggest threat.

Two years ago, when things were nowhere near as bad as they are now, the prime minister described the Maoists as the 'single largest internal security threat' to the country. This will probably go down as the most popular and often repeated thing he ever said. For some reason, the comment he made on 6 January, 2009, at a meeting of state chief ministers, when he described the Maoists as having only 'modest capabilities', doesn't seem to have had the same raw appeal. He revealed his government's real concern on 18 June, 2009, when he told parliament: 'If left-wing extremism continues to flourish in parts which have natural resources of minerals, the climate for investment would certainly be affected.'

Who are the Maoists? They are members of the banned Communist party of India (Maoist) – CPI (Maoist) – one of the

several descendants of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), which led the 1969 Naxalite uprising and was subsequently liquidated by the Indian government. The Maoists believe that the innate, structural inequality of Indian society can only be redressed by the violent overthrow of the Indian state. In its earlier avatars as the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Jharkhand and Bihar, and the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh, the Maoists had tremendous popular support. (When the ban on them was briefly lifted in 2004, 1.5 million people attended their rally in Warangal.)

But eventually their intercession in Andhra Pradesh ended badly. They left a violent legacy that turned some of their staunchest supporters into harsh critics. After a paroxysm of killing and counter-killing by the Andhra police as well as the Maoists, the PWG was decimated. Those who managed to survive fled Andhra Pradesh into neighbouring Chhattisgarh. There, deep in the heart of the forest, they joined colleagues who had already been working there for decades.

Not many 'outsiders' have any first-hand experience of the real nature of the Maoist movement in the forest. A recent interview with one of its top leaders, Comrade Ganapathy, in Open magazine, didn't do much to change the minds of those who view the Maoists as a party with an unforgiving, totalitarian vision, which countenances no dissent whatsoever. Comrade Ganapathy said nothing that would persuade people that, were the Maoists ever to come to power, they would be equipped to properly address the almost insane diversity of India's caste-ridden society. His casual approval of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka was enough to send a shiver down even the most sympathetic of spines, not just because of the brutal ways in which the LTTE chose to wage its war, but also because of the cataclysmic tragedy that has befallen the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, who it claimed to represent, and for whom it surely must take some responsibility.

Right now in central India, the Maoists' guerrilla army is made up almost entirely of desperately poor tribal people living in conditions of such chronic hunger that it verges on famine of the kind we only associate with sub-Saharan Africa. They are people who, even after 60 years of India's so-called independence, have not had access to education, healthcare or legal redress. They are people who have been mercilessly exploited for decades, consistently cheated by small businessmen and moneylenders, the women raped as a matter of right by police and forest department personnel. Their journey back to a semblance of dignity is due in large part to the Maoist cadre who have lived and worked and fought by their side for decades.

If the tribals have taken up arms, they have done so because a government which has given them nothing but violence and neglect now wants to snatch away the last thing they have – their land. Clearly, they do not believe the government when it says it only wants to 'develop' their region. Clearly, they do not believe that the roads as wide and flat as aircraft runways that are being built through their forests in Dantewada by the National Mineral Development Corporation are being built for them to walk their children to school on. They believe that if they do not fight for their land, they will be annihilated. That is why they have taken up arms.

Even if the ideologues of the Maoist movement are fighting to

eventually overthrow the Indian state, right now even they know that their ragged, malnourished army, the bulk of whose soldiers have never seen a train or a bus or even a small town, are fighting only for survival.

In 2008, an expert group appointed by the Planning Commission submitted a report called 'Development Challenges in Extremist-Affected Areas'. It said, 'the Naxalite (Maoist) movement has to be recognised as a political movement with a strong base among the landless and poor peasantry and adivasis. Its emergence and growth need to be contextualised in the social conditions and experience of people who form a part of it. The huge gap between state policy and performance is a feature of these conditions. Though its professed long-term ideology is capturing state power by force, in its day-to-day manifestation, it is to be looked upon as basically a fight for social justice, equality, protection, security and local development.' A very far cry from the 'single-largest internal security threat'.

Since the Maoist rebellion is the flavour of the week, everybody, from the sleekest fat cat to the most cynical editor of the most sold-out newspaper in this country, seems to be suddenly ready to concede that it is decades of accumulated injustice that lies at the root of the problem. But instead of addressing that problem, which would mean putting the brakes on this 21st-century gold rush, they are trying to head the debate off in a completely different direction, with a noisy outburst of pious outrage about Maoist 'terrorism'. But they're only speaking to themselves.

The people who have taken to arms are not spending all their time watching (or performing for) TV, or reading the papers, or conducting SMS polls for the Moral Science question of the day: Is Violence Good or Bad? SMS your reply to ... They're out there. They're fighting. They believe they have the right to defend their homes and their land. They believe that they deserve justice.

In order to keep its better-off citizens absolutely safe from these dangerous people, the government has declared war on them. A war, which it tells us, may take between three and five years to win. Odd, isn't it, that even after the Mumbai attacks of 26/11, the government was prepared to talk with Pakistan? It's prepared to talk to China. But when it comes to waging war against the poor, it's playing hard.

It's not enough that special police with totemic names like Greyhounds, Cobras and Scorpions are scouring the forests with a licence to kill. It's not enough that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the notorious Naga Battalion have already wreaked havoc and committed unconscionable atrocities in remote forest villages. It's not enough that the government supports and arms the Salwa Judum, the 'people's militia' that has killed and raped and burned its way through the forests of Dantewada leaving 300,000 people homeless or on the run. Now the government is going to deploy the Indo-Tibetan border police and tens of thousands of paramilitary troops. It plans to set up a brigade headquarters in Bilaspur (which will displace nine villages) and an air base in Rajnandgaon (which will displace seven). Obviously, these decisions were taken a while ago. Surveys have been done, sites chosen. Interesting. War has been in the offing for a while. And now the helicopters of the Indian air force have been given the right to fire in 'self-defence', the very right that the government denies its poorest citizens.

Fire at whom? How will the security forces be able to distinguish a Maoist from an ordinary person who is running terrified through the jungle? Will adivasis carrying the bows and arrows they have carried for centuries now count as Maoists too?

Are non-combatant Maoist sympathisers valid targets? When I was in Dantewada, the superintendent of police showed me pictures of 19 'Maoists' that 'his boys' had killed. I asked him how I was supposed to tell they were Maoists. He said, 'See Ma'am, they have malaria medicines, Dettol bottles, all these things from outside.'

### Operation 'Green Hunt'

What kind of war is Operation Green Hunt going to be? Will we ever know? Not much news comes out of the forests. Lalgarh in West Bengal has been cordoned off. Those who try to go in are being beaten and arrested. And called Maoists, of course. In Dantewada, the Vanvasi Chetana Ashram, a Gandhian ashram run by Himanshu Kumar, was bulldozed in a few hours. It was the last neutral outpost before the war zone begins, a place where journalists, activists, researchers and fact-finding teams could stay while they worked in the area.

Meanwhile, the Indian establishment has unleashed its most potent weapon. Almost overnight, our embedded media has substituted its steady supply of planted, unsubstantiated, hysterical stories about 'Islamist terrorism' with planted, unsubstantiated, hysterical stories about 'Red terrorism'. In the midst of this racket, at ground zero, the cordon of silence is being inexorably tightened. The 'Sri Lanka solution' could very well be on the cards. It's not for nothing that the Indian government blocked a European move in the UN asking for an international probe into war crimes committed by the government of Sri Lanka in its recent offensive against the Tamil Tigers.

The first move in that direction is the concerted campaign that has been orchestrated to shoehorn the myriad forms of resistance taking place in this country into a simple George Bush binary: If you are not with us, you are with the Maoists. The deliberate exaggeration of the Maoist 'threat' helps the state justify militarisation. (And surely does no harm to the Maoists. Which political party would be unhappy to be singled out for such attention?) While all the oxygen is being used up by this new doppelganger of the 'war on terror', the state will use the opportunity to mop up the hundreds of other resistance movements in the sweep of its military operation, calling them all Maoist sympathisers.

I use the future tense, but this process is well under way. The West Bengal government tried to do this in Nandigram and Singur but failed. Right now in Lalgarh, the Pulishi Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee or the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities – which is a people's movement that is separate from, though sympathetic to, the Maoists – is routinely referred to as an overground wing of the CPI (Maoist). Its leader, Chhatradhar Mahato, now arrested and being held without bail, is always called a 'Maoist leader'. We all know the story of Dr Binayak Sen, a medical doctor and a civil liberties activist, who spent two years in jail on the absolutely facile charge of being a courier for the Maoists. While the light shines brightly on Operation Green Hunt, in other parts of India, away from the theatre of war, the assault on the rights of the poor, of workers, of the landless, of those whose lands the government wishes to acquire for 'public purpose', will pick up pace. Their suffering will deepen and it will be that much harder for them to get a hearing.

Once the war begins, like all wars, it will develop a momentum, a logic and an economics of its own. It will become a way of life, almost impossible to reverse. The police will be expected to behave like an army, a ruthless killing machine. The paramilitary will be expected to become like the police, a corrupt, bloated

administrative force. We've seen it happen in Nagaland, Manipur and Kashmir. The only difference in the 'heartland' will be that it'll become obvious very quickly to the security forces that they're only a little less wretched than the people they're fighting. In time, the divide between the people and the law enforcers will become porous. Guns and ammunition will be bought and sold. In fact, it's already happening. Whether it's the security forces or the Maoists or noncombatant civilians, the poorest people will die in this rich people's war. However, if anybody believes that this war will leave them unaffected, they should think again. The resources it'll consume will cripple the economy of this country.

### **Meetings of civil liberties groups**

Last week, civil liberties groups from all over the country organised a series of meetings in Delhi to discuss what could be done to turn the tide and stop the war. The absence of Dr Balagopal, one of the best-known civil rights activists of Andhra Pradesh, who died two weeks ago, closed around us like a physical pain. He was one of the bravest, wisest political thinkers of our time and left us just when we needed him most. Still, I'm sure he would have been reassured to hear speaker after speaker displaying the vision, the depth, the experience, the wisdom, the political acuity and, above all, the real humanity of the community of activists, academics, lawyers, judges and a range of other people who make up the civil liberties community in India. Their presence in the capital signalled that outside the arc lights of our TV studios and beyond the drumbeat of media hysteria, even among India's middle classes, a humane heart still beats. Small wonder then that these are the people who the Union home minister recently accused of creating an 'intellectual climate' that was conducive to 'terrorism'. If that charge was meant to frighten people, it had the opposite effect.

The speakers represented a range of opinion from the liberal to the radical left. Though none of those who spoke would describe themselves as Maoist, few were opposed in principle to the idea that people have a right to defend themselves against state violence. Many were uncomfortable about Maoist violence, about the 'people's courts' that delivered summary justice, about the authoritarianism that was bound to permeate an armed struggle and marginalise those who did not have arms. But even as they expressed their discomfort, they knew that people's courts only existed because India's courts are out of the reach of ordinary people and that the armed struggle that has broken out in the heartland is not the first, but the very last option of a desperate people pushed to the very brink of existence. The speakers were aware of the dangers of trying to extract a simple morality out of individual incidents of heinous violence, in a situation that had already begun to look very much like war. Everybody had graduated long ago from equating the structural violence of the state with the violence of the armed resistance. In fact, retired Justice PB Sawant went so far as to thank the Maoists for forcing the establishment of this country to pay attention to the egregious injustice of the system. Hargopal from Andhra Pradesh spoke of his experience as a civil rights activist through the years of the Maoist interlude in his state. He mentioned in passing the fact that in a few days in Gujarat in 2002, Hindu mobs led by the Bajrang Dal and the VHP had killed more people than the Maoists ever had even in their bloodiest days in Andhra Pradesh.

People who had come from the war zones, from Lalgah, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, described the police repression, the arrests, the torture, the killing, the corruption, and the fact that they sometimes seemed to take orders directly from the

officials who worked for the mining companies. People described the often dubious, malign role being played by certain NGOs funded by aid agencies wholly devoted to furthering corporate prospects. Again and again they spoke of how in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh activists as well as ordinary people – anyone who was seen to be a dissenter – were being branded Maoists and imprisoned. They said that this, more than anything else, was pushing people to take up arms and join the Maoists. They asked how a government that professed its inability to resettle even a fraction of the 50 million people who had been displaced by 'development' projects was suddenly able to identify 1,40,000 hectares of prime land to give to industrialists for more than 300 Special Economic Zones, India's onshore tax havens for the rich. They asked what brand of justice the supreme court was practising when it refused to review the meaning of 'public purpose' in the land acquisition act even when it knew that the government was forcibly acquiring land in the name of 'public purpose' to give to private corporations. They asked why when the government says that 'the writ of the state must run', it seems to only mean that police stations must be put in place. Not schools or clinics or housing, or clean water, or a fair price for forest produce, or even being left alone and free from the fear of the police – anything that would make people's lives a little easier. They asked why the 'writ of the state' could never be taken to mean justice.

### **Rejection of the New Economic Policy**

There was a time, perhaps 10 years ago, when in meetings like these, people were still debating the model of 'development' that was being thrust on them by the New Economic Policy. Now the rejection of that model is complete. It is absolute. Everyone from the Gandhians to the Maoists agree on that. The only question now is, what is the most effective way to dismantle it?

An old college friend of a friend, a big noise in the corporate world, had come along for one of the meetings out of morbid curiosity about a world he knew very little about. Even though he had disguised himself in a Fabindia kurta, he couldn't help looking (and smelling) expensive. At one point, he leaned across to me and said, 'Someone should tell them not to bother. They won't win this one. They have no idea what they're up against. With the kind of money that's involved here, these companies can buy ministers and media barons and policy wonks, they can run their own NGOs, their own militias, they can buy whole governments. They'll even buy the Maoists. These good people here should save their breath and find something better to do.'

When people are being brutalised, what 'better' thing is there for them to do than to fight back? It's not as though anyone's offering them a choice, unless it's to commit suicide, like some of the farmers caught in a spiral of debt have done. (Am I the only one who gets the feeling that the Indian establishment and its representatives in the media are far more comfortable with the idea of poor people killing themselves in despair than with the idea of them fighting back?)

For several years, people in Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal – some of them Maoists, many not – have managed to hold off the big corporations. The question now is, how will Operation Green Hunt change the nature of their struggle? What exactly are the fighting people up against?

It's true that, historically, mining companies have often won their battles against local people. Of all corporations, leaving aside the ones that make weapons, they probably have the most merciless past. They are cynical, battle-hardened campaigners and when people say, 'Jaan denge par jameen nahin denge' (We'll

give away our lives, but never our land), it probably bounces off them like a light drizzle on a bomb shelter. They've heard it before, in a thousand different languages, in a hundred different countries.

Right now in India, many of them are still in the first class arrivals lounge, ordering cocktails, blinking slowly like lazy predators, waiting for the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) they have signed – some as far back as 2005 – to materialise into real money. But four years in a first class lounge is enough to test the patience of even the truly tolerant: the elaborate, if increasingly empty, rituals of democratic practice: the (sometimes rigged) public hearings, the (sometimes fake) environmental impact assessments, the (often purchased) clearances from various ministries, the long drawn-out court cases. Even phony democracy is time-consuming. And time is money.

So what kind of money are we talking about? In their seminal, soon-to-be-published work, *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminum Cartel*, Samarendra Das and Felix Padel say that the financial value of the bauxite deposits of Orissa alone is \$2.27 trillion (more than twice India's GDP). That was at 2004 prices. At today's prices it would be about \$4 trillion.

Of this, officially the government gets a royalty of less than 7%. Quite often, if the mining company is a known and recognised one, the chances are that, even though the ore is still in the mountain, it will have already been traded on the futures market. So, while for the adivasis the mountain is still a living deity, the fountainhead of life and faith, the keystone of the ecological health of the region, for the corporation, it's just a cheap storage facility. Goods in storage have to be accessible. From the corporation's point of view, the bauxite will have to come out of the mountain. Such are the pressures and the exigencies of the free market.

That's just the story of the bauxite in Orissa. Expand the \$4 trillion to include the value of the millions of tonnes of high-quality iron ore in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and the 28 other precious mineral resources, including uranium, limestone, dolomite, coal, tin, granite, marble, copper, diamond, gold, quartzite, corundum, beryl, alexandrite, silica, fluorite and garnet. Add to that the power plants, the dams, the highways, the steel and cement factories, the aluminium smelters, and all the other infrastructure projects that are part of the hundreds of MoUs (more than 90 in Jharkhand alone) that have been signed. That gives us a rough outline of the scale of the operation and the desperation of the stakeholders.

### **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)**

The forest once known as the Dandakaranya, which stretches from West Bengal through Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, is home to millions of India's tribal people. The media has taken to calling it the Red corridor or the Maoist corridor. It could just as accurately be called the MoUist corridor. It doesn't seem to matter at all that the fifth schedule of the constitution provides protection to adivasi people and disallows the alienation of their land. It looks as though the clause is there only to make the constitution look good – a bit of window-dressing, a slash of make-up. Scores of corporations, from relatively unknown ones to the biggest mining companies and steel manufacturers in the world, are in the fray to appropriate adivasi homelands – the Mittals, Jindals, Tata, Essar, Posco, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and, of course, Vedanta.

There's an MoU on every mountain, river and forest glade. We're talking about social and environmental engineering on an unimaginable scale. And most of this is secret. It's not in the

public domain. Somehow I don't think that the plans afoot that would destroy one of the world's most pristine forests and ecosystems, as well as the people who live in it, will be discussed at the climate change conference in Copenhagen. Our 24-hour news channels that are so busy hunting for macabre stories of Maoist violence – and making them up when they run out of the real thing – seem to have no interest at all in this side of the story. I wonder why?

Perhaps it's because the development lobby to which they are so much in thrall says the mining industry will ratchet up the rate of GDP growth dramatically and provide employment to the people it displaces. This does not take into account the catastrophic costs of environmental damage. But even on its own narrow terms, it is simply untrue. Most of the money goes into the bank accounts of the mining corporations. Less than 10% comes to the public exchequer. A very tiny percentage of the displaced people get jobs, and those who do, earn slave-wages to do humiliating, backbreaking work. By caving in to this paroxysm of greed, we are bolstering other countries' economies with our ecology.

When the scale of money involved is what it is, the stakeholders are not always easy to identify. Between the CEOs in their private jets and the wretched tribal special police officers in the 'people's' militias – who for a couple of thousand rupees a month fight their own people, rape, kill and burn down whole villages in an effort to clear the ground for mining to begin – there is an entire universe of primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders.

These people don't have to declare their interests, but they're allowed to use their positions and good offices to further them. How will we ever know which political party, which ministers, which MPs, which politicians, which judges, which NGOs, which expert consultants, which police officers, have a direct or indirect stake in the booty? How will we know which newspapers reporting the latest Maoist 'atrocities', which TV channels 'reporting directly from ground zero' – or, more accurately, making it a point not to report from ground zero, or even more accurately, lying blatantly from ground zero – are stakeholders?

What is the provenance of the billions of dollars (several times more than India's GDP) secretly stashed away by Indian citizens in Swiss bank accounts? Where did the \$2bn spent on the last general elections come from? Where do the hundreds of millions of rupees that politicians and parties pay the media for the 'high-end', 'low-end' and 'live' pre-election 'coverage packages' that P Sainath recently wrote about come from? (The next time you see a TV anchor haranguing a numb studio guest, shouting, 'Why don't the Maoists stand for elections? Why don't they come in to the mainstream?', do SMS the channel saying, 'Because they can't afford your rates'.)

Too many questions about conflicts of interest and cronyism remain unanswered. What are we to make of the fact that the Union home minister, P Chidambaram, the chief of Operation Green Hunt, has, in his career as a corporate lawyer, represented several mining corporations? What are we to make of the fact that he was a non-executive director of Vedanta – a position from which he resigned the day he became finance minister in 2004? What are we to make of the fact that, when he became finance minister, one of the first clearances he gave for FDI was to Twinstar Holdings, a Mauritius-based company, to buy shares in Sterlite, a part of the Vedanta group?

What are we to make of the fact that, when activists from Orissa filed a case against Vedanta in the supreme court, citing its violations of government guidelines and pointing out that the Norwegian Pension Fund had withdrawn its investment from the

company alleging gross environmental damage and human rights violations committed by the company, Justice Kapadia suggested that Vedanta be substituted with Sterlite, a sister company of the same group? He then blithely announced in an open court that he, too, had shares in Sterlite. He gave forest clearance to Sterlite to go ahead with the mining, despite the fact that the supreme court's own expert committee had explicitly said that permission should be denied and that mining would ruin the forests, water sources, environment and the lives and livelihoods of the thousands of tribals living there. Justice Kapadia gave this clearance without rebutting the report of the supreme court's own committee.

What are we to make of the fact that the Salwa Judum, the brutal ground-clearing operation disguised as a 'spontaneous' people's militia in Dantewada, was formally inaugurated in 2005, just days after the MoU with the Tatas was signed? And that the Jungle Warfare Training School in Bastar was set up just around then?

What are we to make of the fact that two weeks ago, on 12 October, the mandatory public hearing for Tata Steel's steel project in Lohandiguda, Dantewada, was held in a small hall inside the collectorate, cordoned off with massive security, with an audience of 50 tribal people brought in from two Bastar villages in a convoy of government jeeps? (The public hearing was declared a success and the district collector congratulated the people of Bastar for their co-operation.)

What are we to make of the fact that just around the time the prime minister began to call the Maoists the 'single largest internal security threat' (which was a signal that the government was getting ready to go after them), the share prices of many of the mining companies in the region skyrocketed?

The mining companies desperately need this 'war'. They will be the beneficiaries if the impact of the violence drives out the people who have so far managed to resist the attempts that have been made to evict them. Whether this will indeed be the outcome, or whether it'll simply swell the ranks of the Maoists remains to be seen.

Reversing this argument, Dr Ashok Mitra, former finance minister of West Bengal, in an article called 'The Phantom Enemy', argues that the 'grisly serial murders' that the Maoists are committing are a classic tactic, learned from guerrilla warfare textbooks. He suggests that they have built and trained a guerrilla army that is now ready to take on the Indian state, and that the Maoist 'rampage' is a deliberate attempt on their part to invite the wrath of a blundering, angry Indian state which the Maoists hope will commit acts of cruelty that will enrage the adivasis. That rage, Dr Mitra says, is what the Maoists hope can be harvested and transformed into an insurrection.

This, of course, is the charge of 'adventurism' that several currents of the left have always levelled at the Maoists. It suggests that Maoist ideologues are not above inviting destruction on the very people they claim to represent in order to bring about a revolution that will bring them to power. Ashok Mitra is an old Communist who had a ringside seat during the Naxalite uprising of the 60s and 70s in West Bengal. His views cannot be summarily dismissed. But it's worth keeping in mind that the adivasi people have a long and courageous history of resistance that predates the birth of Maoism. To look upon them as brainless puppets being manipulated by a few middle-class Maoist ideologues is to do them a disservice.

Presumably Dr Mitra is talking about the situation in Lalgarh where, up to now, there has been no talk of mineral wealth. (Lest we forget – the current uprising in Lalgarh was sparked off over the chief minister's visit to inaugurate a Jindal Steel factory. And where there's a steel factory, can the iron ore be very far away?)

The people's anger has to do with their desperate poverty, and the decades of suffering at the hands of the police and the Harmads, the armed militia of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) that has ruled West Bengal for more than 30 years.

Even if, for argument's sake, we don't ask what tens of thousands of police and paramilitary troops are doing in Lalgarh, and we accept the theory of Maoist 'adventurism', it would still be only a very small part of the picture.

The real problem is that the flagship of India's miraculous 'growth' story has run aground. It came at a huge social and environmental cost. And now, as the rivers dry up and forests disappear, as the water table recedes and as people realise what is being done to them, the chickens are coming home to roost. All over the country, there's unrest, there are protests by people refusing to give up their land and their access to resources, refusing to believe false promises any more. Suddenly, it's beginning to look as though the 10% growth rate and democracy are mutually incompatible.

### The need for war

To get the bauxite out of the flat-topped hills, to get iron ore out from under the forest floor, to get 85% of India's people off their land and into the cities (which is what Chidambaram says he'd like to see), India has to become a police state. The government has to militarise. To justify that militarisation, it needs an enemy. The Maoists are that enemy. They are to corporate fundamentalists what the Muslims are to Hindu fundamentalists. (Is there a fraternity of fundamentalists? Is that why the RSS has expressed open admiration for Chidambaram?)

It would be a grave mistake to imagine that the paramilitary troops, the Rajnandgaon air base, the Bilaspur brigade headquarters, the unlawful activities act, the Chhattisgarh special public security act and Operation Green Hunt are all being put in place just to flush out a few thousand Maoists from the forests. In all the talk of Operation Green Hunt, whether or not Chidambaram goes ahead and 'presses the button', I detect the kernel of a coming state of emergency. (Here's a maths question: If it takes 600,000 soldiers to hold down the tiny valley of Kashmir, how many will it take to contain the mounting rage of hundreds of millions of people?)

Instead of narco-analysing Kobad Ghandy, the recently arrested Maoist leader, it might be a better idea to talk to him.

In the meanwhile, will someone who's going to the climate change conference in Copenhagen later this year please ask the only question worth asking: Can we leave the bauxite in the mountain?

[<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/oct/30/mining-india-maoists-green-hunt>]

### Postscript

Arundathi Roy spent days with Maoists in tribal areas this year. See her account, *Walking With The Comrades*, on [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com). Here is an extract from the article:

We walked to the bus stand, only a few minutes away from the temple. It was already crowded. Things happened quickly. There were two men on motorbikes. There was no conversation—just a glance of acknowledgment, a shifting of body weight, the revving of engines. I had no idea where we were going. We passed the house of the Superintendent of Police (SP), which I recognised from my last visit. He was a candid man, the SP: "See Ma'am, frankly speaking this problem can't be solved by us police or military. The problem with these tribals is they don't understand greed. Unless they become greedy, there's no hope for us. I have told my boss, remove the force and instead put a TV in every home. Everything will be automatically sorted out."