
OTHER NATIONS

An Irish Peace?

"The Patriot Game" by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in *National Review* (Apr. 26, 1993), 150 E. 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

During more than two decades of terrorism in, and from, Northern Ireland, the prevailing political wisdom has been that patient negotiations will eventually lead to a general solution, which will then isolate the terrorists and render them harmless. This approach—exemplified by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985—has failed, Irish historian and politician Conor Cruise O'Brien argues. It is time, he contends, for more radical measures.

There is now, O'Brien notes, very little support in the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Republic of Ireland for the predominantly Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its armed struggle against Britain. In the general election last November, Sinn Fein, the IRA's political arm, won less than two percent of the vote. After IRA bomb explosions in Warring-

ton, England, killed two children last March, thousands in the Irish Republic joined in demonstrations against political violence and the IRA.

In Northern Ireland, however, which is part of the United Kingdom, about one-third of the Catholic minority regularly votes for Sinn Fein, and many other Catholics, O'Brien says, "live in a condition of ambivalent neutrality between the IRA and the security forces, and in some fear of both. The Protestant (Unionist, Loyalist) majority there is strongly hostile to the IRA, from which its members have been under lethal attack for more than 20 years now." Northern Ireland's condition increasingly resembles civil war.

Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, the Republic acknowledged British sovereignty over Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland so long as that was desired by the majority of its inhabitants, and in return Dublin was to be given an advisory role in the devolution of power from London to Northern Ireland. However, O'Brien observes, not only did IRA violence become "even more audacious and spectacular," but the Loyalists, feel-



Supporters of the Irish Republican Army in Derry, Northern Ireland. The IRA and its violent campaign against Britain have very little support across the border, in the Republic of Ireland.

ing betrayed, prepared for their own campaign of violence, which erupted in 1992. "The Protestant backlash . . . is now a grim and sustained reality." In Northern Ireland last year, the earlier pattern was reversed: More Catholics were killed by Protestants than vice versa. Immediately after the two children in Warrington were slain, Protestant paramilitary forces killed six Catholics, including an acknowledged

IRA member, in Northern Ireland.

"The peace movement in the Republic, laudable and welcome as it is in itself, will not end the smoldering civil war in Northern Ireland," O'Brien writes. What is needed, he says, is for the British government to begin "selective internment of the terrorist leaderships, both Nationalist and Loyalist, who intimidate their own communities, dominate them, and then use them as bases for murderous attacks

The Dead of Kolpashevo

Adam Hochschild, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* (Mar. 28, 1993), looks at how the people in one town are dealing with the legacy of Stalin's rule, which left some 20 million dead.

In May 1979, swollen by melting snow, the Ob [River] began eating away at its banks at a Siberian town called Kolpashevo. As the flood waters gnawed deeper into the base of the river bank, the earth and sand that crumbled into the water disclosed a mass of human skeletons. Beneath this strata of bones was another layer: whole corpses. Buried in dry, cold sand that lay just on top of permafrost, they had not decomposed; they had been mummified. Embedded in the river bank were more than a thousand skeletons and bodies in all.

The horrified townspeople of Kolpashevo knew why the dead were there. This spot had been the site of the regional headquarters of the NKVD, the Stalin-era secret police. In the preserved corpses, some Kolpashevo residents recognized people they knew, still wearing the same shoes and clothes they had been arrested in some 40 years earlier. . . .

Kolpashevo was a small town—everyone knew each other. One person they all knew was Stepan Marton. Born in Budapest and trained as a physician, he served in the Austro-Hungarian forces in World War I. He was a prisoner of war in Russia when the revolution broke out. Released, Marton remained in the young Soviet state, first working as a Red Army doctor. Then he joined the secret police. . . . During the dread year of

1937 . . . he was chief of the N.K.V.D. regional headquarters in Kolpashevo. . . .

Anatoly Spragovsky [who joined the secret police a decade after the Kolpashevo killings] does not blame Marton any more than he does anyone else. "If he hadn't done all this, he would have been shot." When he was working on rehabilitations in the '50s [of victims of Stalin's Great Purge], Spragovsky says, he went over cases with other officers who, like Marton, had been active in the purge. "When I would present them with proof they had fabricated a case, they wouldn't even bother to look, since they already knew that everything was a lie. But they'd say to me . . . 'If you had been in our shoes at that time, you would have done the same.' " . . .

In trying to come to terms with the ravages of Stalinism, many Russians ask: after what point in history did the worst of the tragedy—the famines, the mass executions, the gulag—become inevitable? The October Revolution? Stalin's selection as Communist Party secretary? One can ask the same question about a person's life. For Stepan Marton, doctor turned executioner, what was his point of no return? As a prisoner of war in a senseless, bloody conflict between two dying empires, Marton must have felt himself to be a victim. But at what point did he become a persecutor instead? When he took part in the Russian civil war? When he joined the secret police? When he took up his post in Kolpashevo? You would have done the same.

on the other community." Efforts to get at these "paramilitary godfathers" through the courts are of no use, he says, because evidence against them is always unobtainable.

Internment did not work in Northern Ireland in 1972, when it was applied on a mass scale but only to Catholics. That led to Catholic mass protests throughout the world. But now, O'Brien argues, the circumstances are very different: "Today, there are two terrorist campaigns, equally ferocious and indiscriminate, which between them hold the whole of Northern Ireland in fear, and can strike far beyond the borders of that province. There is every reason to believe that the great majority of people in Northern Ireland, in both communities, would rejoice to learn that both sets of godfathers were safely under lock and key." All terrorism would not end, O'Brien acknowledges, but "a sustained and determined counter-terrorist effort" will eventually bring peace.

Israel Returns To Its Roots

"Israel and the End of the Cold War" by Shlomo Avineri, in *The Brookings Review* (Spring 1993), 1775
Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The end of the Cold War has transformed politics in the Middle East. The radical Arab forces have lost their Soviet patron, and the Israelis feel less threatened. But a second, less obvious consequence of the Soviet empire's collapse is also making for greater stability in the region, according to Avineri, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This development is the reforging of cultural ties between Israel and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Jewish people and the Zionist movement, which gave birth to Israel as a nation in 1948, have deep roots in the region, Avineri points out. "Before 1882, when the great mass of Jewish immigration from the Russian Empire to the West and to Palestine started, more than 80 percent of the world's Jews lived in two countries:

the czarist Russian Empire and the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. And the great national and social upheavals in these areas gave rise to the cultural and intellectual renaissance, the Jewish *Haskala* (Enlightenment), that later led to Zionism."

Budapest-born Theodor Herzl and other Zionists were greatly inspired by 19th-century Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nationalism. The revival of Hebrew literature in Eastern Europe owed much to Polish romanticism and the Russian literary tradition. The revival of Hebrew as a literary and spoken language, not just a sacred tongue, owed much to the central role that language played in Polish, German, Czech, and Hungarian nationalism. Even the Israeli national anthem, *Hatikva* (which begins, "Our hope is not yet lost") was fashioned after the Polish anthem (which begins "Poland is not yet lost.")

The Holocaust and then the explicitly anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish communist regimes in Eastern Europe cut off Israelis from their heritage, Avineri says. In the minds of many Israelis, Poland became identified with Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. "That Jews have lived in Poland for almost a thousand years, have survived despite repeated persecutions, and have created a rich Jewish culture that to a large extent became the defining factor in modern Jewish identity, was mostly forgotten."

Now, many Israelis are returning to their roots. "Younger Israelis are traveling to Eastern Europe to find the villages and *shtetls* of their parents or grandparents—not out of nostalgia, but out of keen interest to understand better their own origins, their own family history, their own identity," Avineri says. The removal of the immense barrier, in part psychological, that for decades prevented this rediscovery of European cultural roots may not have immediate political consequences, he acknowledges, but it is likely to be significant in the long run. Although many Jews in Israel are from other traditions (Yemeni, Moroccan, Kurdish, Iraqi), those with roots in Central and Eastern Europe predominate. As their ties to their heritage are re-established and strengthened, the eventual result is likely to be an Israel "less alienated . . . from some of the formative elements of its own identity." That in itself, Avineri believes, is likely to be a contribution to peace in the Middle East.