

# Labour Affairs

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## A Thinking Labour Party

Parliament has voted in favour of David Cameron's motion that Britain bombs ISIL positions in Syria. Syria is a sovereign state and therefore the UK would be breaking international law by carrying out bombing in Syria without the permission of the Syrian government. However the UN charter does allow member states to take action, like bombing, in the territory of other member states if it is necessary for their own protection. It is for this reason that Cameron's motion explicitly 'notes the clear legal basis to defend the UK and our allies in accordance with the UN Charter'. The motion effectively claims that the bombing in Syria is necessary to defend the UK and is therefore legal in international law. It's a false argument. ISIL represents no existential threat to the UK even if they successfully execute attacks like the Paris shootings. Also it's probable that the bombing will increase the likelihood of ISIL targeting the UK.

In the past Parliament might well have nodded through Cameron's motion. But Jeremy Corbyn, Labour's new leader, is making a difference. He insisted that MPs think far more deeply about what their votes are expected to achieve than they ever had to in the Blair years. Corbyn is forcing the Labour party to become an opposition of substance and not just of form. And many Labour MPs are finding it very difficult. It is so much easier to just mouth platitudes.

Corbyn demanded of the British Parliament that they do something much more complicated than drop a few bombs. He demanded that they help bring about a 'comprehensive negotiated political

settlement of the Syrian war' and he has called for 'an acceleration of the peace talks in Vienna, involving all the main regional and international powers, with the aim of negotiating a broad-based government in Syria that has the support of the majority of its people. In the context of such a settlement, internationally backed regional forces could help to take back territory from ISIL. But its lasting defeat in Syria can only be secured by Syrians themselves' (Guardian December 2nd). A further strong point made by Corbyn (and by people like John Baron, Conservative Backbencher) is the utter failure over the past eighteen months to cut off money, men and arms to ISIS, which had it been done would have had more impact on ISIS than all the bombing.

Corbyn was unable to convince the shadow cabinet that there should be a Labour whip on the vote on Cameron's motion. George Galloway described that failure as a 'tactical and moral failure'. It wasn't. Corbyn has to work with the material he has to hand in the form of elected Labour MPs. He reluctantly made the right decision in not forcing the whip and instead persisted in arguing his case coherently. His approach has worked and he has likely won over some of the doubters.

Cameron has justified UK bombing of Syria on the pretence that it is necessary to defend Britain and is therefore legal in international law. Cameron knows this is not the case so the question must be asked what his real reasons are. There are probably several.

Cameron feels that Britain is being increasingly side-lined from the resolution of the Syrian

problem. He wants Britain to bomb Syria to show that Britain is still an important power in the world, worthy of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a status that had been threatened by Parliament's refusal to endorse the bombing of Assad in August 2013.

But Cameron's involvement in Libya should make him a very dubious candidate for involvement in Syria. In Libya, via a dishonest interpretation of the UN Security Council Resolution which allowed the creation of 'No Fly' zones, Cameron bombed the Gaddafi army and effected regime change thus creating the non-functioning state that Libya is today. There is little doubt that Cameron would like to effect a similar regime change in Syria today. His 2013 motion rejected by the British Parliament was designed to do just that. His motion on bombing ISIL has also that intention as evidenced by Michael Fallon's answers to a House of Commons select committee on 1st December where he said that ISIL was degrading the opposition to Bashar Al-Assad and that one purpose of the UK bombing of ISIL is to strengthen the military forces opposing the Assad government. This is a recipe for prolonging the civil war without changing the outcome.

In contrast Corbyn is advocating, as stated above, 'an acceleration of the peace talks in Vienna, involving all the main regional and international powers, with the aim of negotiating a broad-based government in Syria that has the support of the majority of its people'. The emphasis on the 'regional' powers is important. Clearly this involves the government of Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian Opposition Committee, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey working out a political solution together with oversight from Russia and America. Corbyn will likely

view many of these participants with distaste. But he wants them to set about resolving their differences politically unlike Cameron who is prepared endure endless chaos and disruption of peoples' lives rather than allow Bashar al-Assad remain in power even if only temporarily.

One of Corbyn's severest critics in the Parliamentary Labour Party has been Mary Creagh MP. The nature of a thinking Labour party is that there will be disagreements and arguments. Mary Creagh's argument will need to be analysed and answered. A weakness in her position is that she cannot see a future Syria with any role for Assad and the Ba'ath party. She is partly answered when Corbyn states that he wants a 'broad-based government... that has the support of the majority of its people'. The implication is clearly that what existed pre 2011 will not be acceptable in 2015. But for Corbyn the issue is to be resolved in the Vienna talks primarily by the Syrian representatives but also with the regional and international powers contributing. Surely better that a compromise for a functioning Syrian state is hammered out around a table in Vienna than that another 50,000 die in Syria.

Corbyn is forcing the Labour party to think hard about all these very complicated issues. In a similar way he has challenged the Tory case on austerity which the previous shadow cabinet was too easily prepared to concede. There was much talk in the media about Britain no longer having an effective opposition after Corbyn's leadership victory. The opposite has turned out to be the case. Corbyn is endeavouring to create a Labour party that is required to think and which may therefore become a truly effective official opposition.

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# Osborne's Sleight Of Hand

Chancellor George Osborne was outraged when the House of Lords urged him to rethink his decision to cut tax credits. He cited the old tradition that the Lords do not amend money bills. With 821 members the Lords is the second largest legislative chamber in the world. However, it does not have a Conservative majority. Following the Lords opinion, the eccentric Conservative Backbencher Jacob Rees-Mogg suggested the appointment of an extra 150 Conservative Peers to avoid any further defeats.

Osborne was initially determined to press ahead with the cuts. But it became apparent that a significant number of Conservative backbench MPs were unhappy with the Chancellor. Around 71 hold marginal seats and feedback from their constituents told them that their tenure was under threat.

One would like to think that the Lords opinion and Conservative Backbenchers' anxieties persuaded Osborne to scrap the cuts to tax credits. It transpired however that the Office For Budget Responsibility gifted him a £27 billion improvement in public finances through a long-term forecast of higher tax revenues and increased economic growth. But the £27bn could also be seen as an example of creative accountancy; plucking money from thin air to get Osborne out of immediate difficulties. It was this 'gift' from the OBR that enabled him to scrap the cuts.

The OBR also allowed him to reverse his decision to cut the police budget. Instead it will rise by £900m in cash terms by 2019/20. This however may have had more to do with the terrorist attacks in Paris and the inevitable media hysteria over potential threats to Britain's streets. This was revealed with an increase of £500m in the counter-terrorism budget. But all is not well with policing. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner and Chief Constables are still feeling the effects of

a 20% cut since 2010, with a loss of police officers and forced mergers of backroom staff. And a reduction of 30% in the Home Office admin budget will add to problems with policing across the country.

Osborne's U-turns have also been possible as a result of proposed cuts in government departments. In addition to cuts in the Home Office budget, there are to be cuts ranging from 14% to 37% in Work and Pensions, Justice, Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Business, HM Treasury, Communities and Local Government, and Transport. Some of these cuts will be offset by increases in capital spending but the overall trend will be downward.

The diminution in Whitehall departments, with the inevitable loss of jobs, will have an adverse knock on effect in the wider economy. Total government spending this year will be £756bn, rising to £821bn by 2019/20. In percentage terms it will fall from just under 40% of GDP to about 36.5% in 2019/20. Osborne claims that the projected 36.5% is economically manageable. But it has the feel of a political decision to shrink the state rather than posing the question: what do we want the state to do? And then setting the appropriate level of expenditure.

Shrinking the state places greater responsibility on local government to deliver key services. By cutting support for councils by 56% over the next five years, Osborne is forcing them to raise local taxes to pay for services such as social care. This will mean councils incurring the wrath of voters rather than the government.

Given a level playing field, devolving responsibility for delivering services

to local government is a desirable aim. But the playing field is far from level. Councils in wealthy areas, mostly in the south-east, are able to raise more revenue than those in poor areas, mostly in the midlands and north. A One-Nation Conservative government is simply not working.

However, not all government departments will experience budget cuts. Defence, Education, Health and Overseas Development will not only be protected but will benefit from spending increases. The NHS is to receive £3.8bn in 2016/17 out of an extra £8bn promised by 2020. The budget for the NHS in England will rise from £101.3bn this year to £119.9bn in 2020/21. But this amounts to less than 1% a year. Moreover, the share of GDP allocated to health will fall from 7.3% this year to 6.7% in 2020/21. And the NHS will have to find £22bn in savings, while nurses take out loans to pay for training. Osborne gives with one hand and takes with the other

The situation for pensioners continues to improve. According to a report by insurers Canada Life, since the recession of 2008 and the end of 2014 pensioners incomes rose while workers' pay stagnated. Canada Life have calculated that during this period retired household income increased by almost a third, while working households experienced a drop of 4.4% in real terms. This year has seen a slight improvement with average pay, including bonuses, increasing at an annual rate of 3%. However, Osborne's boast that living standards have risen is entirely due to the improved finances of retired households; a point missed by the pro-Conservative press. And

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retired households will see a further boost in living standards with a scheduled pension increase of 2.9% from next April.

On the other hand, the introduction of universal credit will mean further misery for millions of working households. A further £12bn of welfare cuts, which will include housing benefit, over the next five years, will be reflected in universal credit, the new benefits system expected to be up and running in 2016/17. The Institute For Fiscal Studies have calculated that under universal credit 1.9m working families will be £1,400 better off by 2020, but 2.6m will lose £1,600. Furthermore, the IFS claim that “new claimants will receive significantly lower benefits than they would have done before the July changes.” In the meantime, the Department for Work and Pensions is trumpeting the good news while suppressing the bad.

In his statement to Parliament, Osborne said that bringing down the debt and reducing the deficit are at the heart of his programme for economic recovery and national security. So far his record is not a good augury for the future. He will have failed at the end of his tenure as Chancellor if his gamble

on future growth and tax revenues falls flat and there is little left of the nation’s assets to sell. A point made by John McDonnell, and entirely missed by his colleagues, when waving a copy of Mao’s Little Red Book. Osborne has continued Thatcher’s policy of selling off state assets, which are often bought by foreign government-owned companies. This was the substantial point behind John McDonnell’s unwise stunt in waving a copy of Mao’s Little Red Book: many things vital to Britain are now owned by China.

At the end of the 2015/16 fiscal year National Debt is expected to exceed £1.5tn, about 82.5% of GDP. In 2005 it was less than £0.5tn, 38% of GDP. Following the financial crisis of 2008 it increased rapidly, reaching over £1tn in 2011. According to the OBR the budget deficit is forecast to be around £65.5bn at the end of this fiscal year in April 2016. Meanwhile government borrowing remains high, with in excess of £54bn borrowed so far this year. Osborne’s aim of a £10bn budget surplus at fiscal year end 2020 looks a tad optimistic.

Osborne’s Autumn Statement appeared to take Labour by surprise. It wasn’t prepared for a blanket removal

of cuts in tax credits. While Osborne’s economics are suspect he is setting a political agenda that appears to resonate with voters. Labour needs to up its game and reassert the case for a strong welfare state supported by a strong economy.

A high wage, low welfare economy is Osborne’s mantra. He is delivering on the latter and believes that the so-called national living wage and a modest infrastructure investment programme will deliver the former. Labour must go further and argue the case for strong state-led investment to increase growth and productivity, the best guarantee of a high wage, high welfare economy.

Corbyn’s election has moved Labour to the left, much to the annoyance of many of his colleagues. His low-key but effective performance at Prime Ministers’ Question Time has often wrong-footed Cameron. It could be said that his persistent questioning of the effects of austerity led to the reversal of the cuts in tax credits. He is not a natural orator, but he has a unique way of making his point. His style is a welcome relief from the blustering bravado of Blair and Cameron.

A Letter to Froggy (This Month-News From Britain) Labour Affairs, November, 2015 Issue.

The piece entitled the Assisted Dying Bill is excellent. I have often wondered what is the best thing for people who are in a terminal state of health. Was assisted dying the answer but after having read the article I am convinced, with its arguments, that assisted dying isn’t the best bet through it maybe creating social problems like sick people thought to be hanging on too long, being too expensive to keep at home or too expensive for the NHS, and for the private hospital insurance companies, and generally being too much of a nuisance.

There is also the past history of the Nazi euthanasia programmes that came to be used for political reasons. Years ago in a discussion on this subject someone asked a question: ‘Did we learn anything from the Nazis in their medical experimentations?’ I was totally disgusted at the question even being raised and said so, end of discussion. Now I think the question should be raised again, in other words, has Nazism taken the edge off humanitarianism.

Assisted dying has been on my mind since a Dutch member of my extended family contracted motor-neurone disease and went through the Dutch easy death method in which his own personal GP and another doctor as a witness helped with the procedure. His wife and teenage children seemed comfortable enough with the event. He did decide to go this way at the very end after he lost the power of speech and was afraid of losing all communication with his family. I was quite depressed by what he did. I had known him as a vital man in his forties who loved life and took part in water sports like kayaking, ice skating and swimming. He was one of the Netherland’s leading psychiatrists. His mother died of the same disease but held out to the end. Being a practising Catholic she thought of assisted dying as suicide. Her son, being a non-practising Protestant thought differently. I felt disappointed with what he decided to do.

So, I am grateful for this article by Froggy.

W. J. Haire.

Every word or act of Jermyn Corbyn is closely scrutinised by the British media. Recently he was criticised for a speech he gave in 2014 in which he questioned the spending of £50m to commemorate the First World War. In the article below, Pat Walsh describes the background to the War and argues that Corbyn's position is a basically honest one.

## An Honest Englishman

by Pat Walsh

From newspaper reports we learn that Jeremy Corbyn did not wish to indulge himself, or the country, in commemorating the Great War of 1914. He presumably sees that War as it actually was/is rather than what it was/is made out to be. He does not subscribe to the fantasy that has been constructed around it. He is not in denial about it. He understands it.

The requirement of commemorating the Great War seems to be all-embracing these days. That is not a product of the Great War of 1914. It has come about through the increased desire to wage wars in recent years by the British State. Britain always commemorated what happened in the Great War, of course, but now it links it up with current war fighting and the view that it is better to be a Churchill than a Chamberlain – which simply means woe to he who refuses to fight (or bomb, these days) people thousands of miles away lest they bomb and shoot us one day. The point that more of them might come and bomb and shoot us because of us bombing them does not count. It is outside the Churchillian narrative and is inadmissible.

Churchill, of course, had much to do with the making of what is now the glaxis of the Middle East. He provoked the War on the Ottoman Empire by filching two Turkish battleships that were paid for and being built in British shipyards as part of a naval alliance with the Turks. The Ottoman Government were asking for a full alliance at this time to try to stay out of the War that was developing against Germany, or at least preserve their territories from the Western vultures who were gathering around and who wished to divide up the spoils of war. Churchill also put a blockade on Istanbul – an act of war – after his navy forced two German ships into the Straits in order to compromise Turkish neutrality.

Churchill also organised the ham-fisted assault at the Dardanelles and then the Gallipoli landings. That set off a chain of events that did for the Armenians and the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire. At the end

of the War, when the Turks were finally defeated, the Muslim territories were taken by England, France, Italy and Greece and Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine were made to suit the Imperial interests. Puppet states and rulers were installed who were subsequently removed when Britain mismanaged its world dominance with another World War. The inhabitants of these constructs were forced to make the best they could of what they were left with and they did until further meddling destabilised them once again, into what they are today.

It all pretty much began with Churchill and his friends. So Mr. Corbyn can rest easy when it is said he is not a Churchill.

It must be said that Mr. Cameron is no Churchill either. How can he be when Churchill lost the Empire and the power that went with it for Britain to start – if not finish World Wars? Cameron can meddle to his hearts content, of course, and manoeuvre to turn world events in his favour and against Mr. Corbyn at the ballot box. But he can be no Churchill, thank God.

What was the Great War all about? Reginald Brett (Lord Esher) someone who was deeply involved in the making of that War wrote to another man, Lord Maurice Hankey, who was also a vital component of it, on the first anniversary of it. He concluded in his Remembrance Day commemoration:

*“Promises and performance: or the great disillusion. What a theme for Burke or Swift!*

*“Even a far humbler pen would be tempted to leave on record the fact that contemporaries of our eminent statesmen were not dupes of the Peace Conference, as nearly everyone but Byron and a few of the shrewder spirits were of Vienna and Metternich.*

*“A war to end all wars! Open Diplomacy! No Secret Treaties! A League of Nations! Self-determination! What has happened to all these fine phrases that not one of them has been translated into the faintest semblance of actuality. From*

*the ashes of the holocaust of youths scattered over France and Flanders, Russia and Mesopotamia – the best blood and sinew of our race – others must hereafter arise destined to that same old Moloch of aimless war.*

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

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

There is the honest aristocratic view of the Great War by those who planned it, not by those who supported and fought it and had to adjust their view of the War to make something positive out of it.

Up until 1914 the aristocracy had handled British affairs in the world with considerable success. From 1688 until 1914 it rarely put a foot wrong in its Empire building, aside from losing America. It had seen off France and confined Russia in its Great Game and expanded Greater Britain across the earth's surface. It controlled one quarter of the world's land surface, its navy controlled the vast majority of its seas and the remaining areas were penetrated by English commerce. The vast majority of the earth was therefore under British control or hegemony.

And then a disastrous policy aimed at cutting down a potential minor rival drastically misfired and produced a global catastrophe.

Out of that catastrophe Britain emerged triumphant and seemingly at the pinnacle of its power. But the victory was illusory because in attaining

it England had badly wounded itself and had had to be bailed out by the U.S. in order to finish what it started. And from there things went wrong in an even more serious fashion.

The Great War produced the Bolshevik takeover of Russia, its settlement produced Mussolini; it produced Hitler and the Nazis; it brought Japan into world affairs and made an enemy of her when the U.S. prevented Britain from renewing its alliance with the Emperor. And it failed to see off Germany because England could not help itself in resurrecting it through facilitating Herr Hitler when the Balance of Power was played again in Europe. And so it led to a Second World War, which Lord Esher predicted in 1919, at the end of the First one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

How was such a national, Imperial and global catastrophe to be dealt with unless through denial and fantasy? The British democracy - that emerged fully in 1918 - had joined the War in 1914 and pretended it was something else.

When Britain encouraged and then joined the European war that was taking shape in August 1914 it made it into a Great War. It was Great Britain that put the Great in the Great War. That is to say that without Great Britain's participation in it there would have been no Great War. In entering the European war Britain stated its aims in grand universalistic terms that were idealistic in the extreme. These aims were not only idealistic and unachievable but they were fraudulent. They were fraudulent in order to salve the Liberal conscience that was confronted by a *fait accompli* that it could not resist. The Balance of Power/Commercial War that had been planned behind the backs of the democracy for more than a decade was dressed up in moralistic finery to justify righteous support.

The objective of what was a Great Fraud was to show to the

world that Britain was fighting a good war against an evil that had to be vanquished. The war was proclaimed as being for "civilisation against the Barbarian", for "democracy" against "Prussianism". And it was also supposedly a "war for small nations" for "poor little Belgium" or for "gallant Serbia" and for a host of other things that just about tolerate mention these days, but which dissolve when any thought is done about them.

What it really came down to was a pulverising of Germany and the taking of its trade and markets in what was a traditional Balance of Power war catastrophically invested with a great moral mission. The Fraud that was perpetuated on the world concerning the character of the War Britain proclaimed itself to be fighting was produced in order to convince any doubters, at home and abroad, about the rightfulness of it.

The Fraud was also useful in enlisting the cannon fodder necessary to see the job through. And when Britain's Great War did not prove great enough to achieve its objectives and the United States had to be procured as an ally to complete the job the Fraud was both perpetuated and enhanced. A massive propaganda effort was launched that not only coloured the settlement of the war to the detriment of Europe and beyond but also created the myths that mystify understanding of it to this day.

The British declaration of War in August 1914 was the point of origin for the catastrophic history of Europe and its hinterlands in the twentieth century. The manner in which Britain fought that war and the peace settlements it determined at the end of it set in motion a train of events that are still working themselves out today with tragic consequences for humanity.

Jeremy Corbyn in wanting nothing to do with the perpetuating of such a Fraud is at the very least an honest man.

## EXISTING STATE OF THINGS

They sang of heroes but their blood and guts  
sung a different song, becoming a glut,  
staining the white poppy an Earl Haig red,  
the biggest bits they could find were their heads.  
Afghanistan failure, the third attempt,  
anything less than bravery was contempt  
for not endorsing the militarist code.  
With metal legs, no balls, no children sowed,  
a clinking army joins the job-seekers,  
past ancient cannon, those brutal reapers.  
Of the incarcerated, one in ten,  
former military find journey's end,  
twenty thousand rock to a jail-house ditty  
while free comrades dwell in cardboard city,  
the wailing in the psychiatric ward,  
one hangs by the neck with pyjama cord,  
the sensitive young mind could take no more  
disorientated on a foreign shore.  
But look out for the rough and ready soul  
who volunteers that extra bit when told.  
No army can be bigger than their dead,  
no sleep longer in that eternal bed.  
Yet less war to the elite is mere cant  
they hyperventilate in parliament,  
seeing Syria as a boil to lance.  
Savagery worn as a gentle flower,  
dressed to kill at memorials jars  
with the call for a peace that smells like death,  
taking down nations with its firry breath.  
Then bourgeois manners with the fork and knife,  
the same hands teaches others how to slice

enemies defending their country as ok,  
bishops ignore munitions when UK  
and in the House of Lords, in purple robes,  
they rant the ineffective moral code.  
But killers have their own modus operandi,  
when a war or two is sometimes handy.  
'Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition.'  
a song from the WW2 situation,  
now ignored in more secular times  
but its sentiments loud and clear still rhymes.  
It is war without victims without names,  
each city is a human-shield-blame-game.  
How gentle is a drone in the clear blue sky  
when judge and jury from its innards shouts die.  
Tornados, Mirages, F-16s rabies  
the plenipotentiaries of Hades,  
the aircraft carrier, missile cruiser  
off a desert coast, the ultimate bruiser  
of some hundred year old tribal village,  
uranium-tipped shells cause fatal spillage.  
The poor is still with us as in Shelley's time,  
in ending, his wishes and high hopes climb,  
yearning for lost peace, love and concord heaven  
in Existing State of Things, 1811.  
So now we enter the land of romance,  
never did such values ever enhance  
England's nation-making history when  
new Tudor England set a cruel trend.

Wilson John Haire. 26th November, 2015

# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND.

On 18 October 1916 Irish Nationalist MP John Redmond initiated a debate on the government of Ireland. In his opening speech he argued that the British government's treatment of Ireland had a negative effect on recruitment. His comments on the Easter Rising, he referred to it as a 'mad rising', and its impact on Irish attitudes to the War are worth noting.

Mr. REDMOND:

I beg to move, "That the system of government at present maintained in Ireland is inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies are fighting in Europe, and has been mainly responsible for the recent unhappy events and for the present state of feeling in that country."

My object in raising this discussion this afternoon is to call the attention of Parliament and the attention of the country to the very serious situation which exists in Ireland at this moment. I propose to snake a general survey—not I hope at very great length—of that situation and of the causes which have led to it. This is certainly an occasion when the public interests can be served by plain speaking. It is a plain, undeniable fact that at this moment there is a situation in Ireland full of menace and of danger—full of menace to Ireland and to all our hopes and aspirations for her entire future; full of menace to that good understanding between the two peoples which has been the great result of the patient labours of the constitutional movement in Ireland for the last forty years, and, I think, full of menace also to the highest interests of the Empire at this moment. In describing such a situation, in endeavouring to explain it, and in offering any suggestions for its amelioration, I feel that one must tread with caution. My object is to allay and not to inflame feeling, to minimise and not

to increase difficulties, and to show how, in my opinion, it is possible even yet to save the situation.

The crisis which has arisen in Ireland was of very slow and gradual growth; but I will only go back as far as the declaration of war. Were my purpose different from what it is, were my desire simply to make a political point in a party controversy, the temptation would, I think, be irresistible to go back far beyond the outbreak of war and to show where the original responsibility lies for what has occurred. But I do not want to make a party speech. I will commence my survey at the outbreak of war. At that moment, fraught with the most terrible consequences to the whole Empire, this country found, for the first time in the history of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland, that the Irish Nationalist representatives, representing the overwhelming mass of the people of Ireland, were enabled to declare themselves upon the side of the Allies, and in support of this country in the War. They did that with their eyes open. They knew the difficulties in their way. They knew, none so well, the distrust and suspicion of British good faith which had been in the past universal, almost, in Ireland. They recognised that the boon of self-government had not been finally granted to their country. They knew the traditional hostility which existed in many parts of Ireland to recruiting. Facing all these things, and all the risks that they entailed, they returned from this House to Ireland and told her sons that it was their duty to rally to the support of the Allies in a war which was in defence of the principles of freedom and civilisation. They succeeded far better than they had anticipated or hoped.

At the commencement—and this is a notorious fact—there was

genuine enthusiasm in Ireland on the side of the Allies. I myself was a witness of that. I addressed great popular gatherings in every province in Ireland in support of the Allies. The whole atmosphere on the question of recruiting in Ireland had been altered, and I say here, solemnly, that all that was needed was a little sympathetic understanding on the part of the Government of this country to have created a practically united Ireland in support of the War. Surely the most elementary statesmanship would have dictated the wisdom and the policy of supporting and encouraging our efforts by every possible means at the disposal of the Government of this country. But instead of that, I am sorry to say that from the very first hour our efforts were thwarted, ignored, and snubbed. Our suggestions were derided. Everything, almost, that we asked for was refused, and everything, almost, that we protested against was done. Everything which tended to arouse Irish national pride and enthusiasm in connection with the War was rigorously suppressed. Under all the circumstances of the case, looking back now, I am amazed at the success which at first attended our efforts. I am not today going to enter into any argument as to whether Ireland has or has not done all that she could. Of course, that topic may be raised and may be discussed later in the Debate or on some other occasion. All I will do now is to point to the fact that Ireland has at this moment 157,000 men in the Army, 95,000 Catholics and 62,000 Protestants, and that she has 10,000 men in the Navy—that is 167,000 men, including both—and that they are drawn—I speak not now of the proportions—from every part of Ireland—north, south, east, and west. But when we entered

on this work our difficulties rapidly increased. The delay in putting the [Home Rule Bill](#) on the Statute Book was really of no advantage to any political party in this House. No party gained the smallest advantage by that delay. But in Ireland that delay gave every opponent of ours an opportunity of saying that we were about to be cheated and betrayed.

We offered at the very commencement of the War many thousands of Irish National Volunteers for Home defence to be put in the same position practically as the Territorials were at that moment in this country, but they would not be accepted, and there was no disguise—and this is the thing that did the harm in Ireland—made of the reason, the reason being that you could not bring yourselves to trust Nationalist Ireland. Since then I am glad to know that 30,000 of these Irish Nationalist Volunteers have entered the Army. Many of them have made the sacrifice of their lives on the field of battle, and very many of them have gained very high military distinction. But if your response at that time, at that critical moment, had been a generous and chivalrous response, if it had been a response of trust when we made that offer, I say that that number would easily have been trebled, and what was regarded as little short of an insult to Irish national feeling would have been avoided. To such extreme and absurd lengths did this distrust go that even a man like Lord Powerscourt, when he came here to London with an offer to raise for Home defence a battalion of a 1,000 men in his own county, was refused. We asked then for the creation of an Irish Army Corps, that all the Irish divisions and regiments should be put together to form an Irish Army Corps. The Prime Minister will remember that in his speech in September last year in Dublin he promised that that request of ours would be acceded to. I am not making any attack upon him when I say that that promise has never been carried out, and we had to wait many weeks and months before the 16th Irish Division was called into being in the South of Ireland.

Day by day and hour by hour our difficult and uphill task of endeavouring to popularise the Army was systematically thwarted—in small things, perhaps, which singly would have been of no account, but which in

their cumulative effect had a damning influence upon the work in which we were engaged. The Ulster Division properly—I was delighted when it occurred—were permitted to wear in their caps a special badge with the red hand of O'Neill. The Welsh Division—the present Minister of War took care of that—were allowed to have a special distinguished badge with the Dragon of Wales. When we asked for a special distinguishing Irish badge for our Irish Division in the South of Ireland it was refused. A committee of Irish ladies—if my recollection does not betray me, I think it was on the initiative of Lady Fingall—came together to embroider flags for the new Irish Division. The offer was accepted with gratitude by the General Commanding the Division, and subscriptions and committees were started all over the country, when suddenly, within a few days, a peremptory letter appeared in the papers saying that the War Office would not permit the acceptance of these flags. Officers Training Corps were established in Dublin University and in Belfast University. I think they existed in most of the Universities of this country. But when the new National University in Dublin asked for an Officers' Training Corps they were refused. When my hon. Friend the Member for West Belfast (Mr. Devlin) raised three or four thousand troops in his constituency for the Irish Division, and when they were being brought to Cork, through Dublin, we asked that they should be allowed to march with military bands from one railway station to another. We asked it as a recruiting device in order to arouse military enthusiasm. No, it was refused, and these thousands of men who had come down from my hon. Friend's constituency were kept at Amiens Street station, cooped up in the train for some hours, then they were brought round by the loop line to Kingsbridge and taken down in secret to Cork.

Then when recruiting committees were established in Ireland, almost invariably in Nationalist districts, the Unionist registration agents were given charge of them. I wonder if my hon. Friend who sits below me, the Member for East Mayo (Mr. Dillon), will be annoyed if I tell a story with reference to him in this matter. The chieftown in his constituency is the town of Swinford.

I need not say what his position is in that constituency. The recruiting agent appointed was the Unionist agent, a highly respectable gentleman. I say nothing against him; but in that constituency, where the Unionists are but a handful, the Unionist registration agent was the person put in charge of the committee, and he decided to call a recruiting meeting in Swinford, and he wrote a letter to my hon. Friend which really was as good a joke as ever I heard. He wrote to him to say, "We are calling a meeting to be held in the town of Swinford and we invite your presence, and I can assure you that if you come you will be well received." Then at all these meetings Unionist speakers were selected. Bands were refused to the new battalions. Now I dare say that in pre-war times it was a regulation of the War Office that a band should be provided out of the private purses of the officers. That may be so for all I know. But here you were trying to create a New Army in a country where the first thing you had to do was to arouse some enthusiasm on the part of the people. The War Office refused to give anything at all towards bands, and I had myself to get up a subscription among some of my friends which enabled me to present a fife-and-drum band and an Irish war pipes band to every one of these new battalions.

When Sir Hedley Le Bas went to Ireland to endeavour to push on recruiting he stated in his report to the War Office, which I saw, that in some places—I will not mention them—in Dublin he was plainly told by members of the recruiting committee that they did not want too many Nationalist recruits, and it was only after a prolonged struggle that we got what was considered by the Catholic Hierarchy an adequate number of Catholic chaplain in either the Army or the Navy. Then there seemed to us—at any rate there seemed to the mass of the Irish people whom we were trying to wean away from their old hostilities—to be on foot a systematic suppression of recognition of the gallantry of the Irish troops at the front. I do not think that there was any single incident that did more harm to our efforts at that time than the suppression in the official dispatches of all recognition, even of the names being mentioned, of the gallantry of the Dublin Fusiliers

and the Munster Fusiliers in the landing at V Beach at Gallipoli. Then we asked that these new battalions should be trained in places where their very presence and appearance would help us in our work. That also was refused. In the whole province of Connaught not one single new battalion was trained. Galway is the headquarters, I think, of the Connaught Rangers. Several new battalions of the Connaught Rangers were raised, but not one of them was allowed to be trained within the confines of the province of Connaught, although there is at the present moment, outside Galway, an admirable training ground properly equipped with rifle ranges and everything else.

Then what about the officers? I do not want to go into the question of Nationalist or Catholic or Protestant, but it is a strange thing—and while such considerations do not influence me, you must realise how they were likely to influence the masses of people in Ireland—that up to the time that the 16th Division went to the front, with the exception of two or three subalterns, there was not a Catholic officer in the Division. That has been somewhat changed now I am glad to say, and some of these other things which I have mentioned have been changed, but too late. The mischief was done at the time when I was striving with all my might and main in this matter, and when I was entitled, in the circumstances, to all the support which the Government could give me. Let me give one more instance, and I will pass on. On the Tyneside in this country, owing largely to the generosity of Mr. Joseph Cowen, I think five battalions of Irishmen were raised. My hon. Friend the Member for the Scotland Division of Liverpool (Mr. T. P. O'Connor) made a request that of those five battalions one at least might be trained in Ireland. Why? We wanted the spectacle seen in Ireland of an Irish battalion from England going to Ireland and marching through the streets of Dublin and being trained there as an example and stimulus to the rest of Ireland. It was said, first, that it would be hard on the battalions, because the men were very often billeted in their own homes, and that it would be a loss to them. But these battalions asked to go, but it was said, No, they would not be allowed.

Taking any one of these things singly,

you may say they seem contemptible and small, but the cumulative effect was enormous, and they took all the heart out of the efforts which were being made. Day by day the undoubted enthusiasm at the commencement of the War began to die down. Day by day our enemies were instilling into the minds of the people that we were just as much distrusted by England as ever, and that in the end we would be cheated and betrayed. Then, what I may call the final blow came in the creation of the Coalition Government. I tell the Prime Minister that, from the day the Coalition was formed, recruiting for the Army in Ireland declined rapidly. From the day the Coalition was formed, recruiting for the revolutionary, anti-recruiting, Sinn Fein party rapidly increased. An eminent Prelate once declared that, in his opinion, Home Rule was dead and buried. Distrust and suspicion spread all over the country, and the spectacle—explain it how we would to the people of Ireland—of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Dublin University being given a seat in the Cabinet as chief Law Officer meant, to the minds of these people—I am speaking of the impression created in Ireland—meant, in the minds of large masses of the people, that in the end they would be betrayed. The offer that was made to me to join the Cabinet of course deceived nobody. Everyone knew that I would not and could not accept it. Everyone noted this further fact that, while representatives of the small Unionist party in Ireland were put in this Coalition Government, into the Executive of Ireland, the offer made to me, who represented the majority of the Irish people, was not an office in the Government of my own country at all, but some unnamed English office. I begged the Prime Minister at the time to leave Ireland out of the Coalition. He refused, and the result in Ireland was fatal.

I did not, however, in consequence of this, even then relax my efforts, but, from that day to this, things have gone from bad to worse. Suspicion and distrust have spread rapidly, and finally came the rising in the City of Dublin last Easter. At first, that rising was resented universally by all classes of the people of Ireland. It seemed so causeless, so reckless, so wicked, and I am to-day profoundly convinced of this, that if that rising had

been dealt with in the spirit in which General Botha dealt with the rising in South Africa, it probably would have been the means, strange though it may sound to hear it, of saving the whole situation. But, unfortunately, it was dealt with by panicky violence. Executions, spread out day after day, and week after week—some of them young boys of whom none of us had never even heard, and who turned out to have been young dreamers and idealists—shocked and revolted the public mind of Ireland. There were only some fifteen hundred men, according to my information, who took part in that rising, and yet the military authorities scoured the entire country, and arrested thousands—we heard the number of thousands to-day at Question Time—of perfectly innocent men and young boys, and spread terror and indignation all through the land. I know myself personally of perfectly peaceful villagers, where the Sinn Feiners have never been heard of, who were raided, in some cases in the dead of night, and in some cases, to my knowledge, against the advice of the local police officer, and young boys were dragged off to Dublin only to be returned a couple of days afterwards when it was found there was nothing against them. By that proceeding terror and indignation were spread throughout the country, and popular sympathy, which was entirely against the rising on its merits, and against the rising when it took place, rapidly and completely turned round.

All this was a terrible and fatal blunder. How different was the action of General Botha. Do you ever reflect how this South African case is relevant to the case of Ireland? You made peace with General Botha, in spite of profound distrust, in spite of bitter and powerful opposition. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman sealed that peace with freedom. If he had not done so where would South Africa be to-day? He trusted General Botha, and South Africa had been, at the time war broke out, in the enjoyment of free institutions for ten or twelve, or more, years; and in spite of that, and in spite of your trust in General Botha, and in spite of the fact that they had the experience of the working for several years of self-government, General Botha was faced, after war broke out, with a rebellion, just as we

were in Ireland. And yet poor Ireland was denounced because a couple of thousand foolish men attempted this mad rising—Ireland which had not been trusted, which had not had ten years' experience of free institutions; Ireland, which had not yet tasted the first fruits of the peace which she had been only too glad and proud to make with the people of this country.

Is the situation hopeless? Is it too late to repair the mischief? Will you trust Ireland even now? When the Prime Minister returned to this country from Ireland, after the suppression of the rising, he solemnly told his colleagues and the House of Commons that the system of government in Ireland had hopelessly broken down, and, as he told us, his colleagues unanimously asked the present Minister for War to endeavour to bring about a settlement by agreement. After many conversations, he put before us a certain set of proposals, and asked us to go back and submit them to our followers in Ireland. We had the assurance that these proposals were accepted by him. We had more. We had the assurance that they were accepted by the Prime Minister, and if we had had the remotest idea that these two right hon. Gentlemen were not prepared to stand by these proposals, do you think we would have been such fools as to go with them in our hands for the acceptance of our followers in Ireland? We had this assurance, we went, and, in the teeth of enormous difficulties, we got our people to agree to most unpopular proposals. We then came back here, and found that these proposals were thrown over by the Cabinet; and the answer that you have given to Ireland, if she were trusted even now, is that you have again set on its legs this system of government which the Prime Minister told us had hopelessly failed. You have set up Dublin Castle, and you have got into it not merely a Coalition Government, but a Unionist Government—a Unionist Chief Secretary and a Unionist Attorney-General—the two men who practically conduct the whole of the government of Ireland. We have it on the statement of the Prime Minister himself that the Viceroy has no power, and we know it. The men responsible for the government of Ireland are these two Unionist gentlemen.

And what is the system of government they are administering? They are

administering a system of universal martial law all over the country. I am here this afternoon to ask the Government what do they propose? The new Chief Secretary went to Ireland to attempt to find a solution. Has he found one? What does he propose? Is it seriously proposed to maintain the present system to perpetuate martial law, to keep a Unionist executive in office, to keep hundreds of unaccused and untried prisoners in prison? I think we are entitled to demand from the Government a statement of their policy. To me, personally, one of the saddest things in the present situation is the danger which in spite of anything I can do, there is that the Irish regiments at the front may not be kept up to their full strength. Personally I would do anything possible to avert that catastrophe. But it is no use you asking me to do the impossible. These gallant men have an irresistible claim on their fellow countrymen. No one can accuse my colleagues or myself of any desire to evade that claim. Several of my colleagues are themselves in the Army. One of my colleagues who joined the Army at the commencement of the War died in the Service very soon after. An ex-colleague of ours, a brilliant young Irishman, Professor Kettle, died the other day on the Somme. At least twenty Irish Nationalist Members have sons in the Army. One of my hon. Friends here has four sons in the Army. Two of my colleagues in this party have had their sons killed in this War. There are very few of us on these benches who have not some near and dear relatives taking all the risks side by side with you.

What I feel about these Irish soldiers is this: I feel that by their gallant deeds they have already won a new place for Ireland before the world, a new place in the policy and councils of the Empire. My conviction is that it is for Ireland in her own interests to keep that place, and it is for the Empire in the Empire's interests to enable her and to help her to keep it. How? By removing once and for all this fog of bad faith and bad management, and by settling Ireland on a basis of freedom and responsibility. I put on one side for the moment the question of Conscription in Ireland. All I will say of that, at this stage—we may have to speak about it later on—is that it would be not a remedy but an aggravation, and I

cannot bring myself to believe that any man responsible for the government of Ireland, either in the civil or in the military sphere would, at this moment, recommend it. What, then, you say, can nothing be done? I will state what in my opinion can be done—done, first of all, by the authorities I am speaking of. I will refer to the responsibility of the Government later on. From the first it seemed to us in Ireland as if there had been a distinct desire to deplete the 16th Division. Drafts have been sent to my personal knowledge from the 16th Division since they went to the front to English Divisions. Three hundred men of one of our reserve regiments in Ireland were the other day put into kilts and sent to a Highland regiment. A similar draft was only the other day sent from another of our reserve regiments to an English regiment. My hon. Friend the Member for Galway had a question about the 10th Dublins.

Let the House bear with me for a moment while I tell them something about the history of the 10th Dublins. At the commencement of the War a battalion called the "Pals Battalion" of the Dublin Fusiliers was raised in the City of Dublin. It was composed of young university men, athletes, and young professional men, and so on, who went in their hundreds and enlisted as privates in this regiment. They went out to Gallipoli, and in two days 75 per cent. of that gallant regiment was destroyed. One would think that would have damped the ardour of the City of Dublin. Not at all. The men in the City of Dublin thought the best monument they could raise to their sons who had died so gallantly in Gallipoli was to raise a new "Pals Battalion," and so they raised the 10th Dublins, one of the finest battalions ever raised in Ireland. I met them two months ago, by chance, at Holyhead; I was on the platform when the ships came sailing in, with Irish war pipes playing Irish national airs. I saw them filing down; they marched past me almost all carrying a little green flag on their bayonets. They recognised me and greeted me warmly, and I said to them, "Well, you are going to the front. I am sure you will maintain the traditions of your gallant Irish regiment." Yes, but where did they go? What right has the War Office to reproach us with not keeping up the Irish Divisions when they send a battalion like that, not to

an Irish Division, but to a new Division called the Naval Division, made up, I suppose, of Marines. I demand, as a right, when we are told we are not keeping up our 16th Division, that that magnificent battalion, which was raised for the purpose of doing honour to the Irish Army at the front, should go to the 16th Division.

Let me say something more that the authorities can do. One of the most encouraging things that I have heard about the War is the large proportion of the casualties which are slight wounds, so that the men in a month, perhaps more or less, are able to return. My information is, so far as the 16th Division is concerned, that hundreds and hundreds of these wounded men from the ranks sent to the base hospital at Boulogne or elsewhere, on recovery, are sent, not to the 16th Division, but to English Divisions. So long as these things happen, what a mockery it is to us to reproach us with not keeping up our Division! Then I complain of the persistent refusal, notwithstanding Army Orders I see published in the newspapers, of recruiting officers in Great Britain to send Irish recruits to the Irish regiments to which they desire to go to. Men ask to be sent to Irish regiments and are put, against their will, into English and Scottish regiments. I was talking today to an officer who called my attention to the fact that there are twenty times more Irishmen in English, Scottish and Welsh battalions in the Army than there are Englishmen, Scotsmen and Welshmen in Irish regiments. Why persistently refuse to transfer these men? I have had scores on scores of letters from these Irishmen in British battalions asking me to get them transferred to the Connaught Rangers or the Dublins. I have never succeeded in a single case in getting them transferred. Why should they not be allowed to do it? Why should not any man who chooses be allowed to volunteer to go from the Gordon Highlanders or the Seaforth Highlanders to join the Connaught Regiment?

I pass from individual men to the battalions. There are many, very many, entirely Irish battalions raised in this country. I spoke a moment ago of the five Tyneside battalions. In all nearly 100,000 Irishmen have joined the Colours in Lancashire. There are in Liverpool battalions called the Liverpool

Irish. Why not allow one or two of these battalions to join the 16th Division? Let me take a case in point. There is a gallant regiment here in London called the London Irish. I remember at the commencement of the War, when a notice appeared in the "Gazette," leaving out the word "Irish." When I questioned the War Office about it in this House I was told that they had no such right to be called the London Irish as the London Scottish had to be called the London Scottish, as they had no records; they were a new battalion. When I enlightened the ignorance of the War Office by showing them the records of this battalion, going back for nearly 100 years and containing the names of most distinguished soldiers, then an assurance was given me that once again they would be allowed to call themselves the London Irish. You know what the London Irish have done in the War; they are the regiment who captured Loos, who dribbled a football in front of them. You know what they did on that occasion and on others. Now the London Scottish have been attached to the Gordon Highlanders. Why will you not allow the London Irish to be attached to the 16th Division? Is not that a reasonable request? But no, that request has been refused, and they have been attached to the Rifle Brigade. I say if the London Scottish have a right to be attached to the Gordon Highlanders, the London Irish have a right if they choose—and they are anxious for it—to be attached to the 16th Division. In these ways the authorities may do a great deal—a very great deal indeed—to help us in this matter of the Irish Division.

But I recognise fully—I would not be honest if I did not say so plainly—that these expedients cannot fully meet the case. The case can only be met by boldly grappling with the situation in Ireland itself. So long as the present state of government exists in Ireland, so long will the present excited and irritating national public feeling exist there, and so long as that feeling exists, everything will be wrong. So long as the Irish people feel that England, fighting for the small nationalities of Europe, is maintaining by martial law a State Unionist Government against the will of the people in Ireland, so long no real improvement can be hoped for. Let the Government withdraw martial law, let them put in command of the

forces in Ireland some man who has not been connected with the unhappy actions of the past. Let the administration of the [Defence of the Realm Act](#) be as stringent as you like, but let it be animated by the same spirit and carried into effect by the same machinery as takes place in Great Britain. Let the 500 untried prisoners be released, let the penal servitude prisoners be treated as political prisoners, and, above all, and incomparably more important than all, let the Government take their courage in both hands and trust the Irish people once and for all, by putting the [Home Rule Act](#) into operation and resolutely, on their own responsibility, facing any problems that that may entail.

One hon. Gentleman who has notice of an Amendment to my Motion on the Paper speaks of this as a matter of purely domestic controversy. But this is not a matter, if I may respectfully say so to him, which concerns only Ireland and Great Britain. It concerns the highest interests of the Empire and of the War. I have myself intimate personal knowledge of how injuriously the Irish situation is affecting the interests of England and the best interests of victory for England all through the Continent of America. It is having, as the Government themselves well know—and there is not a man who does not know it—the same effect in the Dominions, and especially is it having its effect in Australia. As one who has honestly done his best, and who is prepared to continue honestly doing his best, no matter what the risk to his popularity or his influence, to help you to win this War I do beg of the Government to hearken seriously to my warning and my advice.

Mr. HAYDEN:

I beg to second the Motion

Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



Cameron took advantage of the 13 November Paris massacres to gain a vote, long denied, for bombing in Syria. The situation in France and England being different, Cameron will not reap the popularity that Hollande has, with his extra 20 points in the French opinion polls. On the contrary, emotion being more or less absent, a lot of good arguments were aired in the house of Commons and in the media and will stick in people's minds.

The *Spectator*, and Simon Jenkins in the *Guardian* approved Corbyn's stand. A lot of good points were made in Parliament: Bombing supposedly does not make the UK a target for attacks but according to Eliza Manningham-Buller, director general of MI5 during the invasion [of Iraq]:

"The bombing increased the terrorist threat by convincing more people in the region that Islam was under attack. It provided an arena for jihad."

Attacks from the air will not destroy ISIL so we also need ground troops: Cameron mentioned 70 000 moderate troops ready to complete the mission. The head of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee said this figure was a 'revelation' to him.

The UK has 'unique' weapons like the Brimstone, which will make a difference: but the Saudis have been using these very same weapons since February with no good result.

Two years ago Cameron wanted

to bomb Assad, now he wants to bomb Assad's enemies.

If the Chilcot inquiry had produced its report, we might have learnt something to help in the present situation.

Conservative MPs made good points: Kenneth Clarke (we should negotiate with Assad), Peter Lilley (there are no moderates in Syria) John Baron (we risk repeating the errors we made in our interventions in Iraq, in Afghanistan post -2006, and in Libya.) Gerald Howarth (the Prime Minister should intensify his discussions with President Putin) Bernard Jenkin (the US seem to be lukewarm against ISIL: whereas during the Bosnia conflict they made 130 sorties a day, in Syria it is an average of perhaps 7 sorties a day). Edward Leigh (we have to cooperate with Russia, Assad and the Syrian army if we are to complete a bombing war and forward to the reconstruction after that.) Richard Fuller (the Iraq war aggravated the separation between British Muslims and the rest of the British population. Is the Prime Minister sure this will not happen again as a consequence of the decisions that he makes after today?)

There is an impression that the best and clearest points were made by Conservatives, unless their contributions stood out because they were speaking against Cameron.

The outcome of the vote will do nothing to weaken Corbyn's position, on the contrary; the Prime Minister may have won, but public

opinion is on the side of Corbyn. On the day of the vote, 2 December, 54% of the country was reported to reject bombing.

### COP 21

This is the UN Climate Conference in Paris, November 30 to December 11. It could not have come at a worst time. The Greats of the world are much more interested and involved in the Syrian events than in this conference. 'COP 21' stands for 'Conference Of the Parties' to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The conference is also known as 'CMP 11', 'Meeting of the Parties' to the Kyoto Protocol 2005.

The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty, which extends the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that commits State Parties to reduce greenhouse gases emissions, based on the premise that global warming exists and man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have caused it.

The Conference does not address the unsustainable and wasteful use of resources by the Western world, only the emission of greenhouse gases. This has the advantage of leaving unmentioned the real problems, and of projecting an aura of uncertainty over the discussions, since the public still has the impression that the issue is a matter for debate.

Moreover, since the solution is less production of coal, gas and oil,

it would make impossible the Western way of life, and has therefore no chance of succeeding.

And finally, since the developing world is only holding out against the intention of the United States to create a ‘unipolar’ world, i.e. a world entirely dominated by them, by developing as fast as they can in order to be strong enough to withstand US pressure on them, they will not want to put themselves in danger by reducing production.

It is an occasion for the US to bully weaker countries however.

### The Pope’s Encyclical on the Environment

The Pope’s Encyclical on the Environment ‘Laudato Si’ enjoins the world to look after our common home, the Earth. It does not limit itself to ‘green house gases’, but properly addresses the wasteful Western way of life and recommends moderate consumption.

The Pope has God, and his mission, to keep him occupied. What do Westerners have to keep them happy? New shiny baubles, and the promise of perpetual upgrades. (This is our ‘way of life’ which we bomb Syria to defend, according to Cameron and Hollande.)

### The greasy pole

This absence of idealistic belief and this concentration on material goods is one cause of the radicalization of some young people in France. What does France have to offer young people: a struggle up the greasy pole for jobs and money. Some can only look at others engaging in that struggle, with no way of getting even near the bottom of the pole.

Another cause is the sickening spectacle of wars led by powerfully armed Western powers against weak countries, as Thomas Piketty, economist and now adviser to

Corbyn, explained in *Le Monde* of 21 November:

‘A few hundred dead in the Western coalition to give back the oil to the emirates and to Western companies [in Kuwait 1990-1] as against a few thousands on the Iraqi side; in the Iraq war between 2003 and 2011: around 500,000 Iraqi dead, as against more than 4,000 American soldiers killed. There is also an extreme asymmetry in human losses in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This reality serves as justification for the jihadists.’

Piketty goes on to criticize Western support for the tiny countries who sit on oil resources:

‘Oil resources are concentrated on small unpopulated territories. If we look at the zone from Egypt to Iran, via Syria, Iraq and the Arab peninsula, that is around 300 million inhabitants, we see that oil monarchies gather between 60 and 70% of the Gross Domestic Product of the region, for just about 10% of the population, making this the most inegalitarian region of the planet. Yet we give our support to these monarchies and sell them our arms. Our propaganda for

democracy can only sound hollow.’ ‘What we need is a development model that is social and equitable, both here in France and there in the Middle East.’

Meanwhile the chaotic situation in France helps the National Front gain votes; in the forthcoming regional elections, voters in 6 regions (out of 14) say they will vote NF in the first round.

The head of the Employers Federation (MEDEF or ‘Movement of the Enterprises of France’), Pierre Gattaz, made a speech to say the NF economic programme (pension age of 60, leaving the Euro, a higher minimum wage) would be a disaster.

Sarkozy, leader of his renamed party (the UMP is now ‘LR’ for ‘Les Republicains’), still has a slightly better foreign policy than Hollande; he is keen to work with Russia. Hollande however is at the highest point in popularity since his election, thanks to the emotion created by the attacks of 13 November. It is doubtful however that it will be reflected in good election results for the Socialist Party.

Every daring attempt to make a great change in existing conditions, every lofty vision of new possibilities for the human race, has been labelled Utopian. Emma Goldman

Economics is extremely useful as a form of employment for economists. John Kenneth Galbraith

Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character had abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour, and courage which it contained. John Stuart Mill

Democracy is when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers. Aristotle

Democracy is a form of government that substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few. George Bernard Shaw

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Paris Bombings:

### Failure of the New Right

Society is an organic thing. Humans will not live together peacefully unless they are convinced that they have reasons better than crude self-interest to actually do so.

The French Revolution was a genuine liberation, but also a spectacular failure of the Enlightenment's notion that 'rational self-interest' would solve everything. Because once you break the comfortable web of custom and habit, you raise the question of who the 'self' is and what its interests are. And *there is no simple answer that will easily gain general acceptance*. Philosophers often claim to have one, French philosophers especially: but no two are alike and none have solid reasoning behind them. The more people think about the matter, the more they are likely to disagree. Is the 'self' really an 'it' with an abstract identity? If not, then just what is it?

Europe in general and France in particular imported vast numbers of Muslims as cheap labour. And made little allowance for building organic links with these new citizens. France, unlike Britain, never had a strict colour-bar. But it *did* have a gigantic colour-bias and cultural bias. Small numbers of non-whites could be taken up and cherished – most notably Edith Piaf,<sup>1</sup> who had some Moroccan ancestry and who was raised in a brothel. But for every cherished Piaf there would be 999,999 others who remained marginal and were expected to quietly endure it.

And they are no longer willing to endure it. Faced with a system that tells them they are free and equal and then treats them like dirt, they no longer accept it. Yet socialism or communism have lost ground as secular alternatives. Many socialists have been reverting to bad old chauvinist habits. Many socialists have accepted New Right notions of cherishing capitalists as the only possible wealth-creators. They impose austerity to keep up the value of the banks' gambling debts, with bank nationalisation deemed unthinkable.

Faced with massive and continuous injustice towards the poor and towards Arabs and Muslims, significant numbers of young Muslims have decided that they are living among enemies and ought to be fighting. It's regrettable that they've fought by utterly vicious methods and with self-defeating sectarianism, but it's hardly unexpected. Revolutionary Communism would have organised them better, but the West put enormous effort into defeating it among Arabs and Muslims. They boosted and in part created the secular nationalist dictators that they then set about destroying after the fall of the Soviet Union

Treat people like garbage and you have no right to complain about the smell. But human weakness being what it is, rich and powerful bunglers attract a whole swarm of praise-singers. These are morally worse than the original bunglers: they ought to know better. People speak of 'presstitutes': but unlike prostitutes, they are not giving

value for money. Doomed policies remain doomed even if you can talk the public into believing them.

It need not have been so. After the experience of Fascism and faced with a global challenge from Leninism, the West decided to restore the organic links damaged by capitalism. There was a commitment to generous welfare and to full employment. It worked OK, but got disrupted by the 1960s demand for more sexual and personal freedom. The establishment was baffled by this – surely people already had *freedom*, or at least as much freedom as any reasonable person could ask for. But for the Baby Boom generation, limits on their freedom were not reasonable at all. And they paid too little attention to the actual achievements of the system they opposed: the precious gifts of generous welfare and full employment.

This set the stage for the rise of the New Right. Let people have their sex, drugs and rock-and-roll. For Libertarians this was fine: if it killed some of them it would improve the species. But also reject both generous welfare and full employment: let the market decide. Most of them stopped short of wanting to abolish welfare completely, but favoured returning it to the mean-spirited workhouse system. Don't let the poor actually starve, but give them the minimum you could get away with. Keep on insulting them for failing to find jobs that just are not there and which were intentionally moved to low-wage countries.

This had to be dressed up somewhat to make a type of right-wing

politics that a majority would vote for. Reagan and Thatcher didn't denounce ordinary people for making unreasonable demands on the rich: they used various genuine errors and failings to convince ordinary people that generous welfare and full employment were burdens on the working mainstream, exploited by wastrels and parasites. Of course there *were* some real instances: the Left made a strategic mistake by not constantly insisting that these were small exceptions. And by not keeping on hammering the point that 'reforms' favoured by the New Right have greatly multiplied the number of wastrels and parasites, while reducing opportunities for honest work. That most 'reforms' are a reactionary return to systems that had already failed once.

The Left also messed up by making crude comparisons with fascism. There was indeed a shared admiration for violence and trickery. But whereas fascism aimed to repair damaged organic links on a reactionary basis, the New Right saw these things as needless expenses. Were keen to erode them and ease the burden on the rich.

They also promised 'trickle-down': that the newly liberated rich would create more wealth for everyone. But when this failed to happen, once again the Left let them get away with it. A lot of the Left never outgrew the 1960s dislike for the world they grew up in, and so failed to defend those parts of it that had been sound and worthy of praise.

Fascism could almost certainly have created a stable new order on a reactionary basis, had it won militarily. In this the New Right also differ from fascism: they were unable to create the promised New World Order after the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union. (Which with hindsight had been in decline since their 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia and the crushing of serious reform.)

The New Right had no clear idea what to do with their unexpected victory over the Soviet Bloc. What ideas they did have were wrong. Rather than reform the UN to suit themselves, they preferred to bypass it when it would

not obey them. With the Soviet collapse, the USA military was stronger than the combined forces of the rest of the world. Surely this massive might and firepower could impose whatever the US chose, with Britain as minor military help and a major booster politically? Surely they now could reshape the world as they wished?

Except they couldn't. The New Right in their attempts to remould Iraq managed to spectacularly disprove their own notion that the state machine was a pointless burden and could be abolished. Demonstrated the enormous difficulty in forming a self-regulating society acting according to Western notions. With the state removed, people living in the arbitrary territory labelled Iraq re-discovered and affirmed older and stronger identities. Even individuals who had no such wish faced an outbreak of sectarian strife that soon taught them that they were only safe among 'their own'. And if you were a small community you had no future – Iraq's remaining Christians and various other non-Muslim minorities are doomed to death or exile.

In the West, New Right policies have eroded existing organic links. This weakness shows up first where those links were already weak: with people who are both poor and culturally different. Finding themselves unwanted, a lot of them turn to alternative rebellious authorities that are very glad to have them.

I mentioned earlier that there was a shared admiration for violence and trickery between old-style fascism and the modern New Right. But admiration for violence is also a feature of the Islamist hard-liners, and it sells as such. If it's like something from a horror movie: horror movies have become a major part of Western culture. And Hollywood regularly churns out 'action movies' in which small bands of heroes fight violently and destructively against some wicked superior authority.

People involved in extremism are mostly those who have left their traditional culture and absorbed a lot of Western ideas, yet failed to find a

decent role for themselves. People denied a regular place in the society now make their own drama with themselves in a starring role.

(Not, indeed, that all of them were unsuccessful in Western terms. Osama bin Laden came from a rich well-connected family. He had grand credentials for having been an Islamic extremist in Afghanistan when the Soviets were there and the West approved of him. I don't think he was the only one, either.)

### Say Daesh, not ISIS

I've talked before about the Western media's error in confusing the extremists with the Muslim majority. Calling them 'Islamic State' or similar. Maybe they think this is smart, since the Muslim majority also insist that Israel is being grossly unfair and are affirming their Islamic identity against an increasingly cold and hostile Western world. Maybe they think that lumping together terrorists with those who are just anti-Western will stop them being anti-Western. Maybe: but if so, it is an enormously foolish idea. The whole trend has been for those who started out moderately religious to intensify it in the face of hostility. Likewise those who started out moderately anti-Western get hard-line and maybe ready to fight.

If the wisdom of the New Right were true it would be otherwise, certainly. But this is one of their many failures to understand the wider world as it exists outside the small and artificial worlds of commerce and 'the media'. Like fascists, they are burdened by an ideology that tells them falsehoods about the basics of the modern world. Their falsehoods are somewhat different from fascist falsehoods, but still very damaging.

Finally some people are learning the advantages of making a separation. In a speech following the Paris terror attacks, President Francois Hollande used the word 'Daesh' for the group sometimes known as ISIS and sometimes 'Islamic State'.<sup>2</sup> Daesh is an Arabic acronym for the group's original name, before it claimed to be the Islamic State led by a self-styled

Caliph. It has the advantage also of sounding very rude in Arabic. And for Westerners, it should make clear that this is one particular hard-line sect, very different in its aims and methods from most Muslims.

(By analogy, the Jehovah's Witnesses are undoubtedly a sect of Christianity, but viewed as eccentric and even absurd, though entirely law-abiding. The Klu Klux Klan makes a lot of claims to be Christian, but is viewed as criminal and a disgrace by most Christians outside of some surviving racists in the US South. And so on.)

Saying 'Daesh' more often would help, but is only a small measure. For they've been succeeding politically, even while they are contained militarily. Daesh have forced the leaders of the Anglosphere and the European Union to treat them as a power rather than a bunch of marginal unimportant people. Not necessarily people with a deep inner certainty about their faith – confident people are very seldom radical extremists. Maybe people feel that life is not worth living if the options offered by the New Right and by capitulating socialists is all that is on offer.

The Daesh are people of Muslim origin who have absorbed a lot of New Right values and then become violently hostile to the New Right project for world domination. Not unexpected, since the USA and European Union took advantage of the Soviet collapse to try to make themselves bosses of a grossly unjust New World Order. They largely ignored the United Nations structures that they themselves had created when they were wiser and more frightened.

Now they are frightened again. But have no ideas except to demand that everyone ignore their failures and rally behind their incompetent leadership.

### China's Mixed Economy

"The five year plan system is a Soviet-style throwback from China's Communist past, but it remains a pivotal feature of the Chinese government. We're just concluding the twelfth version of the plan.

"Communist Party cadres are evaluated on how well they meet the plan's targets. Sometimes, this leads to forest-for-the-trees situations: it's not unusual for the plan's wider objectives to be thrown out the window in order to achieve an obscure data point....

"Attempts to steer the economy into a new direction formed another part of the last five year plan.

"China's leaders have stated repeatedly they want to move away from a dependence on low-cost exports towards more sustainable growth that relies on the service sector, high-end manufacturing and domestic consumption.

"Did the government achieve its economic reform goals under the five year plan?"

"Technically, yes. Many of the economic targets in the plan appear to be on target."<sup>3</sup>

The above is the BBC assessment. What they *don't* mention is that China has for many years been moving away from its flirtation with New Right values. Even before the 2008 crisis, the leadership decided that both foreign investors and Chinese capitalists had more authority and independence than their usefulness merited.

China's top leader Xi Jinping has now put it more forcefully:

"The president highlighted the need to uphold and improve the basic socialist economic system, stressing that people should consolidate and develop the public sector while encouraging, supporting and guiding the non-public sector to develop.

"The mainstay status of the public ownership and the leading role of the state-owned economy must not waver," he said, adding that these could ensure that people from all ethnic groups share the fruit of development, and they are guarantees for solidifying CPC's ruling status and adherence to the socialist system."<sup>4</sup>

The trend for some time has been for the state to take back control. If markets are permitted in new areas, these are markets that stay well-regulated. This is nicely set out in a book called *The Global Rise of China*,<sup>5</sup> which speaks of the rise of what they call

'State Neoliberalism'. The term Mixed Economy has dropped out of common usage, but that's clearly what it is.

### UN Rejects Catalan Independence

"The United Nations does not view Spain's separatist-ruled Catalonia region as having the right to self-determination, U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon said in an interview published Saturday.

"Spain is an independent and sovereign country that includes the Catalan region," Ban told four Spanish newspapers..

"It is in this way that it was admitted to the United Nations and acts within the international community," he said, according to a Spanish translation of his comments...

"Ban said the U.N. did not recognize Catalonia as a non-autonomous territory that should be able to claim the right to self-determination.

"When one speaks of self-determination, certain areas have been recognized by the United Nations as non-autonomous territories. But Catalonia does not fall into this category," he told the Spanish press.

"A positive aspect of Spain is that there is respect for diversity: the culture, the languages, the traditions," he added."<sup>6</sup>

The United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories<sup>7</sup> was drawn up in 1946 as part of a general campaign to end colonialism – *not* part of the original Charter, which had the British Empire and French Empire as senior founders. It is rather arbitrary but is the only applicable law. And has mostly defended existing states against secessionists, even those with clear majority support from the region they wish to separate.

### Snippets Breaking Up The UK?

What if England voted to leave the European Union, but Scotland and Northern Ireland vote to stay? Polls indicate this could happen.<sup>8</sup>

If the overall vote were to quit, Scotland would demand and probably get a second Independence Referendum.

If it were to stay, there would be strong English demand to separate from both Scotland and the EU.

And Northern Ireland? Protestants are more likely to want to quit and Roman Catholics to stay.<sup>9</sup> A separation from England would be another matter. A federation with Scotland not unthinkable.

Wales will probably vote to quit. But is very unlikely to go it alone: the north, centre and south of Wales are tied economically much more closely to England than to each other.

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### Do You Remember John Major?

Prime Minister after the fall of Thatcher. Lost to Tony Blair in 1997. Was moving back to One-Nation Toryism. And has recently complained about the shocking impact of inequality in Britain.<sup>10</sup>

Blair in office decided that New Labour should move to the right of the economic policies Major had been following. He helped revive Thatcherism among the Tories. It won him two more elections, but at the expense of what Labour was supposed to be for.

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### Solar, Sand and Salt

Solar Power depends on sunlight, strongest at noon. But energy use continues after sunset, and there are also clouds. That's the problem with photovoltaics, the conversion of solar energy into direct current electricity using semiconducting materials.

A major alternative is Solar Thermal Energy. In hot climates, you can use the sun to boil water for a steam engine, which in turn can generate electricity by turning a magnet within loops of wire. This worked badly – but an interesting alternative is melting salt.<sup>11</sup> Or using a mix of heated sand and water, which holds heat and gives you electricity long after sunset. This is being used at a new plant just opened in Morocco.<sup>12</sup> For now it is just a small supplement for local consumption. But there are grand plans for exporting electricity to Europe.

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### Left Win In Portugal

Socialist leader Antonio Costa became Prime Minister on 26<sup>th</sup> November. His party came second in the recent election, but has a majority with Hard-Left support.

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### Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* can be found at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. And at my own website, <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

### References

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2 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/what-daesh-mean-isis-threatens-6841468>

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## NATIONAL DEMENTIA

TV journalists yap as if on  
liquor  
a million candles  
flicker  
tired are the hands of the flower  
picker  
union jacks and tricolours no longer  
bicker  
but every day two nations become  
sicker  
vile messages of hatred on impromptu  
stickers  
red white and blue on national monuments  
glitters  
the voices of the sane are drowned out by  
snickers  
the faces scowl on Big Ben that giant  
ticker  
drop your fists we are Europe the ultra  
hitter  
they created a river of blood and now we are  
its tributaries  
high-stress patriotism makes it flow  
quicker.

Wilson John Haire. 17-11-15

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## G20 and Paris Attacks

On 17 November David Cameron presented a statement to MPs on the attacks in Paris and the G20 summit. Jeremy Corbyn replied for Labour. 15 Labour MPs made a short contribution. Only David Winnick supported Corbyn. The remaining 14 Labour MPs made no reference to Corbyn's speech and more than half supported Cameron, directly or indirectly. And no one commented upon Corbyn's statement that "President Obama has said that ISIS grew out of our invasion of Iraq." Nor did any MP refer to the reported statement by one of the Paris terrorists that the attack was a response to Hollande's decision to interfere in Syria.

The 14 Labour MPs who spoke were Yvette Cooper, David Winnick, Gisela Stuart, Keith Vaz, Chris Leslie, Emma Reynolds, Pat McFadden, Mike Gapes, David Hanson, Chuka Umunna, Sarah Champion, Jack Dromey, Ian Austin, Richard Burden and Anne Coffey. The comments of those who gave unqualified support to Cameron are published below.

### **The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on the terrorist attacks in Paris and the G20 summit that took place in Turkey over the weekend.

On Paris, the Home Secretary gave the House the chilling statistics yesterday. We now know that among the victims was a 36-year-old Briton, Nick Alexander, who was killed at the Bataclan. I know

that the thoughts and prayers of the whole House will be with the families and friends of all those affected.

On Saturday, I spoke to President Hollande to express the condolences of the British people and our commitment to helping in whatever way we can. After our horror and our anger must come our resolve and our determination to rid our world of this evil, so let me set out the steps that we are taking to deal with this terrorist threat.

The more we learn about what happened in Paris, the more it justifies the full-spectrum approach that we have discussed before in the House. When we are dealing with radicalised European Muslims, linked to ISIL in Syria and inspired by a poisonous narrative of extremism, we need an approach that covers the full range: military power, counter-terrorism expertise, and defeating the poisonous narrative that is the root cause of this evil. Let me take each in turn.

First, we should be clear that this murderous violence requires a strong security response. That means continuing our efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL in Syria and Iraq, and, where necessary, working with our allies to strike against those who pose a direct threat to the safety of British people around the world. Together, coalition forces have now damaged over 13,500 targets. We have helped local forces to regain 30% of ISIL territory in Iraq and we have helped to retake Kobane and push ISIL back towards Raqqa. On Friday, Kurdish forces

retook Sinjar. The United Kingdom is playing its part, training local forces, striking targets in Iraq and providing vital intelligence support. Last Thursday the United States carried out an air strike in Raqqa, Syria, targeting Mohammed Emwazi, the ISIL executioner known as Jihadi John. That was a result of months of painstaking work in which America and Britain worked hand in glove to stop this vicious murderer.

It is important for the whole House to understand the reality of the situation that we are in. There is no Government in Syria with whom we can work, particularly in that part of Syria. There are no rigorous police investigations or independent courts upholding justice in Raqqa. We have no military on the ground to detain those preparing plots against our people. In this situation, we do not protect the British people by sitting back and wishing things were different. We have to act to keep our people safe, and that is what this Government will always do.

Secondly, on counter-terrorism here in the UK, over the past year alone our outstanding police and security services have already foiled no fewer than seven terrorist plots right here in Britain. The people in our security services work incredibly hard. They are a credit to our nation and we should pay tribute to them again in our House today. But now we must do more to help them in their vital work. So in next week's strategic defence and security review, we will make

a major additional investment in our world-class intelligence agencies. This will include over 1,900 additional security and intelligence staff and more money to increase our network of counter-terrorism experts in the middle east, north Africa, south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

At the G20 summit in Turkey this weekend, we agreed additional steps to better protect ourselves from the threat of foreign fighters by sharing intelligence and stopping them travelling. We also agreed for the first time to work together to strengthen global aviation security. We need robust and consistent standards of aviation security in every airport in the world and the UK will at least double its spending in this area.

Thirdly, to defeat this terrorist threat in the long run we must also understand and address its root cause. That means confronting the poisonous ideology of Islamist extremism itself. As I have argued before, that means going after both violent and non-violent extremists—those who sow the poison but stop short of actually promoting violence; they are part of the problem. We will improve integration, not least by inspecting and shutting down any educational institutions that are teaching intolerance, and we will actively encourage reforming and moderate Muslim voices to speak up and challenge the extremists, as so many do.

It cannot be said enough that the extremist ideology is not true Islam, but it does not work to deny any connection between the religion of Islam and the extremists, not least because the extremists themselves self-identify as Muslims. There is no point denying that; what we need to do instead is take apart their arguments and demonstrate

how wrong they are, and in doing so we need the continued help of Muslim communities and Muslim scholars. They are playing a powerful role and I commend them on their absolutely essential work.

We cannot stand neutral in this battle of ideas. We have to back those who share our values with practical help, funding, campaigns, protection and political representation. This is a fundamental part of how we can defeat this terrorism both at home and abroad.

Turning to the G20 summit, there were also important discussions on Syria and on dealing with other long-term threats to our security, such as climate change. Let me briefly address those.

On Syria, we discussed how we do more to help all those in desperate humanitarian need and how to find a political solution to the conflict. Britain, as has often been said, is already providing £1.1 billion in vital life-saving assistance—that makes us the second largest bilateral donor in the world—and last week we committed a further £275 million to be spent in Turkey, a country hosting over 2 million refugees. In February, the United Kingdom will seek to raise further significant new funding by co-hosting a donors conference in London together with Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the United Nations.

But none of this is a substitute for the most urgent need of all: to find a political solution that brings peace to Syria and enables millions of refugees to return home. Yesterday I held talks with President Putin. We reviewed the progress made by our Foreign Ministers in Vienna to deliver a transition in Syria. We still have disagreements—there are still big gaps between us—but there is progress.

I also met with President Obama and European leaders at the G20,

and we agreed some important concrete steps forward, including basing some British aircraft alongside other NATO allies at the airbase at Incirlik if that is the decision of the North Atlantic Council, which meets shortly. These would be in an air defence role to support Turkey at this difficult time. We also agreed on the importance of stepping up our joint effort to deal with ISIL in Iraq and Syria—indeed, wherever it manifests itself.

This raises important questions for our country. We must ask ourselves whether we are really doing all we can be doing—all we should be doing—to deal with the threat that ISIL poses to us directly, not just through the measures we are taking at home, but by dealing with ISIL on the ground in the territory that it controls. We are taking part in air strikes over Iraq and have struck over 350 targets. Significant action has been taken in recent hours. ISIL is not just present in Iraq; it also operates across the border in Syria, although that border is meaningless to it—as far as ISIL is concerned, it is all one space. It is in Syria, in Raqqa, that ISIL has its headquarters, and it is from Raqqa that some of the main threats against this country are planned and orchestrated. Raqqa is, if you like, the head of the snake.

Over Syria we are supporting our allies—the US, France, Jordan and the Gulf countries—with intelligence, surveillance and refuelling. But I believe, as I have said many times before, that we should be doing more. We face a direct and growing threat to our country, and we need to deal with it not just in Iraq but in Syria too. I have always said that there is a strong case for our doing this: our allies are asking us to do it, and the case for doing it has only grown stronger after the Paris attacks. We cannot and

should not expect others to carry the burdens, and the risks, of protecting our country.

I recognise that there are concerns in this House. What difference would action by the UK really make? Could it make the situation worse? How does the recent Russian action affect the situation? Above all, how would a decision by Britain to join in strikes against ISIL in Syria fit into a comprehensive strategy for dealing with ISIL and a diplomatic strategy to bring the war in Syria to an end? I understand those concerns, and I know that they must be answered. I believe that they can be answered. Many of them were expressed in the recent report by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

My firm conviction is that we need to act against ISIL in Syria. There is a compelling case for doing so. It is for the Government, I accept, to make that case to this House and to the country. I can therefore announce that as a first important step towards doing so, I will respond personally to the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I will set out our comprehensive strategy for dealing with ISIL and our vision for a more stable and peaceful middle east. This strategy should, in my view, include taking the action in Syria that I have spoken about. I hope that, in setting out the arguments in this way, I can help to build support right across the House for the action that I believe it is necessary to take. That is what I am going to be putting in place over the coming days, and I hope that colleagues from across the House will engage with that and make their views clear, so that we can have a strong vote in the House of Commons and do the right thing for our country.

Finally, the G20 also addressed other longer-term threats to global

security. In just two weeks' time, we will gather in Paris to agree a global climate change deal. This time, unlike in Kyoto, it will include the USA and China. Here at this summit, I urged leaders to keep the ambition of limiting global warming by 2050 to less than 2° above pre-industrial levels. Every country needs to put forward its programme for reducing carbon emissions. And, as G20 countries, we also need to do more to provide the financing that is needed to help poorer countries around the world to switch to greener forms of energy and adapt to the effects of climate change.

We also agreed that we should do more to wipe out the corruption that chokes off development, and to deal with antimicrobial resistance. Corruption is the cancer at the heart of so many of the problems we face in the world today, from migrants fleeing corrupt African states to corrupt Governments undermining our efforts on global poverty by preventing people from getting the revenues and services that are rightfully theirs. And if antibiotics stop working properly—the antimicrobial resistance issue—millions of people in the world will die unnecessarily. So these are both vital issues on which the United Kingdom is taking a real lead.

Let me conclude by returning to the terrorist threat. Here in the UK, the threat level is already severe, which means that an attack is highly likely, and it will remain so. That is why we continue to encourage the public to remain vigilant. We will do all we can to support our police and intelligence agencies as they work around the clock. The terrorist aim is clear: it is to divide us and to destroy our way of life. So now more than ever we must come together and stand united, carrying on with the way of life that we

know and love. Tonight, England will play France at Wembley. The match is going ahead. Our people stand together as they have done so many times throughout history when faced with evil. And once again, together, we will prevail. I commend this statement to the House.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):**

First, I thank the Prime Minister for his statement, a copy of which he kindly sent me earlier. May I also thank him for the measured and careful tone of his public statements since the dreadful events of last Friday in Paris? In the face of such tragic events, and the horror, anxiety and sorrow that have caused the British public to stand up in solidarity with the people of France, it is right that we take an approach of solidarity with them.

The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have talked of the importance of achieving consensus in our response to the attacks and a common objective in trying to defeat ISIL. I agree with him, and the Opposition stand ready to work with him and the Government towards that end. May I also thank him for arranging for the National Security Adviser to brief my Opposition Front-Bench colleagues last weekend? Will he assure me that the Opposition and other parties will continue to be briefed about developments as they emerge?

On behalf of Labour Members, I want to express my condolences to and solidarity with the people of Paris in the wake of the horrific and unjustified attacks on the people who suffered in that city last Friday night. That solidarity extends to all victims of terrorism and conflict, whether they be in Paris, Beirut, Ankara or Syria itself. Absolutely nothing can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians by anyone,

anywhere, ever. These contemptible attacks were an attempt to divide Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and peoples of all faiths and none, as was tried in London some years ago. They will fail.

Secondly, I wish to take a moment to praise the efforts and work of emergency service workers, in Paris and elsewhere, who spring into action in these dreadful and very difficult situations, and help to save life. It is easy to forget the extraordinary heroism of those involved in simply going to work, not knowing what will happen. It is not easy to drive an ambulance not knowing what you are going to find when you arrive at the scene.

In my letter to François Hollande this weekend, I said that we stand united with his country in expressing our unequivocal condemnation of those involved in planning and carrying out these atrocities. The shocking events in Paris were a reminder to all of the ever-present threat of terrorism and indiscriminate violence. In this House, we also have a primary and particular duty to protect the people of this country and keep them safe. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) pledged our support for the Government in their efforts to do that, and that we reiterate again. We welcome the sensible measures to make more funding available for our security services, so that they can gather intelligence and expose and prevent plots, but can the Prime Minister confirm that those will be balanced with the need to protect our civil liberties, which were so hard won in this country and are so stoutly defended by many of us? They are part of what distinguishes us from many other regimes around the world—indeed, regimes from which people are fleeing.

My right hon. Friend said

yesterday that in the forthcoming spending review there should be protection of the policing budget and policing services, which clearly will be playing a vital role on the ground in ensuring that our communities are safe. Will the Prime Minister now confirm that he is willing to work with us to prevent cuts to our police force and ensure that they are able to continue with the protective work they have to do? Does he agree with the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Lord Blair, that it would be “a disaster” to axe police community support officers, as they bring in vital intelligence from communities to help prevent attacks? As a Member of Parliament for an inner-city community, I fully understand and appreciate the great work that safer neighbourhood teams and community policing teams do.

As for community cohesion, we in Britain are proud to live in a diverse and multi-faith society, and we stand for the unity of all communities. There are more than 2 million Muslims living in Britain, and they are as utterly appalled by the violence in Paris as anybody else. We have seen after previous atrocities such as this that there can be a backlash against the Muslim and other communities. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and far-right racism have no place whatsoever in our society or our thinking, and I hope there will be no increase in any of that degree of intolerance as a result of what has happened in Paris.

Will the Prime Minister set out in more detail the steps his Government are taking to work with representative organisations of all our faith communities to ensure that we achieve and strengthen community cohesion during these very difficult times? We must also ensure that those entering our country, whether they be refugees or visitors, are

appropriately screened. Will he confirm that the Home Office will provide the border staff necessary to do that?

It is also important in these circumstances to maintain our humanitarian duty towards refugees. The Syrian refugees are fleeing the daily brutality of ISIL and Assad and it is our duty—indeed it is our legal obligation—to protect them under the 1951 Geneva convention. I hope the Prime Minister will confirm that our obligation to maintain support for that convention and the rights of refugees will be undiminished by the events of the past few days.

At a time of such tragedy and outrage, it is vital that we are not drawn into responses that feed a cycle of violence and hatred. President Obama has said that ISIS grew out of our invasion of Iraq, and that it is one of its unintended consequences. Will the Prime Minister consider that as one of the very careful responses that President Obama has made recently on this matter? It is essential that any military response that might be considered has not only consent, but support of the international community and, crucially, legality from the United Nations. I welcome the Prime Minister’s comments at the G20 yesterday when he said:

“I think people want to know there is a whole plan for the future of Syria, for the future of the region. It is perfectly right to say a few extra bombs and missiles won’t transform the situation.”

I welcome the Prime Minister’s commitment to respond personally to the Foreign Affairs Committee report, which has been so carefully presented to the House and the country. Will he confirm that, before bringing any motion to the House, he will provide answers, as he has indicated that he will, to

the seven questions raised by the Select Committee report? Will he also say more about the particular contribution that Britain has made to the Vienna talks on the future of Syria? The talks possibly provide a basis for some cautious optimism that there could indeed be a political future in Syria that involves a ceasefire and the ability of people eventually to be able to return home.

Finally on this matter, will the Prime Minister also say what more can be done to cut off supplies of weapons and external markets to ISIL? Weapons are being supplied to some of the most repressive regimes in the region. What is being done to ensure that they do not end up in even worse hands, including those of ISIL and some of the extremist jihadist groups in Syria? What more can be done to bring to account those Governments, organisations or banks that have funded these extremists, or turned a blind eye to them? We need to know the financial trail by which ISIL gets its funding and indeed sells its oil.

Turning quickly now to other G20 issues, did the Prime Minister have a chance to congratulate the new Canadian Prime Minister? He did not mention it, but I am sure that he has. Is he also aware that the current slowdown in the global economy is causing concern? What discussions has he had with his Chancellor about the dangers of more demand being sucked out of the economy at this time?

In conclusion, the Prime Minister mentioned the climate change talks that will be going on in Paris over the next few weeks. They are very, very important indeed. I welcome the commitment he made in relation to the problems created by epidemics and antibiotic resistance. I ask him also to consider this: the cuts

that have been made to renewable energy in this country run directly counter to everything he and his Government have said they want to achieve at the climate change talks. We must combat climate change globally, internationally, and here in Britain.

**The Prime Minister:**

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the genesis of ISIL. The so-called Islamic State is one of the branches of this violent Islamist extremism that we have seen in our world for more than 20 years—I am talking about Boko Haram, al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. It is worth making the point that the first manifestations of this violent Islamist extremism, not least the twin towers attack, happened before the invasion of Iraq. It is important that we do not try to seek excuses for what is a death cult, which has been killing British citizens for many, many years. He rightly asks about the process in Vienna. We are a key part of that, with our Foreign Secretary playing a very strong role. Indeed his work was commended by Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned what I said yesterday about additional bombs and missiles only being able to go so far in Syria. Yes, that is right, Britain can do more, and because of our expertise and targeting, we could cut the number of civilian casualties when that action is taken. It would make a difference, but, alongside that, we also need a process that delivers a Government in Syria who can represent all of the Syrian people. We cannot defeat ISIL purely by a campaign from the air; we need to have Governments in Iraq and in Syria who can be our partners in delivering good government to those countries and in obliterating the death cult that threatens

both us and them. Those things go together.

**Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab):**

Is the Prime Minister aware that those of us who are not persuaded, at least at this stage, that air strikes should be extended to Syria have no less hatred for the mass murderers who have carried out so many atrocities, the latest in Paris? We are not persuaded, not because we are pacifists or semi-pacifists—I am certainly not so and never likely to be—nor because of the internal politics of the Labour party, but because, as the Foreign Affairs Committee concluded, there does not seem to be a strong case for extending air strikes, and it will achieve little or nothing and simply make us feel good that we are doing something as a result of the atrocities.

**The Prime Minister:**

I do not agree with that view. I respect the fact that it is for the Government to bring forward the argument, to make the case and to seek to persuade as many Members of this House as possible that it is the right thing to do. People who oppose that have to answer the question why it is right to take out ISIL in Iraq, but wrong to take out ISIL in Syria, particularly as the headquarters of ISIL are in Syria and it is from Syria that the attacks on this country have been planned and, for all we know, continue to be planned. That is the question that colleagues will have to answer after reading my response to the Foreign Affairs Committee. If we can get to the situation where it looks like Britain can come together as one and say, “It is right for us to take this action”, I am not asking for an overwhelming majority; just a majority would be good enough.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): Does the

Prime Minister agree that full responsibility for the attacks in Paris lies solely with the terrorists and that any attempt by any organisation to somehow blame the west or France's military intervention in Syria is not only wrong and disgraceful, but should be condemned?

**Hon. Members:**

Hear, hear.

**The Prime Minister:**

The response right across the House shows how right the hon. Lady is. Those who think that this is somehow all caused by Iraq should remember that France did not take part in the Iraq war. Indeed, it condemned it. The fact about these ISIL terrorists is that they hate our way of life. They want to kill and maim as many people as possible. They also do that to Muslims with whom they disagree. That is why we have to confront and defeat them, not compromise with or excuse in any way this vile organisation.

**Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab):**

May I ask the Prime Minister to reject the view that sees terrorist acts as always being a response or a reaction to what we in the west do? Does he agree that such an approach risks infantilising the terrorists and treating them like children, when the truth is that they are adults who are entirely responsible for what they do? No one forces them to kill innocent people in Paris or Beirut. Unless we are clear about that, we will fail even to understand the threat we face, let alone confront it and ultimately overcome it.

**The Prime Minister:**

It is that sort of moral and intellectual clarity that is necessary in dealing with terrorists. I know there is something deep in all of us that wants to try to find an excuse, an explanation or an understanding, but sometimes the answer is staring us in the face. With ISIL, that is absolutely the case.

**Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab):**

I agree with everything the Prime Minister said about Syria and terrorism. Does he agree with me that those who say that Paris is reaping the whirlwind of western policy or

that Britain's foreign policy has increased, not diminished, the threats to our national security not only absolve the terrorists of responsibility, but risk fuelling the sense of grievance and resentment that can develop into extremism and terrorism?

**The Prime Minister:**

The hon. Gentleman kindly said that he agreed with me and I absolutely agree with him. We have to be very clear to people who are at risk of being radicalised that this sort of excuse culture is wrong. Not only is it wrong for anyone to argue that the Paris attacks were brought about by western policy; it is very damaging for young Muslims growing up in Britain to think that any reasonable person could have that view. I agree with the hon. Gentleman 100%.

**Ann Coffey (Stockport) (Lab):**

I thank the Prime Minister for his statement, which I fully support. Does he agree that the multiculturalism of our country is more likely to be destroyed if we do not take every possible action to defeat these murderous terrorists?

**The Prime Minister:**

I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady, and as we do that, we need to take everyone in our country with us.

**Labour's Bombers**

The following 66 Labour MPs supported the government's motion to bomb Syria. Members of the Shadow Cabinet are marked\* 152 Labour MPs voted against the government.

Heidi Alexander\* (Lewisham East), Ian Austin (Dudley North), Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich East), Kevin Barron (Rother Valley), Margaret Beckett (Derby South), Hilary Benn\* (Leeds Central), Luciana Berger\* (Liverpool Wavertree), Tom Blenkinsop (Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland), Ben Bradshaw (Exeter), Chris Bryant (Rhondda), Alan Campbell (Tyne-mouth), Jenny Chapman (Darlington), Vernon Coaker\* (Gedling), Ann Coffey (Stockport), Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract & Castleford), Neil Coyle (Bermondsey & Old Southwark), Mary Creagh (Wakefield), Stella Creasy (Walthamstow),

Simon Danczuk (Rochdale), Wayne David (Caerphilly), Gloria De Piero\* (Ashfield), Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South & Penarth), Jim Dowd (Lewisham West & Penge), Michael Dugher\* (Barnsley East), Angela Eagle\* (Wallasey), Maria Eagle\* (Garston & Halewood), Louise Ellman (Liverpool Riverside), Frank Field (Birkenhead), Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar & Limehouse), Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East), Caroline Flint (Don Valley), Harriet Harman (Camberwell & Peckham), Margaret Hodge (Barking), George Howarth (Knowsley), Tristram Hunt (Stoke-On-Trent Central), Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central), Alan Johnson (Kingston Upon Hull West & Hessle), Graham Jones (Hyndburn), Helen Jones (Warrington North), Kevan Jones (North Durham), Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South), Liz Kendall (Leicester West), Peter Kyle (Hove), Chris Leslie (Nottingham East), Holly Lynch (Halifax), Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham & Morden), Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East), Conor McGinn (St Helens North), Alison McGovern (Wirral South), Bridget Phillipson (Houghton & Sunderland South), Lucy Powell\* (Manchester Central), Jamie Reed (Copeland), Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East), Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry North West), Joan Ryan (Enfield North), Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-On-trent North), Angela Smith\* (Penistone & Stocksbridge), John Spellar (Warley), Gisela Stuart (Birmingham Edgbaston), Gareth Thomas (Harrow West), Anna Turley (Redcar), Chuka Umunna (Streatham), Keith Vaz (Leicester East), Tom Watson\* (West Bromwich East), Phil Wilson (Sedgefield), John Woodcock (Barrow & Furness).

**Esme Geering**

Esme Geering, writing from Texas, USA, claimed that the statement in the November editorial 'the UK is the 5<sup>th</sup> richest nation in the world' is factually wrong. This is a serious point and therefore a detailed reply will appear in the next (February 2016) issue of Labour Affairs.

# Airstrikes Against ISIL In Syria: The Foreign Affairs Select Committee Report.

by David Morrison

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee has published a report on the possible extension of UK airstrikes against ISIL into Syria.

The report raises key questions for Government in anticipation of any motion asking the House of Commons to approve an extension of offensive British military operations to Syria.

The Committee finds that the benefits of extending British involvement in Coalition airstrikes in Syria are more than outweighed by the risks of legal ambiguity, political chaos on the ground in Syria, military irrelevance, and diplomatic costs.

The Committee is not persuaded by the Government's efforts to treat ISIL and the Syrian civil war as separate issues, and considers that the focus on the extension of airstrikes against ISIL in Syria is a distraction from the much bigger and more important task of finding a resolution to conflict in Syria, which is itself a main cause of ISIL's rise.

The Chairman of the Committee, Crispin Blunt MP, said:

"We are concerned that the Government is focusing on extending airstrikes to Syria, responding to the powerful sense that something must be done to tackle ISIL in Syria, without any expectation that its action will be militarily decisive, and without a coherent and long-term plan for defeating ISIL and ending the civil war.

There is now a miscellany of uncoordinated military engagements by an alarming range of international actors in Iraq and Syria, all of whom share an interest in defeating ISIL and who between them possess an overwhelming capability to do so. These forces desperately need coordinating into a coherent strategy and that is where our efforts should be focused. Making the military picture yet more complex is a distraction from the key task to help end the suffering and reverse the spread of this dangerous, barbaric and regressive ideology.

Just as we need a coordinated military strategy to defeat ISIL, we urgently need a complementary political strategy to end the civil war in Syria. By becoming a full combatant in the US led campaign at this stage, the UK risks needlessly compromising its independent diplomatic ability to support an international political solution to the crisis. Right now, the Government should be focussing all its energies supporting the efforts at international diplomacy in Vienna.

In this report, we set out seven points on which the Government should provide further explanation before asking the Commons to approve a motion authorising military action. Success in Vienna would produce an international strategy. There would still be military questions to answer. Until all these points are satisfied, the Government should not try to obtain Parliamentary approval to extend British military action to Syria. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on UK military intervention in Syria says "there should be no British airstrikes in Syria without a coherent international strategy to both defeat ISIL and end the Syrian civil war".<sup>1</sup>

The Committee has a Conservative majority (6 out of 11), with Conservative Crispin Blunt as Chair.

Below are the questions that the report says the Government needs to answer before asking the House to authorise military action on Syria:

**The Government should explain the following points before asking the House of Commons to approve a substantive motion authorising military action:**

- a) On an international strategy:**
  - i) How the proposal would improve the chances of success of the international coalition's campaign against ISIL;**
  - ii) How the proposed action would contribute to the formation and agreement of a transition plan for Syria;**

**iii) In the absence of a UN Security Council Resolution, how the Government would address the political, legal, and military risks arising from not having such a resolution;**

**iv) Whether the proposed action has the agreement of the key regional players (Turkey; Iran; Saudi Arabia; Iraq); if not, whether the Government will seek this before any intervention;**

**v) Which ground forces will take, hold, and administer territories captured from ISIL in Syria.**

**b) On the military imperative:**

- i) What the overall objective is of the military campaign; whether it expects that it will be a "war-winning" campaign; if so, who would provide war-winning capabilities for the forces; and what the Government expects will be the result of extending airstrikes to Syria.**

**ii) What extra capacity the UK would contribute to the Coalition's actions in Syria.**

**36. We are persuaded that it is not yet possible for the Government to give a satisfactory explanation on the points listed above. Until it is possible for the Government to address these points we recommend that it does not bring to the House a motion seeking the extension of British military action to Syria**

(Endnotes)

1 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/uk-policy-on-syria-report-published-15-16/>

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Conservatives are not necessarily stupid, but most stupid people are conservatives.  
John Stuart Mill