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Preface

.At a time when America, with Europe in tow, is leading the world to war—whether Cold or Hot remains to be seen—it is useful to re-read articles which appeared in *Irish Political Review* in 1991: shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union: a time when there there was just one Super-Power.

In the generation since 1990 ‘The West[failed to draw a willing Russia into its orbit and instead set about weakening, dismembering, and encircling it: all with the willing cooperation of a bunch of starry-eyed innocents in the Kremlin. The result was a dire deterioration of internal living standards in the former Soviet Union and mayhem in international affairs—with no Power willing to curb the inane policies of the sole Super-Power.

With no Vetoes exercised on the Security Council, the UN became an instrument of Imperial aggression—until President Putin, who has taken his country in hand, called a halt.

Eileen Courtney
July 2014

***Irish Political Review* is a magazine which has been in existence in 1986. It was a follow-on from the *Irish Communist*. There was much interesting material produced in *Irish Political Review*, both stimulating to thought and giving an account of what was happening in society. At this lapse of time, the *Irish Political Review* provides a historical record of what happened a generation ago. *Problems Of Capitalism* proposes to issue selections of articles from these early magazines, not necessarily because it would stand over every word that was said, but as an aid to recalling what is in many ways a different world.**

Iraq, America, And International Law

December 1990 was the hundreds anniversary of the military operation of the American Army against an Indian tribe at Wounded Knee. It was the last campaign that the Union found it necessary to prosecute against the native Indians of that continent, which have been reduced to a tiny, demoralised minority, bereft of land and culture. Nowadays, American ambitions are focussed on a larger stage. The *Irish Political Review* is pleased to print below the edited transcript of a speech analysing American foreign policy in the context of the Iraq/Kuwait conflict, given by Brendan Clifford to the *Cork University Labour Club* on November 19th, 1990.

For the first time in half a century the neutral nations have no role whatsoever in world affairs because of what has happened in the United Nations in these past three or four months. Neutral nations used to have a functional role when the world was divided basically between two major military and political blocs. This division created space for small states that saw themselves as having something independent to contribute to world affairs to make an attempt to do so. They could tack between the two power blocs. But the conflict of power blocs has disappeared during the past year and now the world order is American oligarchy exercised through the medium of the United Nations.

It has been said by many people, including Conor Cruise O'Brien in the first week of the crisis, that the new state of affairs in the world has caused the United Nations to become what it was originally intended to be.

The Soviet Union has suffered internal political collapse, but not the destruction of its military power. Its military power remains as it was but it doesn't know what it stands for in the world at this juncture and it is preoccupied with trying to keep itself together. And China seems to be very eager to compensate in American opinion for what it did in Tiananmen Square in the Summer of 1989. And it is of no great consequence to it now what happens in the Middle East, so it will ingratiate itself by not using its Veto.

So, for all practical purposes, the Veto, as it has made the United Nations functional for the past 45 years, no longer exists. And Conor Cruise O'Brien says now that the United Nations is finally becoming what it was intended to be. Now I can see no grounds whatsoever for that statement, because the Veto was an essential component of the United Nations. The United Nations was made by the United States, Britain and Russia, the three great Powers that won the Second World War and decided to share the world between them in the post-

War era. France was included among the Veto Powers at Churchill's insistence. France contributed nothing in particular to the defeat of Germany and its allies in the Second World War, in fact, it made peace with them. But Churchill had decided that France was to be one of the Great Powers in the post-War world. And America saw that China under Chiang Kai-shek was given a Veto. But, basically, it was an arrangement made between Britain, America and Russia to impose what it called "*international law*" on the world, and to exempt themselves from international law. Exemption of the Powers that made the United Nations from the functioning of the United Nations as a law enforcement body was an essential component of the United Nations. Without it, the *United Nations* could not have been set up. None of the Great Powers would have agreed to the establishment of an international body that could act against them.

The United Nations over the years was the sort of organisation that attracted idealists to work in it, to staff it, and these people had a very rosy idea of what the United Nations was, or could be. They were on the one hand. And, on the other hand, there were the politicians who sat on the Security Council, who were absolutely cynical about the idealism of the United Nations. They used the ideology of the United Nations, but they discounted it as fast as they used it. It meant nothing to them. The United Nations was a form of power politics. And the fact that the Powers constituting it set up exemptions for themselves from international law: that became an irritant to each of the Great Powers in its relations with the others. Each side obviously considered that it was morally entitled to dominate the post-War world. Britain, after twenty years, got sort of phased out of Great Power politics with the end of its Empire. So, what it came down to was the Soviet Union and the United States, each of them building up its armies, and each of them using its veto as it considered expedient in the Security Council. And, unless all five were agreed, the Security Council could not do anything, which meant that they could not

act against each other, or against each other's client states, through the United Nations.

Whether another arrangement was possible I don't know: whether you could have had a United Nations not dominated in law, as well as fact, by a couple of Great Powers. I doubt it very much. But, in any case, this was the arrangement. Law was to be imposed on all the states, except the states that were most likely to commit aggressions. That was clearly understood between them. And most of the aggressions since 1945 have been committed by the United States or by Russia, and the United Nations has had no function with regard to those aggressions, because the United States and Russia were exempt from international law.

There is an institution called the *International Court* and, if you look up the Charter of the United Nations, you will find that the International Court is called the *judicial organ* of the United Nations. The International court was never taken seriously until Nicaragua appealed to it in 1984. The International Court was made up according to a formula by Judges from the five or six different divisions of the world. The Nicaraguan case was so open and shut that the International Court found against the United States and in favour of Nicaragua for the bombing of harbour installations, for the mining of its harbours, for the financing of insurgency movements, for the waging of psychological warfare, for training the Contras, for a whole range of things. There were about ten different charges brought by Nicaragua against the United States, and the International Court voted twelve judges to three that the US had broken the law. The three against were, as far as I remember, the United States itself, Britain, and either France or Japan.

Now what happens with a Judgement of the International Court? That is the only major judgement it ever gave that I know of. It said that the United States should immediately stop doing what it was doing, and that it should pay an immense sum to Nicaragua for the damage caused. Now, since there is talk these days of bringing Saddam Hussain before some international tribunal to make him pay for the damage done in Kuwait, it is interesting that this only award made by the Court of the United Nations was simply set aside by the United States in the Security Council when it came up for discussion. The International Court is a Court without any independent means of putting its Judgements into effect and the USA vetoed implementation of the Nicaraguan Judgement.

A system of law that has no means of putting its own judgements into effect is an absurdity, it simply isn't law. To have law you have to have a body of laws which can be broken, and you have to have some sort of independent judicial tribunal that can make judgements, and you have to have a police force that will implement the judgements. Now the International Court of Justice is a court which

made its Judgement, and yet had no way of implementing its Judgement. Only the Security Council could implement its Judgement, and when it came up for implementation by the Security Council, the United States vetoed it. And that was the end of international law as anything independent of the Security Council. So that the Security Council is both the judge and the policeman, in real terms, of what it called international law. And the five permanent members remain exempt from international law.

You cannot credibly have a system of international law from which the major aggressors are exempt. But the thing worked after a fashion so long as the major aggressors were divided into two major blocs. The Vetoes on either side cancelled each other out. Two wrongs made a sort of right.

Now what happened, essentially, in August 1989, was that the United Nations fell into the hands of the three Western Powers of 1945, and became their instrument for remoulding the world.

Everybody has heard about the Soviet Veto over the years, but the American Veto has been used just as effectively, and the French and the Chinese Veto—they have all been used. The Allies who fought the Second World War had a fundamental difference of opinion as to what the post-War world should be. And each of them reconstructed the bit of the world under its influence according to its own ideas, and tried to encroach on the sphere of interest of the other. And that has been basically the politics of the past 45 years.

So what happens when one of the parties to this major dispute in the world disappears? It is not a system of law unobstructed by the Veto that comes into being. It is that one side of the dispute of 1945 considers that the world now belongs to it. And that, it seems to me, is what happened in early August, 1990.

Thatcher was on vacation in the United States; the ending of the Cold War raised the problem of what was going to be done with NATO. The logical thing, if you believed all that had been said for the previous 40 years, was that, since the Warsaw Pact was dissolving, NATO should also dissolve, because NATO was supposed to have the exclusive function of countering the threat of the Warsaw Pact forces to Western Europe. It had very clear terms of reference. But Thatcher made it clear that she did not want NATO dissolved.

Now I think that, in the short term, it would have been reasonable to keep NATO in being to ensure that the Warsaw Pact forces actually were dissolved, because a lot has been said in this past year, but very little has been done, so the actual army, whatever it is called, in the east, remains in being, therefore the army in the west should remain in being.

But that wouldn't do, because you have popular pressure for winding down military budgets in America and Britain. So Thatcher and Bush raised the possibility of using NATO for other purposes, using NATO for "*out of area*" operations, as they call it. This discussion evolved in May and June, 1990, and a lot of people were discontented at the thought of NATO being used for out of area operations. Now, "*out of area*" operations means that you have a world police force in the interests of Britain and the United States, and France is somehow going along with it, though it has never been as enthusiastic about these things as Britain or the United States have. So that we have this massive army (assuming the Warsaw Pact is going to disintegrate), this massive Anglo-American army, looking for things to do. And the signs, as I read them, say that they contrived something for themselves to do. They had to have a war. If they were going to keep their armies in being as a flourishing military alliance, they had to have a war, otherwise the armies would have been eroded. And the indications are that they contrived this war in the Middle East.

The strange thing, in this time of instant and universal communications, is that any sense of history in the news has been wiped out. People can't remember what happened three months ago, never mind what happened over the past forty-five years, with regard to the United Nations. I know that in England you have had total control of the news by the Government—and the fact that the Labour Party has not been a real Opposition for the last ten years has facilitated it. Really the news is Government hand-outs. And Government handouts will not fill in the real background to this crisis.

But, in America, where you have more flourishing newspaper media, the background has been to some extent filled in. And the background is that American diplomacy set up this conflict between Iraq and Kuwait in order to have a conflict that would justify the continuation of military power. Because another consideration, again, is that everybody was assuming a year ago, that what you were going to have in future was economic competition. But the two great States which were least fitted to profit from a transformation of the Cold War into an era of economic competition, the two states least fitted to flourish in that situation, were Britain and the United States, which were the two major military powers in the West. Britain has undoubtedly been going down economically for a very long time, and in recent years Japan has got a very clear edge over the United States economically. So these were two economic Powers still very, very powerful, but no longer in the ascendant, and in an era of peaceful economic competition, their power would undoubtedly be eroded. The two coming Powers were Japan and Germany, and you have other minor Powers like South Korea. Capitalism is flourishing least in its heartlands these days, and it is taking off in other places. So that Britain and the United States remain far more important in the

world if there is the threat of a major military conflict going on than they would be if the military confrontation of the past 45 years was all superseded and a different kind of development occurred. So both of them had vested interests in having a major crisis in the Summer of 1990.

From what has come out, it seems that American diplomacy indicated to Saddam Hussain that if he took direct action to settle his dispute with Kuwait, American would not consider it any of its business.

Now Kuwait is undoubtedly one of the most artificial states on earth. Basically, Kuwait is a landlord sitting over an oilwell. The oil sheikhdoms were constituted into a state for western political and economic purposes, for separating the oil of the Arab world from the people of the Arab world. There are a range of minuscule states along the Gulf. They are tiny little states. Ireland is a small state, but all of these together probably would not even add up to the population of Ireland. There are about six families, that own something like two-thirds of the world's oil, made up into states for Western strategic purposes.

Iraq is a large country, comparatively speaking, in the Middle East, and a comparatively poor country in the Middle East, that has to work for a living. It has some oil. There are other states there without any oil. The contrast in standards of living between Yemen and Kuwait is something fantastic. Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have the highest per capital gross domestic product in the world. That is not because they produce anything. That is because oil is taken up from under their deserts and they are paid fantastic sums of money. It is not that they have any particular use for the oil. The industrialised world needs the oil and the USA and Britain have constituted these tribes into states so that they can keep control of the oil.

What happened between Kuwait and Iraq seems to have been that the oil in one of the major wells has outlets in both Iraq and Kuwait, and Kuwait was not abiding by agreements as to the amount of oil that was to be taken out in any given year. Iraq took the view that Kuwait, by breaking agreements, was taking its property. Now, Kuwait is stinking rich. It didn't need the money this extra oil brought in. So, presumably, it was doing it because somebody suggested that it would be a welcome act towards the Western world (a plentiful supply of oil on the world market helped to ensure a low price for oil). But it is a serious matter for a country that has got a limited amount of oil to have this 600,000 people with the highest standard of living in the world breaking an agreement as to how their common pool of oil is to be used.

It also seems that, during the Iran/Iraq War, Kuwait, for no good reason, extended its boundaries and encroached on Iraqi territory.

These states, you see, were all drawn up on the spur of the moment by Sir Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell in 1920. These were the expert Arabists in the British Foreign Office who thought they knew everything. They were there in Baghdad in 1920 deciding what the Middle East was, and they drew their lines on the map to be the states. And, when they found that Kuwait and Qatar and these places had oil on them there was no question but that these would be the states. And, in those days, there was the question of surrounding Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia then was quite a different thing from what it is now. It was a very vigorous body of people, and it was threatening to take over the whole peninsula, so Saudi Arabia had to be bottled up. So, for one reason or another, Western strategic interests determined that all these comic-opera states should be set up and used against the main bodies of the Arab people.

The rulers of Kuwait gained an advantage for themselves during the Iran/Iraq War, in which Iraq was actually defending them against the Iranian revolution. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and all of those states were terrified by what was happening in Iran. There was a real threat to them from the popular Islamic fundamentalism which had won state power in Iran. It wanted to upset their delightful little apple-cart. Resurgent fundamentalism, in the shape of Iran, was threatening to spread out all over the Middle East in the way that the Wahhabi fundamentalism of Saudi Arabia had threatened to do in the 1920s. And Iraq was used to contain Iran. It was urged to make war on Iran. It was financed by the West during the course of the war with Iran.

There is a history of the Iran/Iraq War that was published earlier this Summer by an Arab, and there you have the passing remark that, of course, Iraq's allies are the oil-rich monarchies of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Now, until this Summer, that was how it was. Iraq had fought a major war on behalf of itself, fair enough (it is a secular Arab state, not a fundamentalist Islamic state), but also was seen as acting in the interests of everything that was not popular fundamentalism in the Arab world, and particularly as the defender of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The last thing the Kuwaitis needed was more money. But, instead of facilitating Iraq in every way it could as its defender against the Iranian fundamentalist threat, it broke its agreements with regard to the use of the common pool of oil, and encroached on its territory and to have conspired with the United States to aggravate Iraq this Summer. For it seems that the United States rather than Britain saw that Iraq, as a result of fighting its war in the Middle East for ten years, and incurring something like a million casualties, had made itself into a major state in the region. Because, at the beginning, Iraq was not a major state. Iraq itself was on the verge of disintegration in 1975 as a result of the Shah of Iran funding the Kurdish Rebellion. So Iraq, which was not

a powerful state in 1980, as a result of fighting this war, made itself into a powerful state, and it was decided in the United States that something had to be done about this.

Kuwait was encouraged to provoke Iraq, and Iraq was given to understand that direct action against Kuwait would not be considered to infringe on American interests.

It doesn't seem that in Britain there was any great concern about Iraq until very late. Because, when the news about the 'super-gun' came out in May 1990, the British Foreign Office did not want to know about it. It had to be forced on its attention by the newspapers. The British Foreign Office still saw itself as the ally of Iraq, and Iraq as the main supporter of, not so much Western economic interests, as Western political standards in the Middle East, because it was a secular Arab state.

This view changed because of the convergence of a number of different things in July—the state of affairs in the world resulting from Soviet confusion; the problem of what to do with NATO; the imminence of political development in the Common Market—apparently suggested to both Bush and Thatcher (and this is supported by the instantaneous response to the occupation of Kuwait by both of them on 2nd August 1990, and the fact that the UN Resolutions were passed within hours of the occupation) that they could restructure the world more to their liking by using Kuwait as the occasion of setting up a *new world order*, as they called it. And the New World Order was basically to be the world policed by Britain and America, the two great military Powers of the United Nations, once the Soviet Union and China were neutralised.

Within America, but certainly not within Britain, you had people of influence prepared to stand up and ridicule Bush for the comparison of Saddam with Hitler, and prepared to say they wouldn't stand for it. At the height of the war-mongering in August, they were questioning the validity of the Bush-Thatcher policy, and because of that the probability of war decreased. It could still happen, because Bush is going to look absurd if he pulls out.

But what I am saying is basically that he has got absolutely nothing to do with *international law*. And, if we look at the Security Council, which passed those Resolutions, we have the five permanent states, but then all the other states, from five or six divisions in the world, are all taking their turns to sit on the Security Council as ciphers. To have a Security Council Resolution that is effective you have to have the five permanent states and four others.

When we were being told since August what "*the world had decided*", we were never told which states

constituted the world for the purpose of deciding its destiny in the Security Council. The list was too farcical to bear scrutiny. In August 1990 it included Rumania, which had undergone a revolution since being elected to the world government and was in a dreadful confusion. (It was Ceausescu's Government that was elected to the Security Council.) And Ethiopia, which has been waging war against its own minority nationalities for a generation. And the Ivory Coast, whose Government extracted sufficient wealth from the misery of its own downtrodden people to build the biggest basilica in the world and have the Pope to open it in the early Summer. And Columbia, with its state threatened by drug producers.

The safe thing for these small states to do was to raise their hands as they were told to. If you had had India and some other substantial states in the Security Council at the time, things would have been different. The situation was ideal for Thatcher and Bush to say: we've got the United Nations. We are going to do everything we have ever dreamed of doing. By using the United Nations in this way we can run the world and have a New World Order.

However the thing ends, it is not going to end with *International Law* being a more credible thing than it was before the Cold War ended a year ago.

Irish Political Review
January 1991

United Nations: *The Myth Of The 20th Century* [The UN War On Iraq, 1991]

IRISH NEUTRALITY

Ireland preserved a general right of neutrality until 1955, and then relinquished it. Since 1956, it has only had a right of neutrality with regard to conflicts on which the Security Council is divided. By joining the United Nations, it signed away its soul to the five great military powers which, under the Charter, have control of that body. It agreed that it would, when called upon, provide cannon fodder for the wars of the Security Council, just or unjust.

Garret FitzGerald states what is indisputable when he says:

"We may have reservations about many aspects of the Gulf War, but we are not entitled to claim the right to pick and choose which U.N. Security Council decisions we will accept" (*Time To Face Up To Our Responsibilities*, Irish Times, 26.1.91).

Article 43 of the UN Charter says:

"All members of the UN... undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage."

Article 45:

"In order to enable the United Nations to take urgent military measures, Members shall hold immediately available national air-force contingents for combined international enforcement action. The strength and degree

of readiness of these contingents and plans for their combined action shall be determined, within the limits laid down by the special agreement..., by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee."

Article 48:

"The action to carry out the decisions of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security shall be taken by all the Members of the United Nations or by some of them, as the Security Council may determine."

By signing the Charter, Ireland made a contract to fight in wars declared by the Security Council without having any right to be consulted about whether war should be declared. (The clause about special arrangements has no bearing on the principle. In the nature of things a general obligation is met in a particular case by a particular arrangement for putting it into effect.)

Anyone who can read a set of rules and envisage an organisation functioning under them should be able to tell from reading the Charter what sort of organisation the United Nations is. And yet professional commentators (i.e., people who are paid to give their opinions and who therefore might be expected to do an elementary thing like reading the Charter) are almost all of the opinion that the United Nations is, or was intended to be, something which the Charter carefully arranged that it could not be. The *Corkman* is the only paper I have seen which

opposed the War on Iraq straightforwardly, and felt no need to make ritual obeisance to the supposed ideals of the United Nations while doing so.

ILLUSIVE UN

Even Dr., FitzGerald, while pointing out that Ireland has no right to support only just wars waged by the Security Council, expresses illusions about the UN. He says:

"The United Nations is not and never was intended to be a kind of tame pussy cat confined to patrolling peace lines after conflicts between states had ended with one or other side victorious. It was established to enforce the rule of law."

It is perfectly true that the UN was not intended to be something harmless. It was not intended to be a peace-keeping influence on states which were at war, but as a body which would make war in its own right. Its originator, President Roosevelt, devised it as an organisation by means of which the dominant military Powers of 1945 would control the world, and would bomb into submission any state which challenged their dominance:

"The President related the conversation which he had had with Clark Eichelberger with respect to the League of Nations Association. He suggested the name be changed to 'The United Nations Association'... The central idea involves a situation where there are four policemen in the world—the US, Great Britain, Russia and China—charged with the responsibility of keeping the peace. The rest of the world would have to disarm... Inspection would be arranged by the four policemen in all the countries to see that they did not begin to arm secretly... As soon as any of the other nations were caught arming they would be threatened first with a quarantine and if the quarantine did not work they would be bombed: (White House Memorandum, 13 November 1942. Published in *The Roosevelt Letters*. France was added as a fifth policeman on Churchill's insistence. China was given a Permanent Seat because it was then an American sphere of influence but, after the fall of Chiang Kai-shek, the new Chinese Government was kept out of the UN for more than 20 years).

The structure of the UN was systematically worked out in accordance with Roosevelt's blueprint. When Stalin was asked to participate, he objected that the League of Nations had condemned the Russian invasion of Finland in 1939 and tried to arrange international intervention in support of Finland. The British and American leaders explained to him that, under the rules of the United Nations, such a thing would not be possible. The General Assembly would have no power of action, and the Security Council could not act against the interests of any of the Permanent Powers.

Roosevelt did not pretend to be establishing a system of international law. His aim was to establish a mechanism of order under the military dominance of the world by

America, Britain, and Russia. The world was to be organised into a system of order which suited the interests of the three great military Powers and was to be kept that way by the authority of those Powers.

LAW OR ORDER?

Order was not to be maintained through the medium of law. Law and Order are very different things. Order may or may not result from law. In the United States itself, which is the country where law plays the greatest part in society, orderly behaviour is far from commonplace. And, in some of the most orderly societies, there is little recourse to law by individuals.

Fine Gael got very confused about Law and Order in 1927-31. It got into a state of paranoia about the development of the anti-Treatyites into Fianna Fail. It tried to check its growth by 'law and order' harassment. But the law to which it resorted was increasingly emergency law. And emergency law is almost a contradiction in terms. Emergency law is a measure which over-rides the law. (When the British Government found it necessary to break the law for the purpose of maintaining order, Parliament made it immune from prosecution by Indemnity Acts. I think that Indemnity Acts do less damage to law than rule by emergency laws does.)

Fine Gael has never recovered from its 'law and order' rampage of 1927-31. The middle ground shifted away from it then because order maintained by emergency law is brittle. Fianna Fail became the major party because it knew the difference between Law and Order, and had the political ability to maintain order through the medium of ordinary law.

Perhaps it is understandable that Dr. FitzGerald, a product of Fine Gael culture, should look at the United Nations and see its purpose as being to enforce the rule of law, because in his vocabulary law and order are synonyms. But there is nothing in the structure of the UN which would mislead anybody who knows that law and order are different categories of things into supposing that it is an institution based on law. Perhaps people projected onto the UN ideals which had nothing to do with it, but it must be said in defence of the founders of the UN that they did not attempt to deceive anybody about what they were setting up.

(Switzerland is the most democratic, though not the most progressive, state in the world. It is the oldest democracy. It developed itself as a democracy, while being surrounded by powerful and hostile feudal or absolute states, therefore it does not use the phrases of democracy as the small coin of political banter, as the vast majority of other states do. Switzerland refused to join the United Nations and armed itself to maintain its independence against the world. It is the only state of any consequence which is entitled to be neutral in a Security Council war. All other states are under

contractual obligation to support the Security Council.)

If the UN had been designed to function within a system of international law, neither Russia nor America would have joined and, if Britain had joined, it would have been with Jesuitical reservations. President Wilson in 1918-19 had devised the League of Nations to function as a framework of international law, and the Congress had refused to let the USA join it. Congress is the guardian of the absolute sovereignty of the USA. To get its approval for joining the United Nations, Roosevelt had to make it crystal clear that it would not thereby be placing itself under a system of international law.

The United Nations cannot be the framework of a system of international law because its Charter leaves the five most powerful states in the world free to do as they please, and it often pleases them to invade other states. And, with the Permanent Members of the Security Council themselves giving such bad example, the United Nations is also unfit to impose order on the world by moral authority. The present war against Iraq, which everyone knows is a one-off affair, serves neither a purpose of law nor a purpose of order. The human spirit, which has resisted the systematic use of massive power, is unlikely to prostrate itself before one exceptional and disgraceful use of it.

Perhaps an individual within a state may collapse morally in the face of capricious use of power against him. Britain and America (and Douglas Hurd in particular) seemed to believe in August 1990 that states would bow the head to lawless intimidation as a large proportion of individuals will do within a state. I ventured to differ with them:

"A clear and consistent application of a law is more necessary, not less necessary, where the subjects of law are states rather than individuals. States cannot be overawed by the sheer power of police when the law is capricious, as individuals might be" (p5, *The Crisis In Iraq*, Bevin Society, August 190).

If there was a system of international law in operation in the world, I'm sure Iraq would not have occupied Kuwait. If Kuwait had been a real state, and not a concoction for retaining Western control of Arab oil after the formal ending of colonialism, I'm sure Iraq would not have occupied it. If Kuwait had not behaved with particular malice against Iraq after Iraq had saved it from the fundamentalist wave from Iran, there would have been no invasion. If America had made it clear through diplomatic channels that it would go to war if Kuwait was invaded, there would have been no invasion. And if, after the invasion, America and Britain had taken the attitude that Iraq should withdraw in return for a new frontier settlement, the system of international law would not have collapsed, because no such system exists, or had existed even in aspiration since 1939.

But, given how the USA and Kuwait had behaved up to 2nd August 1990, it was not realistic to expect that Iraq would subsequently behave as an individual might in the face of threatening behaviour by policemen who had tricked him.

WAR AND THE ENGLISH

England is without a doubt the most militaristic nation in Europe. I state that as a fact, not as a criticism. It is a fact which may be to its credit or its discredit. I am only concerned to say that it is a fact.

The last threat to English national security was in 1588. During the four centuries since then, various European nations have gone through a militaristic phase. Only in England, which had the least cause for it in concerns of self-defence, has militarism not been a phase but a permanent condition. From which it follows inescapably that the English are the most warlike people in Europe.

Spain declined as a military Power within a generation of the Armada. Since then the Dutch, who had to develop a considerable military capacity in order to establish themselves as a state, have been militarists for a while, as have the Belgians. The Swedes were briefly one of the greatest military Powers. The Germans roused themselves out of lethargy for two hundred years. Only the French continue, after a fashion, to emulate the permanent militarism of the English. And, for the past six months, the English have been jeering at them as wimps because their warmongering has been comparatively sluggish.

The English revel in warfare as only a people which is neither volatile nor vivacious can. As a people they are dour and parochial, though humorous. They have no national culture and therefore they cannot have a system of national education. Their flair for living all went into Puritanism. It is not exhilarating to be amongst them, as it is to be amongst the Italians, French or Spaniards, nor does it induce a philosophical feeling of well-being like a German environment. England is a conglomeration of parishes unified by a gentry, and that pattern of life is so strong that, as the traditional gentry decline, Yuppies are gentrified by the expectations of the peasantry.

A digest of economic statistics tells us little about the real life of England. That is, it does not enable one to anticipate how England will behave. For the purpose of anticipating behaviour, it is best to think of England as it was two hundred years ago, and to assume that the peasantry will follow the lead which the gentry give, and that the gentry will give the lead which the peasantry expect, even though, in terms of economic abstraction, there are hardly any peasants in England today and none of the gentry are genteel.

Very few ideas have gripped the dour, parochial and

comical imaginations of the English. The idea of warfare is one which has. The English peasantry, by which I mean the lower middle class and a large part of the working class, still sees itself slogging it out with foreigners and getting the better of them through sheer pig-ignorant stubbornness.

The English have contributed little or nothing to military tactics. That is not their way. They do not see themselves as being clever. They despise cleverness. On the other hand, it would not be right to say that they take pleasure in the sheer brutality of warfare, because they are largely insensitive to that brutality. But their way is to slog it out, line against line, without any great concern to get it over with.

The three years of trench warfare, from 1915 to 1917, is one of the most appalling things in human history. England declared war on Germany without any reason of national security for doing so. For Germany, encircled by hostile states with immense armies, preparation for war was a matter of survival. It tried to win with a speed and flair and minimum human losses all round. And its opening manoeuvres almost finished the war. But England had made careful preparations to counter that manoeuvre. And, once the German sweep into France had been stopped, all Germany could hope to do was establish a defensive line against superior numbers and armaments and inflict sufficient casualties on the attacking force to get a peace move more or less on the lines of the opening *status quo*. But England wasn't interested in peace. It designated Germany as evil incarnate in order to rule out thought on the matter, and declared its intention of doing the only right thing with evil, which is to wipe it out.

For more than three years, England assaulted the fortified German trench lines, disdaining even the use of machine guns. They assaulted with rifle and bayonet, because it is a well known fact that fancy foreigners *don't like it up 'em*. They themselves were slaughtered in droves, but that didn't seem to matter much to them, because they had taken on a collective existence, like ants. They made homes in the trenches and sang funny songs.

I saw Frank McGuinness's play, *Behold The Sons Of Ulster Marching Towards The Somme* in Belfast last year. It was painful watching a nationalist Irish mind attempting to envisage the human element which made the Somme possible. As the moment for going over the top approached, the behaviour of the little platoon (which is the scene of play) becomes increasingly bizarre and volatile. And that got it as wrong as could be. The Somme, and the half-dozen other battles like it, were the culmination of the English method of warfare, and they were possible only because the English imagination takes that sort of thing in its stride. And the really dreadful thing is that the war was won by battles like the Somme.

The French had no stomach for it. But for the English, the war would have ended half-way through under some arrangement which would have been much more conducive to long-term peace than the arrangement made in 1919. But the English were determined to outlast the forces of Evil and to parade in smug, self-righteous triumph over them, so they filled up the spaces in the line caused by French mutinies, and soldiered on to victory and the catastrophic Treaty of Versailles. (England is much better at starting wars than at concluding them with a functional peace settlement.)

ENGLISH EXISTENTIALISM

England is at war again in 1991, and therefore it is at ease. The problems of existence, which have been a source of profound depression to it for a number of years, have been shelved for the time being. It is back in the familiar and reassuring routine of warfare—and historical experience tells it that a war, if it is big enough, can ward off problems of existence for a very long time. It is therefore doing its utmost to expand this war far beyond what anybody supposed was intended by the Security Council Resolutions.

Labour's Neil Kinnock, who is trying hard to be English, declares that the destruction of Iraq—that is, of the state which exists in the region called Iraq—is not a war aim: it is much better than a war aim, he says, because it is a peace aim. But that is a much too lucid form of gibberish. The incomprehensible patter of War Secretary, Tom King, is much more in the traditional English style. He slithers all over the place, but in the process establishes the feeling that the world East of Suez needs to be reordered, and that the war provides the opportunity for getting a grip on it again.

Fortunately, it is not down to the English this time. The war will last as long as the Americans want it to. And, though the Americans are not less warlike than the English, they are warlike in a different way and for a different purpose.

England needed this war because the development of the Common Market was starting to prey on its mind.

Though the English pioneered industrial capitalism, they are not an industrious people. As militarists they opened most of the world to their manufactured goods, but their industry was quickly overtaken once other peoples, more sociable in character, got the hang of capitalism.

England has a declining economy, on which Thatcherism has made little impression. Thatcher's concern was with money rather than with industry, and the easier the money was got, the better. The City of London was her province. English manufacturers realised years ago that she was not on their wavelength. Sterling was all-important to her, both as a symbol of national sovereignty

against the Europeans and as a source of accumulation of wealth by money-changing. To the manufacturers, the maintenance of sterling came to be seen only as an obstacle to trade with what was supposed to be a Common Market.

England has not flourished economically in the Common Market. But the development of the Common Market, combined with the loss of Empire and the emergence of strong capitalist economies in the least expected places, means that it cannot hope to make its own way in the world economically, without accelerating its economic decline. The signs of desperation in traditional ruling class circles have been much in evidence these past few years.

Thatcher might say "*No, no, no!*" in Europe, but everyone knew that, if she did not give way each year on what she had said the previous year she would not give way on, Europe would just detach itself from England.

A year ago she had her notorious secret meeting with 'experts'. Her great concern then was to ward off the unification of Germany. She was relying on Gorbachev to do that for her. But Gorbachev had given the go-ahead for German unity by the time the minutes of the Chequers meeting were leaked.

The hope then was that German unification would cause a rift with France and disrupt European development. When it became clear that France accepted German unification, and Germany remained committed to European development, the only hope for England (for the bulk of the Tory Party and for much of the Labour Party, whose belated Europeanism was hardly skin deep), was some massive external diversion which would mess up the Common Market.

England determined on war on August 2nd, because it needed a war. It decided on war long before America did. And they are telling no lie when they say the war is not just about oil.

Thatcher, Hurd and King saw the occupation of Kuwait as one of those acts of Providence with which the prayer of the National Anthem is periodically rewarded. They did not act as if their concern was to secure a return of Kuwait to the strange nation of Kuwaities. They acted as if they were determined not to let the possibility of having a war over Kuwait escape. And the Labour Front Bench rowed in behind them: indeed, Kaufman and Kinnock have usually been making even more warlike noises than the Government, while the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have been more warlike than the Americans. The President had a long struggle to get Congress approval, but the debate in the Mother of Parliaments was only put on for show.

England is at war because England was finding it impossible to cope with peace.

But now, for the first time ever, the English cannot afford the cost of a therapeutically necessary war—or so they say, and there is probably some truth in it. So they are going around with a begging bowl to pay for the cost of bombing Baghdad. They're having a whale of a time, but they just can't afford the bombs.

The Germans were required to pay the cost of the 1914 war because they fought. They are now being required to pay the cost of destroying Iraq, because they decline to take part in a massacre.

If the world does not recoil from this terror bombing by the United Nations, and it becomes the pattern of the New World Order, it would seem a good arrangement for the English just to become mercenaries in German pay.

UN: CARTE BLANCHE

As the United Nations mode of warfare gathers momentum, quibbles are raised about how the war is being conducted and how it is being controlled. But United Nations enthusiasts can rest assured that everything is as it should be. The Security Council (the Five Permanent Powers) gave *carte blanche* to America and Britain to do as they please. And the authority of the Security Council within the United Nations is absolute. If the founders in their wisdom had not intended that the Security Council should have absolute power, it would have established a mechanism through which its conduct might be challenged. There is no such mechanism. Both the General Assembly and the International Court are inferior bodies to the Security Council.

The war has seen a collapse of the mainstream British Left—indeed it has become the pacemaker for the Government. Its flimsy world outlook had collapsed during Thatcher's second and third terms and was finished off by Gorbachev's game of skittles with his East European puppet states. Tony Benn, after a long delay, began to be critical, but, since he long ago reduced himself to eccentricity, his opinions carry little weight with public opinion. Only Ted Heath has had the moral substance to go against the stream from the start, and it is almost entirely because of him that the British public has heard views differing from the propaganda of the Government.

Clare Short, the rebel from Crossmaglen, has become part of the Imperialist consensus. As a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party, she voted, on January 30th, for a pro-War resolution, which went far beyond the liberation of the tribal despotism of the al-Sababs. It lists as "*a peace aim*" the dismantling of Iraq as a state—the destruction of its nuclear potential, its chemical industry, etc., and the reduction of its conventional army to a token force. It declares that the "*regional superpower status*" of Iraq must be ended and that no other state must be allowed to take its place. The only practical meaning of that declaration is that America,

assisted by Britain (in other words, the United Nations), must ensure that no Middle Eastern state shall in future be allowed to become strong enough to act independently of them. And it means that Israel is to be maintained as a regional superpower, because not a word is said about the fact that it is known to possess nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them.

(In the publicity of the past six months there has been reference to Israel's "*occupied territories*", as if nothing had happened since 1967. In fact, Jerusalem and Golan are not occupied, but annexed. Israel annexed them in defiance of UN Resolutions, and apparently for the purpose of making it clear that it recognises no UN limitation on its sovereign right to do as it pleases.)

Clare Short not only voted for the NEC resolution, but appeared on Radio Four's *Any Questions* on 25th January, and behaved as part of the consensus.

Since Ireland is not actually involved in the War, and a passive public opinion is more or less evenly divided about it, it is easy to be critical of the War in an Irish context. Mary Holland has been very critical of it in her *Irish Times* column. She has one thing in common with James Connolly, in that she has a British as well as an Irish dimension. But there the resemblance ends. She appeared on the *Any Questions* panel on 1st February, and took care not to upset the appcart.

Brendan Clifford
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February 1991

A United Nations War?

Before 2nd August 1990 the United Nations was a delusory ideal. What is it going to be now?

Erskine Childers the Third (son of the late President, grandson of the British military writer and Irish gun-runner and anti-Treatyite) served for over twenty years in the United Nations apparatus. He saw from the inside how the United States has manipulated the situation ever since August 2nd for the purpose of contriving the War which was finally launched on January 16th, and he described it in an article, published in the *Irish Times* on February 9th. He writes that, though "*the UN is dedicated to 'saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war'...*", in the present instance of a peaceful resolution of the Kuwait issue being actively sought, "*it was deliberately prevented.*" He continued:

"Within 48 hours of Iraqi forces beginning to cross into Kuwait, King Hussein of Jordan had secured Iraq's agreement to halt, and readiness to withdraw, if its long disdained (and by no means illegitimate) complaints against Kuwait were at last brought to negotiation and arbitration through an emergency Arab summit.

"That was to take place at Jeddah two days later. Iraq made only one condition: that there be no further condemnatory statements pending the Jeddah meeting... This initiative was promptly nullified by condemnation from Washington and Cairo. By miraculous coincidence a U.S. \$10.3 billion Egyptian debt was forgiven. Baghdad now assumed war was being prepared."

Childers then proceeds to argue that, even leaving that aspect of the matter aside, the procedures followed, or not followed, invalidate the war in the Gulf from being a United Nations war. He lists the provisions of Articles 42, 44, 45, 46. And he comments:

"Not one element of these provisions has been observed. Without any UN warrant whatsoever, yet claiming to be 'acting under the UN', Operation Desert Storm is using the greatest high-explosive force ever assembled against any country—already five times the force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb"

—and that was in the first fortnight.

He sees the refusal of linkage of the Kuwait resolution with earlier, unimplemented, Security Council resolutions as reinforcing "*suspicion that the US and its key Western allies had intended war all along*".

Childers' view of the politics of the matter is accurate. It has been evident since the first week in August that American and Britain, probably having lured Saddam Hussein into Kuwait by diplomacy, were not going to let him withdraw without a war.

Childers takes the reason to be oil. I could never see that oil was more than an excuse, or a means. In a pamphlet published within a fortnight of the occupation of Kuwait, I suggested that American self-sufficiency in oil meant that, if it threw the Gulf into turmoil, it would have its more efficient economic rivals, Japan and Germany, by the short and curlies. That has been amply borne out. At first America caused the price of oil to go up and down like a yo-yo. And then, having demonstrated its power, it ensured a low stable price for oil when the war began. The Germans and Japanese, who would probably be opposing the War if they were economically independent, are so vulnerable to oil blackmail that they have had to declare their support for the War and even to pay for much of it.

And the reason for the War is certainly not admiration for poor, plucky little Kuwait. I cannot imagine any European or American who knows the "*Kuwaiti nation*" having any other feeling for it than contempt. There has been much talk of "*evil*" since last August. I don't pretend to know what evil is. But I would say that one of the most repulsive forms of humanity in being was to be found in the monstrous paradise of Kuwait.

The reason for the War is to demonstrate United States power to every part of the world, now that America has won the conflict for world hegemony called the Cold War. And Britain joined in so enthusiastically because it found it could no longer play its traditional "*balance of power*" game against Europe, and was having severe existential problems as a consequence: and because, without a major diversion from domestic affairs, the Tories seemed certain to lose the next election.

The crisis is about the New World Order, and secondarily, it is about messing up European development. But the affair has been dragged on for so long, and the war military approach of trading off Iraqi civilians against American soldiers has delayed the decisive battle for so long, that the ruling circle in Russia seems to have been jolted back into a sense of reality about the way of the world—or, what amounts to the same thing, a ruling circle has been reconstituted in the process of disintegration is being stopped

If Bush had joined battle last August, and had accepted a degree of casualties appropriate to the business of establishing mastery of the world, he would probably have found the world at his feet, at least for a while. Nine months later the result may be very different.

Erskine Childers is, however, entirely mistaken when he says this is not a United Nations War because certain procedures were not observed. What's the point in citing Articles, if there is no competent authority to cite them to? The Security Council in the UN Charter, like Parliament in the English Constitution, is sovereign. It

cannot be in breach of itself. Any argument that it is in breach of the Charter is a mere debating point, because there is not within the structure of the United Nations any body authorised to judge the actions of the Security Council.

It was not by oversight that America and Russia made the Security Council supreme. The Charter was drafted in America, and no American politician could fail to see what was *not* being provided for in the UN Charter, because it is what is provided for in the US Constitution—and in the Irish Constitution, for that matter. It would have been a simple matter to give the International Court the authority to decide, on appeal from a member of the General Assembly, whether the Security Council was acting in breach of the Charter. But the UN was deliberately constructed in such a way that there is no appeal from the Security Council. Therefore, whatever is authorised by the Security Council is authorised by the United Nations. And there could have been no real doubt three months ago that the Security Council was giving *carte blanche* to the United States (or to "*Kuwait and its allies*") to make war as it pleased against Iraq. The resolution was drafted in a way that gave infinite scope to expansion by interpretation. If restriction had been intended, the wording would have been different.

One might make the debating point that the Resolution authorising war is being interpreted perversely. But there is no body empowered to make a ruling to that effect. And all concerned knew very well what the functional rules of the United Nations are.

The only real surprise in the affair is that France allowed the thing to be done like this. Gaullism ended last August. That is to say, France ceased to exist as an independent force in world affairs last August. Does that mean that the only resource for its self-respect is to ensure rapid political development of the EC?

Brendan Clifford
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The Iraqi Rebellions And The United Nations

.On April Fool's Day the British Foreign Secretary replied to appeals for help by the Kurdish and Shia rebels in Iraq This reply took the form of a statement to the British media, assuring the British public that "*we should not get into the business of using force which would involve British and American soldiers*" in the effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

A month earlier Hurd had given the world to understand that it was the intention of the United Nations that **Saddam Must Go**. Under that front page headline on March 2nd the *Guardian* reported: "*The Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, yesterday made clear that the victorious alliance against president Saddam Hussein would not rest until the Iraqi leader had been toppled from power.*"

On the same day the Secretary General of the United Nations expressed disagreement with the proclaimed policy of overthrowing the Government of Iraq. He said: "*As Secretary General, I cannot agree with overthrowing the government of a country which is a member of the United Nations*". But who gives a damn what the Secretary General thinks? Certainly not the United Nations.

The Government of Panama was overthrown by the United States army in December 1989 without a semblance of authority from the United Nations Yet the United Nations connived at that action. The United States might, with infinitely greater justification from a United Nations viewpoint, have overthrown the Government of Iraq in March. Its failure to do so had nothing to do with scruples that it might be exceeding its mandate from the UN. The UN resolutions had been freely interpreted by Britain and America during the previous month in a way that gave them ample authority to overthrow the Government of Iraq. And the overthrow of the Iraqi Government by the agents of the United Nations in the first week in March would have been infinitely more humane than either the United Nations bombing of defenceless cities, precisely destroying the utilities on which urban life depends, during the previous six weeks, or the policy of overthrowing Saddam by stimulating civil war, which followed during the next four weeks.

David Howell, Chairman of a Westminster backbench

committee on foreign affairs, who has been flying kites for Douglas Hurd ever since August 2nd, was interviewed on BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme on March 25th. He said:

"Saddam should go... but these things aren't going exactly to script, as the land war did... It may not even be practical to insist that Iraq should stay in one piece..."

After all, he said, Iraq was made up by Britain in 1920, and it might not be practical to keep it on into the 21st century.

On March 25th, it still seemed possible, to those who indulged in wishful thinking, that the rebellion which had been instigated by the United Nations would succeed. And, on the political level, the British and American Governments have engaged in nothing but wishful thinking since last August. Douglas Hurd in particular has been a Machiavellian fantasist. As Northern Ireland Secretary he made a great peace settlement which halted the downward curve in sectarian killing and sent it soaring up gain. And now, as Foreign Secretary, having won a war by virtue of a vast superiority of machinery, he utilised that victory to instigate a civil war in Iraq, without any earnest intention of supporting the rebellions in any decisive way, and apparently without having figured out the fairly simple *realpolitik* of the region.

Anglo-American policy at the beginning of March was to overthrow Saddam by inciting rebellion against him, by facilitating the flow of arms to the Shia rebels in the South, and by restricting under the ceasefire terms, the Government's means of putting down the rebellions. According to a *Guardian* report of March 18th, "*The US position is... to create what one Pentagon official called 'a level playing field' while the people of Iraq fight out their own future*". And James Baker, who has grown to love the word "*collateral*", explained that assistance to the rebels "*may be a collateral effect of the suspension of hostilities agreement that we entered into in military talks with the Iraq forces*".

The "*level playing field*" prolonged the civil war, and maximised casualties, without giving the rebellions any real prospect of success. They had no prospect through their own efforts, because they were not Iraqi rebellions but secessionist movements. Heterogeneous elements were thrown together by the British Colonial Office in

1920, called Iraq, and required to function as a nation-state. The Ba'ath regime is the most successful effort to date to generate national life in the state.

Great publicity was given by the Western media in mid-March to a conference of Iraqi opposition groups organised by Syria and held in Lebanon. The Kurdish representatives were induced to say that they did not want a Kurdish state, and the Shia representatives that they did not want an Islamic state, and it was pretended that the secular democrats represented a substantial force in Iraqi society. The scene was enough to turn one's stomach—a great democratic alliance of irreconcilables organised by *Assad!*

Of course Syria and Turkey, those valiant crusaders for freedom and justice in the United Nations Coalition, might have transformed the situation in the twinkling of an eye by ceasing to oppress their own Kurds, and arranging for the establishment of a state of Kurdistan. Since they did not do that, the Kurdish rebellion on "*the level playing field*" of Iraq was bound to be suppressed. And, in the South, Saudi Arabia knew that it did not want a Shia state on its borders.

Britain and America incited the rebellions of the Kurds and the Shia, prolonged them by placing curbs on Iraqi military activity, and then on April Fool's Day washed their hands of the whole business.

In the Autumn of 1944 the Russian Army (according to the later Western view) incited Warsaw to rebellion

and then from across the river watched the Nazis put it down. Britain and America declare that Saddam is another Hitler. And they have behaved towards the Kurdish and Shia rebellions exactly as they say the Red Army did towards the Warsaw Rising.

The Kurdish leaders declared in January that they had been used as stooges too often by outside interests and then left in the lurch, and that they would not allow that to happen again. Unfortunately, they allowed themselves to believe the United Nations was more genuinely committed to them than the Shah of Iran proved to be sixteen years ago. But, in the moment of truth, the United Nations proved to be only their other oppressors, Turkey and Syria.

As for the United Nations in its universal dimension: the latest motion on Iraq is, as we go to print, being referred to the full membership of the Security Council, having been negotiated over for a week by the five Vetoist Powers. The analysis we made last Autumn is now plain for all to see. It has been said in recent weeks that the War has strengthened the Security Council. It has actually reduced the Security Council to an obvious hulk.

For practical purposes the United Nations is the Vetoist Five. When they act together they need four of the ten elected, transient members as a rubber stamp. The General Assembly is of no consequence.

Brendan Clifford
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East Germany

The socialist states of Eastern Europe were demolished by the Kremlin in 1989. The Kremlin was God in relation to these states, insomuch as they could not survive for a moment without its support. I cannot say precisely when they ceased to have the capacity to sustain themselves but, when I first looked at them in the early sixties, I had no doubt that they were puppet states kept up by Russian strings.

They had of course been established under Russian political tutelage and within the military framework of the Soviet conquest. But, for a decade or so, they had an inner life of their own, and the Russian influence could operate indirectly. The first military action by Russia against one of these states happened in Hungary in 1956. Despite the considerable influence which Russia could exert on Hungarian political life, Hungarian politics threw up a Government which Russia felt it could only cope with by overthrowing it by military invasion.

I have therefore taken 1956 to be the watershed year after which all East European regimes—excepting the regime of Sir Nicolai Ceaucescu—were Russian puppets. Thereafter, it needed only a clear indication from the Kremlin that it would not support those Governments against popular opposition to cause them to fall. Gorbachev gave that indication early in 1989, and by the end of the year all those regimes had gone.

I do not know what Gorbachev's purpose was. I suspect that he outwitted himself with a scheme that was too clever by half for disrupting the political evolution of the Common Market. But there can be no real doubt that it was he who disrupted the socialist system of states in Eastern Europe.

I took little interest in the "*revolutions*" while they were happening. I thought the word was debased by being applied to those demonstrations. The toppling of puppets after the puppet master has let go of the strings is not a revolution. The revolutionary every which caused those states to fall was a brain-wave in the mind of the puppet-master.

The Rumanian events—the only serious contest for power between the state and the demonstrators—gave conclusive proof that the revolutionary was the Kremlin dictator. It was only in Rumania that he could not cause the regime to fall by letting go of the strings. In Rumania he had to organise a revolution in earnest in order to overthrow a regime which had—to the admiration of

Western democracy—developed a capacity to exist independently of the Kremlin. In Rumania the State would not have fallen to mere demonstration, therefore in Rumania the demonstrations had to be stiffened by what used to be called a '*revolutionary cadre*'. Communists loyal to Moscow led the revolution against the Communist who made himself independent of Moscow and accepted a knighthood from the Queen of England. The upshot was that, after the real revolution, the Rumanians found themselves being governed by members of the Communist Party who had led the revolution, and many of the demonstrators were peeved because things had not worked out with them as they had in other places where the revolutions had been mere demonstrations.

The *Irish Times* of 6th May 1991 carries a long whinging report by Helena Sheehan about East Germany since unification, which she describes as "*a brutal Anschluss*". (Much more brutal than the *Anschluss* I would say, in which there was very little brutality. Austria was fascist before unification with Germany, and the merger seems to have given great satisfaction on both sides.)

She purports to describe what is happening in East Germany now from the viewpoint of "*the vanquished*", who, she says, include "*not only deposed politburo or even party members, but those who led the people's movement which deposed them*".

The East German economy is being dismantled, she says, and is being comprehensively replaced by the institutions of the West German economy. And there is great social disorientation:

"I have never seen such a deep and drastic undoing of a social order. People have had the ground go from under their feet and their whole world turned inside out and some are still too stunned to know what happened to them. What most disturbed me was the revelation of how far the social fabric was coming unravelled, how some people were actually unravelling from within. The loss of solidarity in this society in which this solidarity once seemed so strong, not only in general, but in groups and persons I know, ...this really got to me... It is not only a society where no one is sure what exactly the public rules are anymore, but one where very few even know what their own criteria are anymore."

And:

"The tragedy of the *Wende* (great change) was that it

opened everything up and then closed it all down again. During the period of the Modrow government and the Round Table, there was a burst of cultural creativity, people were beginning to shape the sort of society in which they had always wanted to live, to make the sort of television programmes they had always wanted to watch, to write the sort of articles they always wanted to read, to sing the sort of songs they always wanted to hear. I was there last spring just at the end of this period, just as the Deutschmark was casting its dark shadow over it."

The reader of the *Irish Times* is informed that Helena Sheehan "is a freelance writer and lecturer on politics and philosophy", but not that she is (or at least was for a considerable period) a member of the Communist Party of Ireland, on the hardline Moscow wing. And that is a fact which makes the pathos of that last sentence spurious, and renders the general *naivete* of her report unacceptable.

There is little about Bernard Shaw that I admire. But he made one hard-headed decision at the outset of his political career in Britain, and that was not to play at revolution. He refused to dabble in revolution and then whinge about the consequences of failure. He faced up to the massacres in which the Paris Commune ended as the inevitable outcome of bungled revolution. And he became a Fabian. But Helena Sheehan wants to have it both ways.

In the late sixties I gave a series of talks on political economy in Liberty Hall. One of them was about the political economy of the Liberman School, fostered by Khrushchev in the Soviet Union and further developed by Ota Sik in Czechoslovakia under Dubcek. I showed that, in terms of Marxist political economy, the "*socialist commodity*"—the commodity with the transformed nature—was sheer mysticism. It was a slippery concept with which it was impossible to think. A commodity was a commodity—whether in Marxist or Ricardian political economy—and an economy in which all goods were commodities was a capitalist economy.

Those meetings were attended by members of the Communist Party (or the Irish Workers' Party, as it was then called) and by new Marxist leaders of the IRA. Since the "*socialist commodity*" was then the Moscow line, they disagreed with what I said, but were unable to reason on the subject. Their disagreement was purely emotional.

(After one of those meetings I was told that the General Secretary, Mick Riordan, said I shouldn't be let run around wild saying things like that, but should be put in a University. I don't know whether, if the offer was made, I would have gone into a University. Unfortunately, no one has ever tried to bribe me. And, having the habits of mind of the people of Slieve Luacra, beyond the back of Musherah, I have never pined for a University.)

Ota Sik's programme, deciphered from its ideological

code, was for comprehensive capitalist development in Czechoslovakia. Up to the moment when Russia invaded and whisked Dubcek off to Moscow, there was no Moscow critique of Sik's political economy. There could not be because he was careful to express himself in the language pioneered by Moscow. But, after the invasion and the establishment of the puppet Government of Husak, Sik was denounced as the pioneer of a capitalist counter-revolution.

I condemned the invasion without any equivocation. The question of whether Sik's political economy was capitalist was entirely separate from the question of whether Czechoslovakia should be self-governing.

The Communist Party, as I recall, also opposed the Russian invasion, but on the ground that, as it had been saying in echo of Moscow, Sik's political economy was socialist. But the General Secretary did not agree with the position of his Party. He supported the invasion. And, as he was not ousted, he used his Office to accumulate support for changing back into tune with Moscow. Sometime in the seventies, the CPI declared that its condemnation of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia had been mistaken.

At about the same time the CPI became abrasively atheist. About 1964 I had a meeting with the General Secretary in which he expressed strong disagreement even with describing the actual position of the Church in society and with relation to the State, and said that a decision had been taken not to sell Marx and Engels writings on religion in the party bookshop (then on Pearse Street). But I noticed that, in the party paper, support for the invasion of Czechoslovakia was accompanied by atheist propaganda.

Many of those who had opposed the invasion of Czechoslovakia and who believed in the socialist commodity left the Communist Party for the Labour Party then. But the General Secretary introduced couple of Young Turks who put the new line with gusto. As I recall, they were Helena Sheehan and Eoin O Murchu (one of the family of capitalist Murphys for whom I once dug trenches in the outskirts of London).

The Communist Party of Ireland was damn all use when it came to liberalising public life in Ireland. It did not assert its dogmatism when the going was tough. It kept a low profile and applied complex "*dialectics*" to explaining away the obvious facts about life in the Republic. I recall being taken to task for describing the Republic in the sixties as a clerical dictatorship. If you had any experience of life there you knew very well that that is what it was. But it was laid down that, since the clergy were not an economic class, they could not exercise social dictatorship. I asked, if it accorded with Marxism to say that it was a bourgeois dictatorship, exercised in clerical form. That seemed to comply with

doctrine, but it was not approved of by the official Marxists, because their object was to conjure away in thought the brute fact that the Bishops ruled. That was how they sought tolerance.

Catholic Ireland in its prime was unchallenged by the Communist Party. The challenge was made in the middle and late sixties by the Irish Communist Organisation, led by Dennis Dennehy; by the upsurge of raw but highly thoughtful working class feeling that it fostered in organisations such as the Housing Action Associations and the Ballyfermot *Capital* Study Group; and, in the late sixties, by the most remarkable of all the student movements of the time: the Trinity *Internationalists*.

Liberalism in modern Ireland began when the ICO flew in the face of Catholic opinion in 1966, in the most aggravating way possible, and was not crushed. Then or fifteen years later, when Dublin at least had become reasonably safe for atheists, the CPI became atheist in its published materials. And its atheism was interwoven with the Brezhnev Doctrine.

By that time, exhibitionist atheism, which had been necessarily in the sixties in order to establish a point, served no social purpose. What was required in the late seventies and the eighties was the establishment of new cultural trends that people might live in, and a transcending of Catholic-nationalism by the establishment of an adequate historical conception of it. Catholic-nationalism was the cultural medium in which the nation was formed. It was a remarkable historical phenomenon. It changed the real world, and its history needed to be written sympathetically, in order to make further evolution possible. Opinion about the existence of God had nothing to do with it.

It was then that the CPI chose to make an atheist confession of faith, and to condemn the Catholic-nationalism which it had previously denied the existence of. And it did it at the moment when atheism in Eastern Europe had become morally bankrupt.

It is not that viable social cultures cannot be formed on atheist presuppositions, but that the particular atheist culture which the CPI proclaimed in the seventies, and which passed from it to the Republican movement, was a barren atmosphere, incapable of sustaining social life.

Marxism might have flourished if it had developed as a tendency within the liberal European culture of the 18th and 19th centuries and if it had made itself the conservator of that culture. Until about 1970 I had in my own mind always taken it to be that. The point at which I ceased to be a Marxist was the point at which, by consensus of the Communist Parties and the Trotskyist groupings, Marxism was cut adrift from liberal philosophy and was presented as a comprehensive and self-sufficient philosophy on its own.

In Russia and Eastern Europe a semblance of Marxist opposition against Marxist Governments presented itself. The emptiness of all Marxist opposition, and the acceptance by it of ideological taboos set by the Governments, demonstrated conclusively that the capacity for purposeful human thought had evaporated from it. And I demonstrated, at least to my own satisfaction, that Roy Medvedev had a hollow head and that the only Russian head that was full and active was Solzhenitsyn's. But Solzhenitsyn was a believer in God, therefore he was a reactionary, therefore he and anyone who spoke in his favour had to be ridiculed. I coped with that ridicule as a duck copes with water.

Why did the Soviet regime crumble from within? Not because the performance of the economy was poor. The condition of the economy has worsened greatly during the six or seven years of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and there was never any ground for expecting otherwise. Economically, the Leninist regime might have carried on indefinitely. The problem was that it had nothing to live by. I have no inside knowledge, but I assume that *The Gulag Archipelago* and *August 1914* had more effect on the minds of the ruling elite—to which they were available, and by which they were undoubtedly read—than the economy had. I would say that Solzhenitsyn snapped the sense of purpose in the Brezhnevite generation of Leninists, in whom it had already become brittle.

Helena Sheehan must know that, in the game in which she became an active participant on the Brezhnevite side, in the event of there being a winner, winner takes all. East Germany is being incorporated into West Germany because West Germany developed as a functional society and East Germany didn't. So now East Germany is being remoulded by the West. That is happening because the forty-five years after 1945 were a mere hiatus in the East. If a functional society had developed in the East on different principles from West German society, unification would have involved complex negotiation and the united Germany would have been an interesting mongrel product of East and West. But, since East Germany did not live by any vital principle, unification was only a matter of assimilating the East into the West, once the Kremlin gave the go-ahead.

Helena Sheehan's rhapsody on East German life in the Modrow period—the period between the toppling of the old East German regime by Gorbachev and actual unification—is reminiscent of descriptions of Weimar Germany in the 1920s. But Weimar—crippled at the outset by the Versailles Treaty—was not a functional State. It was a pleasant anarchy for some and a condition of misery for most. Modrow's Germany was even less functional than Weimar. If the condition of things described by Helena Sheehan had been anything more than a long holiday, the subsequent process of unification

would be different from what it is. It might be added that, while the Ulbrecht and Honecker regimes were in place, the Helena Sheehans of this world did nothing to bring about the state of liberal freedom they began to admire so much when assimilation into West Germany was in prospect in 1990.

Ten or fifteen years ago, the CPI and associated Republicans preached the theory of two German nations. It was asserted that the separate East German state had taken root as a distinct German nation. The notion even popped up within the B&ICO and was disputed in a series of articles by Angela Clifford. And, around 1979, the B&ICO formally adopted a "*one nation*" view of Germany. I presume that Helena Sheehan, as one of Mick Riordan's militant intellectuals, was then an advocate of the two nations theory with regard to Germany, where it did not apply, while rejecting it where it did apply, in Ireland.

"*Scientific socialism*" has proved to be a delusion—an empty formula which prevents thought and which does not include a culture in which people can live. And, in this respect, there is no difference between Trotskyist and Communist Party forms. I have heard some Trotskyists complaining on television that in Eastern Europe they were included in the general revulsion against Marxism, even though they had always opposed the regimes. But the Trotskyist variant of Leninism is, if anything, even less suitable than the Brezhnevite to be the cultural medium of politics. It is only in the conflicts around Leninist Marxism that Trotskyism has life. To people not involved in those conflicts Trotskyism was indistinguishable from the line of Marxism in power, therefore people did not turn to it in the popular upsurge against the old regimes after Gorbachev gave the nod and wink.

If "*scientific*" socialism is a delusion, what then? Eoghan Harris, who was a scientific socialist for fifteen

years or so, has become a manipulator of "*images*" and an advocate of the dialectics of showmanship. So is it a Barnum and Bailey world?

I was a failure as a Marxist because it always seemed to me that every actual society lived in an actual historical culture. The great sweeps of doctrinaire generalisation made me dizzy very quickly—even though in other respects I have never been subject to vertigo. I always went for the particulars of historical development. I was bred within a local culture which included large remnants of Jacobite and Young Ireland culture and I rebelled against the Catholic nationalist strain in it. And Canon Sheehan is the only Irish novelist that I read out of sheer interest. And the best way I can think to end this article, now that there is so much *angst* about 1916, is to quote from the posthumously published novel directed against the doctrinaire emptiness of the time, Redmondism, that helped to produce the War of Independence: *The Graves At Kilmorna*. The hero, Myles Cogan, an old Fenian, is travelling in Germany on release from a long stretch in Dartmoor, discussing the world with various Germans. On leaving prison, he found post-nationalism all the rage in Ireland. He discusses this with a German:

" 'Well, what is to be will be', said the Thuringian. 'Democracy has but one logical end—Socialism. Socialism is cosmopolitanism—no distinction of nationalities any longer; but one common race. That means anti-militarism, the abolition of all stimulus and rivalry. And who who going to work or fight, my friends, for that abstraction called Humanity? Not I. But, thank God, we have the past to live in! They cannot take that away from us!...' " (*The Graves At Kilmorna*, Athol Books, 2013, p200).

The past has been in scarce supply in Ireland these past twenty years. But the empty formulas of "*post-nationalism*" have left the present confused. Ireland a hundred years on would be familiar to Myles Cogan.

Brendan Clifford
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The Russian Coup

The Russian people were Communist for three generations. In politics they are a passive people, willing to do whatever the State requires them to do, provided this does not make too great demands on them to display initiative. Historically, they are a people organised by a State. They have never led a national life independent of the State, as the Germans did for centuries. And they have never been greatly concerned about the label which the State stuck on itself. Among Slavic peoples they and the Poles are polar opposites. Their only requirement of the state is that it should be the stable framework of their existence, and should not suffer from existential problems.

Some readers may find this kind of generalisation objectionable in principle. If so, they are living in a bygone era. There was a time when it was widely supposed that nationality as a basic organising principle in human affairs was being superseded by some other organising principle which was cosmopolitan in character. That was the time of the Cold War—the time when the world was organised by the conflict of the two great social principles of undiluted collectivism and undiluted economic egoism. That conflict overlay the national question on both sides.

In that bygone era, it might have been unbecoming to show much concern for national characteristics as political factors. The real entities in world affairs were the cosmopolitan blocs of NATO and the Warsaw Pact—the instruments of the Truman Doctrine on the one hand and of the Brezhnev Doctrine on the other. But the Warsaw Pact has dissolved and, in the absence of the Warsaw Pact, NATO has become an ineffectual force in world affairs, despite the ambition of the American and British Governments to preserve it as an instrument of world domination.

When most of the world was organised by NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and conflict was limited to regions of the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa where new states were being formed in the aftermath of the inglorious winding up of Anglo-French-Portuguese Imperialism, national antagonisms were thought of as atavistic remainders of more barbarous times. But, now that we are to have a multitude of states in central and eastern Europe, where previously there were in effect only two states (or two systems of states in which the system hegemonised its component states), that old sentimental attitude towards nationality will no longer do.

Stalin said that the component parts of the Soviet Union were “*national in form and socialist in content*”.

After 1945, the ‘West’ took a similar view of its component parts as national in form and social democratic in content. On both sides, nations were regarded as superficial decorations, creating a semblance of variety in populations that were all basically the same. Each side tried to disrupt the other by encouraging nationalist rebellions, but neither side had any real success in that enterprise.

Soviet instigation was not the cause of the nationalist rebellion in Northern Ireland, any more than Western instigation was the cause of Polish resistance. Irish Republicanism—the genuine article, not Roy Johnson’s Marxist concoction of the late sixties—and Polish nationalism lived their own lives, oblivious to the spirit of the age. They, like the Afghans, are the authentic articles—the incorrigible nationalist flies in the cosmopolitan ointment. They are the insuppressible nationalisms, though none of them has much aptitude when it comes to running states. The IRA spoiled the atmosphere for the West in the idyllic days of the 1970s, and rightly rejected comparison with disgruntled cosmopolitan fragments such as the Red Brigades and the Baader Meinhoff group.

Now that the number of the states in the world is to be increased by the formation of many new nation states in ‘Europe, and that the world is hailing this as progress, let us have the decency to recognise that it was the Provisional IRA that kept the national principle operative in the West during the age of cosmopolitan illusion.

The Russian people were Communist for three generations because the State was Communist. Before that, they were democrats for about nine months because the State was democratic—but because Russia has never sustained civil society at a national level, the Russian democracy of 1917 was chaotic. And, before 1917, the Russian people were the children of their Little Father for about three centuries.

On Sunday, 18th August, the Russian people were still Communist, though their political identity was made insecure by the uncertainty which was emanating from the State. On Monday, 19th August, the Russian people believed that the State had sorted out its existential problems, and that the framework of their lives had been made secure again.

Western ‘experts’ also took the *coup* to be an accomplished fact on the Monday. And the only question being discussed was whether the West should conciliate

the new Soviet Government, or should start up the Cold War again. And a BBC commentator made the remarkable statement that everything now depended on what “*the ordinary decent Communist*” in Russia did.

Over the years, British media discussion of the prospect for peace in Northern Ireland has centred on the mirage figure called “*the ordinary recent citizen*” (ODC). The ODC is a political mirage because he is by definition apolitical. The ODC is the person who wants to get on with personal life and only requires from the authorities that they will provide him with a secure public framework for his private affairs. The Protestant community consists of an abnormally high proportion of ODCs. But the ODC is a figure of no political consequence. If he were of political consequence, he would not be an ODC. Political affairs are, by definition, tended to by people who are not ODCs.

The ordinary decent Communist (ODC) in Russia is very similar up to a point with the ODC in the North. The identity of acronym between the two is entirely appropriate—up to a point. But a point is reached when the ODC in the North ceases to be an ODC. In October 1985 the Ulster Protestant community consisted of something like 99% ODCs. But, in November 1985, almost all the ODCs ceased to be ODCs. The Anglo-Irish Agreement provoked the great majority of the hitherto ODCs into heated political demonstration in Belfast.

In Moscow, on the other hand, the ODCs remained ODCs on August 19th. The ordinary decent Communist, being a sample of Russian citizenship, did not take it to be his business to interfere in the affairs of State. He wanted to know whether the *coup* had succeeded or failed, so that he might know what he was. But he was not so presumptuous as to take sides in the matter before the issue was decided.

The fate of the *coup* was determined behind closed doors. Yeltsin assembled a very small group of people around the Russian Parliament in an act of defiance, and he made a speech or two. When he was not arrested, and when the Parliament building was not occupied, the people of Moscow realised that the old State had crumbled from within, and that they would have to change. They observed this on the Tuesday. And, on the Wednesday, they flocked onto the streets—not to defend the “*reform*” against the “*hardliners*”, but to show themselves that they had adapted to the new order, whatever it be.

On the first anniversary of the *coup*—the first weekly anniversary, that is—an Army Colonel who had opposed the *coup* gave an interview to the BBC explaining his position. He explained that, in his view, the situation had required extraordinary measures. On the Monday morning he had agreed with the declaration of a state of emergency, and he had therefore supported the group

which had taken it upon itself to declare a state of emergency. But, in the course of the day, he judged that the *coup* had been bungled from the outset and would degenerate into fiasco, and therefore he opposed it. He sounded pleased with the way he had behaved. But the BBC reporter could not get her mind around what he was saying. Because he had not opposed the *coup* unthinkingly, on the ground of some abstract principle, but had made a practical reckoning on the basis of some hours’ experience of it, it seemed to her that he had acted a discreditable and shameful part in the affair. That is what BBC reporters have come to.

(The BBC was placed at the centre of the Russian stage by Gorbachev on his return to Moscow. That was one more act of extraordinary ineptitude on his part. Even if the BBC had not lost the aptitude for well-informed, analytical reporting which it once possessed in some degree, it would have been entirely imprudent for Gorbachev to place it at the centre of Soviet affairs at a moment when those affairs were in flux. British broadcasting is, by a Parliamentary decision of the early 1920s, a propaganda apparatus of the British State. And no competent head of any state, whatever the circumstances, recommends the propaganda apparatus of a foreign state as Gorbachev recommended the BBC.)

A *coup* had become inevitable in the Soviet Union this Summer, insofar as any political event is ever inevitable. I can say that with assurance now, a week after the event, having said so in print a couple of weeks before the event, despite having taken only the most casual interest in Soviet affairs during the past ten years.

After the death of Brezhnev, the KGB decided to reform the Soviet State on lines which I described at the time as “*liberal totalitarianism*”. Andropov did not live long enough to give any definite shape to this reform. His protegee, Gorbachev, took over in 1985. He was safe against the “*hardliners*” because he was known to be a KGB man, and Lenin had declared that the KGB (or the Cheka as it was then) was the cream of the Party. The KGB was not only feared but also admired. The talent of the Party was concentrated in it. It was the only region where a semblance of thought occurred.

So the KGB determined on a liberal totalitarian reform, and Gorbachev was its agent. The envisaged reform was self-contradictory in principle. It did not have a realisable objective, and therefore no method could be found of realising its objective.

By the mid-1980s, I had only a residual interest in Soviet affairs. About fifteen years ago I decided that Marxism-Leninism was dead from the neck up. Some Gorbachev enthusiasts told me a few years ago that I should not be so dismissive of him because he was something new and vital. It seemed to me that he was new only in the sense of knowing less about the character

of the Soviet system than I did, and of trying to do what could not be done, and not trying to do what could be done.

Gorbachev's political skill resembles that of Captain O'Neill, who became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1964, when it was a comparatively stable little statelet, and with ineffectual gestures towards an unspecified reform reduced it to a shambles in five years.

Gorbachev brought about a state of affairs in the Soviet Union which could not continue. In the name of economic reform he had worsened the economy year by year. In the name of the market, he had erected barriers to the flow of goods between the different parts of the Union. And he had stimulated the growth of nationalism in the Baltic and the Caucasus, but was not prepared to let the nationalities go their own way. He had disrupted the politics of the State to an extent that had thrown all regions of it into turmoil and prepared it for dissolution, yet he had made no provision for an orderly dissolution. Week by week he was inflaming nationalist sentiment by stimulating it in words and stamping on it in deed. He had reduced the political atmosphere to a condition appropriate to a country defeated in war. But the Soviet Army had not been defeated in war. The Red Army remained the Army of a Superpower, while the State which in constitutional theory was its master was dissolving all around it.

It required no great perspicacity to see that Gorbachev had brought about a highly unstable condition in the relationship of the elements which constitute a state. Since nobody else seemed to be pointing this out, I pointed it out:

"The collapse of the state system of Marxist Communism in 1989 was an unprecedented event in the history of the world, and it has placed the world in a position of unprecedented danger..."

"The Red Army is well educated in politics and knows its proper place in the scheme of things. But when the scheme of things in which it knows its place ceases to exist, what then?"

"No single element in a society can remain in its proper place, unless the other elements are in their proper places. There are no absolute positions for social elements taken in isolation. The elements exist in relationship. Position is defined by relationship. An Army cannot remain in its proper place under the command of the civil power, if the civil power is disintegrating and is incapable of commanding it effectively..."

"...If the Government of the Soviet Union continues to subvert the state, a point must be reached when the Army, as a matter of survival, will consider interfering in politics in order to find a state to be subordinate to. The sharp lesson against meddling in politics, which Stalin taught it in the late thirties, is likely to wear off as the politicians continue to demonstrate their incompetence in affairs of state..." (*Problems Of Communism*, No. 33, August 1991).

In the event, the Army could only very partially unlearn the lesson in political obedience which Stalin had taught it by such painful methods. But the bungled gesture in the direction of a *coup* was sufficient to dispel Gorbachev's dream world. The sleepwalkers woke up with a shock, and what they have been doing and saying for some years began to register in their minds as ideas. And, suddenly, "*in the twinkling of an eye*", as the Bible puts it, they were transformed. One day they were ordinary decent Communists. The next day they were ordinary decent something elses—"*Russian nationalists*" is the word being used, but at this distance from the Black Hundreds, Russian nationalism is to most ODCs a name without definite connotations.

Russian nationalism without the Little Father, without Pan Slavism, and without Gogol, Dostoevsky and Berdyayev—what is it going to be? What is it that is going to be the human subject of Russian Democracy? Democracy is an empty form. And just now Russian nationalism is an empty formula. But it is well to remember that the Russian nationalism of a century ago, which in its most progressive tendency contributed heavily to some of the greatest literature of the world, had three common features: Slavic sentimentality, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism.

Dostoevsky's novels were laid on in the rudimentary Irish public library service of the early fifties, probably because he had the reputation of being a religious reactionary, and had opposed Russian Communism when it was little more than a notion in the mind of Chernyshevsky who was an influence on Lenin a generation later. I was then engaged in a solo rebellion against the dictatorship of Catholicism in Ireland (solo because nobody else would join), and I fed myself on Dostoevsky's exuberant anti-Catholicism. *The Brothers Karamazov* killed Catholicism stone dead for me. So I look forward with interest to what Russian nationalism is going to be this time round. And it will not upset me if Leningrad is changed back into Petersburg, Dostoevsky's city of *White Nights*, which is how I first encountered it.

A Russian lady (Nora Grinberg) who had been an ordinary decent Communist for a while (she explained that she had joined the Komsomol out of respectability and an honest ambition to advance her career), appeared on Channel 4's *Opinion* programme on August 29th, and talked into the camera for half an hour about being Russian. It was a fascinating performance—not a performance at all in fact—which I happened to see just after I had written the preceding part of this article. If I had been doubtful about what I had written she would have dispelled my doubts.

She spoke of the change of Leningrad back to St. Petersburg. (Nobody seems to be proposing that it should have its democratic Russian nationalist name of

Petrograd. Petrograd is nothing. It is where Russian nationalist democracy, in the form of Kerensky, strutted about in its brief moment of glory before driving off to America.) And she made some affectionate comments about Peter the Great. Peter was the Lenin and Stalin of the early 18th century. He compelled Russia to Europeanise, but did so by methods which were not European. He built a city in the marshes to be the nucleus of the European development of Russia, and made it the capital of his Empire. But he built it with forced labour, on a piece of Finland which he gained in a war fought for no other purpose than to gain it. Peter was the organiser of the policy, later adopted by Lenin, of "*fighting Russian barbarism with barbarous methods*". And the people who were sent to Petersburg to be Russia's new European middle class were required by Tsarist decree to learn the art of cultured conversation and apply it at dinner parties to which they invited each other.

(Two centuries and a quarter later, the exposed position of Peter's city on the margin of the state caused the Soviet Government to decide that it needed another bit of Finland to make it defensible. It asked the Finnish Government nicely to hand over a chunk of Karelia. When its request was refused, it fought a war against Finland in the Winter of 1939-40 and took it. The League of Nations condemned Russia for breaching international law. In 1944 Churchill was negotiating with Stalin about the establishment of the United Nations. Stalin mentioned how badly the League had behaved over the Soviet invasion of Finland. Churchill apologised, and assured Stalin that the United Nations would not be permitted to pass judgement on actions which the Great Powers considered necessary to their interests. And Churchill's successors have kept his word. I have heard no suggestion in recent weeks that Karelia be returned to Finland, even though it was annexed by Russia by one of the clearest acts of unprovoked aggression there has ever been. Finland itself does not seem to have asked for it. But Finland learned the hard way that there is no such thing as international law in the world, only Great Power politics)

Nora Grinberg said that Russia is the most literate and most literary country in the world.

So it is. That it is the most literate is an achievement of Stalinism. But it has been the most literary since the 1820s at least. That is to say, it has been the country where literature counted for most in public life. Russia has had literature in place of civil society, and has therefore found it difficult to acquire the petty, universal egoism needed for capitalism of the Anglo/American kind. (The unique social status of Russian literature may derive from the fact that, like the middle class, it was created as an act of State by Peter the Great, who founded and edited the first Russian newspaper.)

Nora Grinberg complained that Britain did not under-

stand this aspect of Russian life. And she clearly felt that a vital element was missing from the life of the free and opulent West, into whose middle class she defected last year, because literature counted for nothing in it. And yet she gave the conventional Western explanation of the course of events in Russia during the past six years—the economic determinist one.

I cannot see how a political movement caused by economic requirements could year by year have the consistent effect of disrupting the economy and cutting off the supply of consumer goods and yet carry on. Russia under Brezhnev was an economic paradise compared with Russia after six years of Gorbachev. But Gorbachev was still offering more of the same.

I have seen the cause of the Gorbachev reform as literary. The KGB was hit by a literary battering ram during the eighties and it was destroyed by the shock.

The name of the cause of the reform is Solzhenitsyn. I published long reviews of *Gulag August 1914*, *The Oak & The Calf*, and *From Under The Rubble*, in which I defended them against the Irish and British Left. The Western Left turned on Solzhenitsyn when he made it painfully obvious to them that he would have no truck with "*positive criticism*" of the Soviet regime. These "*positive critics*" and "*creative Marxists*" were the most useless form of political life ever seen. And the chief of them, Roy Medvedev, was the kept man of the KGB. As I was writing dismissive reviews of Medvedev etc., I often wondered if it was possible for a writer to develop within the Soviet system and do the kind of human job on it that Dostoevsky did on Chernyshevsky. I did not think the writer of *Ivan Denisovich* was it. But then it transpired that *Ivan Denisovich* was a mere ploy which its author used to buy time.

Solzhenitsyn was no mere "*dissident*". He was the philosopher and publicist of an alternative world, and he attacked the existing State at its foundations in the mind. The State withheld his writings from the people, but it could not withhold these writings from itself. And it was the State itself which was most capable of being affected by that literature.

Economic determinism was not an observed fact of life in Russia, but a system of belief. Solzhenitsyn—who would have learned from Dostoevsky that the human environment is not amenities but people—declined to have anything to do with economic determinism. He viewed Soviet history from a standpoint which had nothing in common with either "*creative Marxism*" or the egoistic simplicities of Thatcherism. And, speaking as the heir of Dostoevsky, he told Chernyshevsky's heirs that they had no insides, that they were hollow men.

The KGB were never mere thugs, any more than the Dominicans were mere thugs. Like the Dominicans—

the dogs of God who held Southern France for the Church by terror and preaching—they were capable of great brutality, but were also an intellectual elite. Solzhenitsyn's effect on them seems to have been to change them from Dominicans into Jesuits. And the Jesuits have had a tendency to get too clever by half and endanger the Papacy.

I have no evidence that the KGB, having their heads battered by Solzhenitsyn, sought refuge in Louis Althusser's tortuous Marxism, which took over Western academic life in the seventies. But, when I saw a report that Andropov was dabbling with the idea of governing through sociology departments, I thought they probably had.

Anyhow, there seems to be little doubt that the KGB got too clever by half and undermined a system which would have lasted well into the next century if it had been left alone, and when they tried to call a halt, they found it was too late. At one point the Pope had to abolish the Jesuits in order to safeguard the Papacy. But the man in the Kremlin was no Pope—he was only one of the Jesuits.

I know nothing of Yeltsin, except that he has shown himself to be a politician of Leninist calibre. The day after the *coup* ended, when the world was basking in euphoria under the influence of the BBC, he sobered everybody up by saying that, if the other Republics chose separation, there would have to be revision of borders and population transfers, so that Russia might flourish. That was a slap in the face for "*the world*", otherwise known as the BBC, and you could feel their faces stinging from it.

Nothing like it has been seen in the world since Lenin got off the train at Finland Station in 1917 and, ignoring the garlands, told the welcoming committee that he intended to overthrow what they represented.

The euphoria has been dispelled and apprehension has taken into place. "*The world*" is beginning to realise that nationalism is not to be trifled with.

YUGOSLAVIA

As I write, "*the world*" is very anti-Serbian. It wants Croatia to be permitted to secede from Yugoslavia on nationalist grounds. A war is being fought because Croat leaders insist that the Croatia which appears on the map becomes an independent state. The Serb leaders say that the Croatia which appears on the map is part of Yugoslavia and cannot be maintained otherwise than as part of Yugoslavia. The Serbs in Croatia are Yugoslav citizens, and it is only as Yugoslav citizens that it is tolerable for them to form part of Croatia. But, if Yugoslavia is to be dissolved into nationalities, it must not be on the lines of the internal divisions of the Yugoslav state, but on the lines of the nationalities on the ground. I can see no flaw in that reasoning.

The Croats, who are very much in favour with "*the world*", say that Serbia is Communist, and are not required to say what bearing that has—if it is true—on the nationality argument. Serbia says that Croatia only ever existed separately as a Catholic fascist state under the aegis of Nazi Germany, when it conducted wholesale massacres of non-Catholics, and that in the reconstruction of Yugoslavia it was given large Serb areas by "*the dictator Tito*".

Only the Communist Party had ever transcended the national divisions of the South Slavs. Yugoslavia could only exist as a Communist state. If it is to be broken up because of the overthrow of Communism, the anti-Communists hardly have reason on their side when they base their claims on the divisions made within the Communist settlement.

The "*Greater Serbia*" of the BBC echoes "*Greater Germany*" and thus implies that the regions of Yugoslavia are separate states. They are not. Croatia was made much bigger, under the Communist settlement, than nationalist considerations would have entitled it to be. It is madness for the EC to be encouraging Croatia to reject the Serbian proposal that, if Yugoslavia is to be dissolved, it should be on the actual lines of nationality and not on the administrative divisions made by "*the dictator Tito*" within the Communist settlement.

Brendan Clifford
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