

World War II and the Battle of Britain: Operation Sea Lion, Looking Back

Testimony of a Distinguished Veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)

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Editor's Note

This incisive article written seven years ago by renowned author Frederic Clairmonte, is phrased as "a letter written to a colleague from the Sorbonne. F."

The film on Lord Dowling, the Supremo of Fighter Command during what prosaically has been labeled the Battle of Britain, stimulated you to make some perceptive comments. You asked for some clarifications and amplifications and I shall take some time off to do so. To achieve this I consulted my Archives. I also happened to be a member of the Royal Air Force which I joined in the year of the Battle of Stalingrad. It was an essential part of my experience and the greatest of educations.

It was more than the transition from an adolescent to an adult. It was far more than a world of flying. A span of time that included not merely flying and doing what I was trained to do but also a world of books and study and thinking and reflecting and in talking to others and learning from them. If you wish to call that a University you may be free to do. In that world diplomas and degrees were of utter irrelevance. They would come later.

Let me say at once that there is considerable misunderstanding and swirling myths of what is meant by the Battle of Britain which began after the collapse of France in June 1940. The mass bombings of South England began in August. They were called off in November and we shall see why. There was in the first place no such thing as the Battle of France. France was defeated and capitulated in June 1940. The nostrum of The Battle of Britain was concocted by Winston Churchill, who used it as a promotional battering ram to give colour and charisma to his leadership. In sum, he used it effectively as a public relations stunt. The Nazis did not 'lose' the so called BoB because while they launched an attack it was called off by Hitler in November for reasons we shall now elucidate. From this was drawn the conclusion that the BoB was won by Britain under Churchill's leadership. That is a fallacy. Having said that we do not wish to diminish the fighting spirit of the British military and steadfastness and tenacity of its peoples during those critical weeks. Nor do I intend to disparage the Royal Air Force Fighter Command that operated under an embattled leadership tarnished by personal squabbles and personal ambition. What we are saying is let us try to see things in perspective.

You've no doubt seen the earlier film starring Sir Lawrence Olivier. It gave a romanticized

version of events portraying Air Marshal Dowling as a hero and the RAF Fighter Command as a band of young all-white indomitable brothers that rescued the UK from the clutches of the Nazi invasion thus ensuring the victory of the BoB. This is mythology of a supine order. There was an onslaught on Britain from the middle of August to be sure that lasted until the middle November.

I shall sketch briefly some of the factors leading up to the BoB. Certainly, the discovery of Radar in 1936 and its deployment played a role in confronting the Luftwaffe. But it was never busted. It was not the only factor in play and in the strides of history no single event or personality is of primordial importance. It is mandatory study the ensemble of interlocking events and their causative relationships.

In the course of my military service I became acquainted with many of these fighter pilots many of whom had later shifted to Bomber Command. True, the Luftwaffe pilots, not least of all, such aces as Oberst Adolf Galland had brought with them enormous experience culled from earlier air campaigns.

These were the indispensable testing grounds of the Luftwaffe which the RCAF and the RAF did not have but were soon to acquire. I refer to the Condor Air Squadrons and the use of the Stukas as a devastating destructive force in Spain and you will recall Guernica. The embryonic Luftwaffe was baptized as our 'flying artillery' by Goering. Incidentally, he was never referred to in the R A F/ RCAAf by his name but by the sobriquet 'the Fat Boy', a name that he took with him to the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Many of the RAF fighter crews members were sub-standard but of course there were exceptions. Many were greenhorns and their training in many cases wholly inadequate. But that too was not immutable. The importance of Radar was that it directed from the ground via radio signals to the air crews the direction and altitude of the attacking aircraft. That was no mean feat and Galland as he said after the war was struck by the fact that they zoomed in unerringly on their targets. But the Luftwaffe interceptor aircraft had already surmised that something radically new in aerial warfare had emerged. The so-called BoB began in Dunkirk and the collapse of the French armies.

"The final Wehrmacht victory over England is now only a question of time", noted General Jodl, chief of operations at OKW on June 30, 1940. This is illustrative of Wehrmacht arrogance, understandable enough in the light of the conquests of the Nazi Blitzkrieg; and such imbecile triumphalism was to be repeated again and again. In the early stages of the invasion of the Soviet Union. And he went on: "Enemy offensive operations on a large scale are no longer possible." What he had in mind was that for the first time Hitler's Germany had control of the North Sea with the defeat of Norway and Denmark. Nazi military might was therefore unstoppable or appeared to be so. It was the herald of the great victories of the *Uebermensch*.

The German fleet was no longer bottled up as it was in 1914-18 by British mines and sea power that blocked the Kaiser's U-boats from breaking out into the North Atlantic on a large scale, and shoved the German Merchant Marine from the high seas. In so doing, the Royal Navy's blockade strangled Imperial Germany. Or rather was one of the central factors. The massive German High Sea Kriegs Marine built up by Admiral von Tirpitz since 1897 at an astronomic financial cost was a formidable naval fighting force. Its power remained, however, purely 'potential'.

By May-June 1940 the configuration had changed with the conquest of Denmark and Norway. To this was added the entire French Atlantic coast which bestowed more than 3,000 kms of additional coast to the Third Reich's ballooning empire. All the pre-conditions for the successful launching of the Atlantic war were now present. But other considerations would blunt its full materialization. That major condition - the looming presence of the Soviet Union - which was permanently in the cross-hairs of the yet-to-be conquerors of the USSR would ultimately weaken and deflect the full impact of its offensive naval capability. The Fuehrer's psycho-neurotic obsession was his Eastern frontier - Germany's India. The clubbing of England, a land that was never his ideological or ethnic enemy, would now be pushed "into the cupboard" as Goering jokingly noted.

On May 20, the Panzers of Heinz Guderian smashed through the British and French lines at Abbeville. The final day of reckoning had struck. Nine British divisions and ten French divisions were trapped. And so was the more than 300,000 British expeditionary force (BEF). What followed was to be one of the major turning points of the war. And in the view of many one of Hitler's major mis-calculations. The trap was never sprung. On 24 May, the order coming from the High Command, acting on Hitler's personal order, was that the enveloping movement and the encirclement of the trapped forces was halted.

What now happened revealed not merely his lack of strategic thinking but his wider avaricious ambitions that puzzled many of his cronies. Heinz Guderian, the Panzer commander, was indignant and so was Oberst Adolf Galland - the Luftwaffe's incomparable ace - but what they failed to realize was that the decision proclaimed unilaterally as was his style to halt the attack was politically and ideologically motivated. England to be sure was an enemy but it was not to be the primordial enemy.

Hitler as Halder sedulously believed that the defeat of France would have brought peace and the British ruling class in the manner of Chamberlain would have capitulated.. Personalities in history as I have always stressed in these lectures invariably play a crucial role never ultimately the decisive role; they cannot however be abstracted from the historical process. Churchill was certainly a Tory reactionary but he was not a Lloyd George or a Chamberlain who cherished the delusion that the Empire's white man's rule would best be perpetuated by a deal; with the Nazi warlords.

In this Churchill was acting like shrewd real estate agent who understood that Hitler and Mussolini's had expropriatory designs on the vastness of Empire. Of course it could be speculated that there were those in England (such as Lloyd George who Churchill branded a Petainist) who would have cut a capitulationist deal with Hitler if those 360,000 Anglo-French troops had been captured in the Dunkirk salient. In comparison, Paulus's Sixth Army that surrendered at Stalingrad numbered 250,000.

The 360,000 escapees became the core of a reborn military phalanx to be entirely modernized in very short order and deployed shortly in North Africa, and the conquest of Italian Somaliland. The evacuation that was an extraordinary feat owed nothing to "miracles"; it changed the play of things; it reinforced Churchill's prowess for deal and wheeling. And thus British resistance. Hitler had had placed his bet on the erroneous belief that Churchill and the British ruling class would grovel for peace rendering an invasion superfluous. As the unfolding years of the twenties and thirties dramatized so cruelly (Spain and Ethiopia were sordid case histories) the British ruling class was never opposed to the ideals of Nazidom with its cold-blooded quest to knife the October Revolution in its cradle.

I know the weather in the Channel very well. And its savagery and capriciousness, And of course the course of events after August owed much not only to the Spitfires and the Hurricanes but to meteorological conditions which made a channel crossing a physical impossibility. That was the reason why June was the last date for our invasion in 1944. And that was why the capture of the port of Cherbourg was so vital following D-Day. In September, the weather had already turned nasty with storms and heavy waves. But apart from the vicissitudes of nature's caprices Hitler and his gang had no grasp of the technical complexities of amphibious warfare.

The Amphibious landing craft were built in Glasgow and the engines in Detroit and elsewhere. What Hitler had were wooden barges which were not artifacts of war. That was what Napoleon's had. Obviously, that too was a non-starter. Amphibious operations were perfected between 1942 and 1943. MacArthur's island hopping expeditions in the Pacific were more than test benches. The Wehrmacht had nothing of the sort but then their vision was directed to what they regarded as greener and more exploitable pastures.

I witnessed and participated in the intense preparation for the invasion of June 1944. From Scotland, I did aerial reconnaissance work on the entire Norwegian coast which as in the case of Denmark I came to be familiar with. But that was not all. I saw the amphibious training exercise that was taking place from Margate in the West to Lands End at the western extremity of the British Isles. I also had the possibility of talking to the highly skilled crews that were operating those landing craft. By the end of November 1943, the RAF and the RCAF was transferred from Bomber Command of Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris to the supreme of the Allied forces: General Ike Eisenhower. The air assaults on German cities were called off.

The missions of the Avro Lancasters was to photograph every centimeter of the French coast from Calais to the southern most tip of the Bay of Biscay. We straddled not merely the coasts but plunged deep into the great river estuaries in which many of the big cities were located. Throughout the winter air reconnaissance was exhaustive and the intelligence gleaned of incomparable value. The Wehrmacht's Intelligence in 1940 was poor or better still poverty-stricken. But then they did not have the materiel and their hearts and minds were not on the job. From Cap Gris Nez to Dover is a very small stretch of water. The inhabitants of both places could gaze, as the expression went, into each other's backyard on a sunny day. And from the air that visibility was magnified a thousand times.

The Air Operations

On 15 August the first massive air attacks (baptized *Adlersangriffe*) were launched. This was Directive No. 21. Within the ranks of the German High Command there were doubts. Grand Admirals Raeder and Doenitz summed it up by saying that the German Navy could not undertake the enterprise of an invasion before May 1941. They were juggling with time. That was to be Hitler's crucial date in another part of the world. And they would soon know why the invasion had been shoved into the cupboard. The Fuhrer cradled other plans. It could not give protection to the ports that were being attacked such as Ostend, Cherbourg, le Havre and many others. They had become systematic targets of the R A F and the Royal Navy.

On 7 September, hundreds of bombers came over. Here again there was a major miscalculation perhaps one of the greatest in World War 2. The Luftwaffe had resorted to mass 'terror bombings' - the words are those of Goebbels - in London's East

End. The Luftwaffe shifted from bombing the airfields of South Eastern England where Fighter Command Airfields were located and directed their attacks against London's East End. That was the working class area as you know that contained many people of East European and Russian descent. It was also one of the great bastions of Progressivism and the Communist Party. It was that part of London where Eleanor Marx, barely 20 years old, began her tireless and successful militancy amongst the East End workers.

From the spires of St Paul's Cathedral the future supremo of Bomber Command Air Marshal Arthur Harris (born in India) and his adjutant Air Marshall Tedder (born in Burma that was then part of India) scrutinized and analyzed the bombing patterns. Harris remarked in his cold analytical way: "This is the height of folly. I shall burn them and make them pay for it." They were terrible words by a determined strategist but they were impotent because he was powerless to strike back at German cities. His aspiration would become a cataclysmic reality. In less than two years with the advent of the four-engined Avro Lancaster powered by Merlin Rolls Royce engines another mighty Nemesis would begin - night and day, summer and winter - their relentless onslaughts.

The masters of the Third Reich - and tragically the urban dwellers of the Third Reich - would grasp in their flesh the torrid promises of Harris or Bomber Harris as he was baptized. The Fat Boy had earlier boasted: "If a single bomb drops on German cities my name is Meyer". Indeed the 'Meyers' would attain exponential growth levels. Ironically, it was one of the most ironic, and foolish morsels of babbling in the annals of warfare. The call-off in November had given the RAF a reprieve. Goering, backed by Hitler, went on the assumption that mass terror bombings of civilian areas would demoralize the population and hence contribute to the nation's capitulation. The mistakes and miscalculations were now being compounded at staggering rates.

The extensive bombings of London extended from September 7 to November 3. Arms production did not decrease in that span of time. It made rapid strides not least because of the organizing brilliance of Lord Beaverbrook and others. At that point, Hitler halted the offensive. The Hitlerian leadership continued to believe the world of fantasies. One month after the high-point of the bombings, the chief of the operational staff General Hans Jeschonnek stated that England's destruction would require an air fleet four times as large as the Third Reich possesses. A statement of that kind reveals once again the sheer foolishness of these estimations. Why 4 and not 6 or 10 or 12? This was babbling and nothing more. Jeschonnek and Richtofen Stukas blasted Stalingrad day after day in August 1942 but we know where that led to. It transformed a rubble-ruined industrial city into an impregnable fortress.

The Nazi military machine was the greatest and mightiest military force that the world had seen by the end of May 1940. And here I would concur with William Schirer when he stated that, in truth, neither Hitler, the High Command nor the general staffs of the Wehrmacht, Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe had even seriously considered how a war with Britain could be fought and won. They were clueless. Now with the dazzling success in the midsummer of 1940 they stood stark naked in their victories; they had no projects and plan for exploiting the greatest military victories that the Third Reich would ever know.

But Hitler did have a master plan. Hitler's horizon was never confined to the Cliffs of Dover. Hitler and Churchill to be sure were enemies. But they shared a common enemy that came to loom larger and more menacing as the thirties moved on. Their obsession was

the Soviet Union.

The Spectre of the Soviet Union

Hitler was not only a reactionary but the embodiment of the greatest counter-revolution our world has ever known one that German Big Capital readily recognized and lavishly bankrolled. He was revered by the masters of property who tried to conceal the rationale of his entire being by his quasi-mystical totemism and perverted folklore. His vision was not of recent vintage evidenced in the Nazi bible *Mein Kampf*. It was the proclamation of the war against Bolshevism. Let us look at the crux of his thinking to understand why Britain was not the major enemy. And why at this moment it was to be shoved into the cupboard.

“And so we national socialists turn our gaze towards the lands of the East...When we speak of new territory in Europe today we must think principally of Russia and her border vassalstates. Destiny itself illuminates our way.the colossal empire in the East is ripe for dissolution, and the end of the Jewish domination in Russia will also be the end of Russiaas a state.”

In one of his musings to Rundstedt, Hitler noted that “once England is finished we would not be able to rouse the German people to a fight against Russia. Thus, “ Russia would have to be disposed of first”The fact is that the blueprint for the annihilation of the Soviet Union was initiated in May 1940 and Halder was one of its prime architects. Directive 21 was signed by Hitler on 18 December given the pompous name of Operation Barbarossa. The Directive is clear. Its reading is chilling. Its ruling ideawas that the USSR was not only to be militarily squashed but also obliterated as a political force. “A war against the USSR would be child’s play”, Hitler ranted. That was his credo and it was the credo also of the political universe of Big Capital and its political hirelings. As to the child’s play history would soon give another verdict.

With Directive 21 Operation Sea Lion was scrapped. The grand panorama now envisioned was more than a war of imperial conquest; it was to be metamorphosed intoa war of genocide, a Rassenkampf or Race War the scale of which the world had never seen. An event whose consummation would begin on the 22 June, the same date that the Grande Armee traversed the Niemen. I was an adolescent and I was finishing my apprenticeship as a welder and a machinist.

The Vision of India

Churchill and Hitler share a common ideal. Churchill loved Indiaso much that he did not want to leave it. “ I did not become the King’s first Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” This was his inimitable rejoinder, his greatest truth, to someone who questioned his obduracy on India ’s freedom. For Hitler , India was a model of a predatory colonial empire.“The Soviet Union will be our India .” he jubilantly declaimed. A thought that has long weighed on me and which encapsulates the energizing drive wheelsof Hitlerian genocide. A proclamation which has not ceased to numb our brains even after more than six decades. Such utterances put both British imperialism and the rapacity of Hitlerian imperialism into much clearer focus.

As Churchill confessed: the ‘loss’ of India was one of “my greatest personal losses” And no doubt his lugubrious whine must be grasped in this context when he saidthat it was not only an irreparable ‘loss’ for the British Empire but for humanity as a whole and “ a

personal loss that will never cease to gnaw at my soul."Abstracted from the bogus rhetorical outburst it simply meant that the lush pickings of empire flowed in his blood stream.And as you know he was a subaltern in the Indian imperial army. He was also a major shareholder in British tea plantations in Assam and the the South African gold mines of his friend Cecil Rhodes.

On his father's side (his Mother was American industrial heiress) his family's extensive pickings harked back to the East India Company to be vastly compounded in his own lifetime. These investments embraced large land holdings in the Punjab, commodity trading, mines, shipping and insurance and a wide variety of other assets. Here was the assemblage of the personification of capital wedded to Big Politics. The two moved in easy consonance. Plunder is seldom faceless and in the case of India and the Empire Churchill, like members of his social caste, personified the scale of its parasitism.

What Hitler and Churchill's mutual "love" of India boils down to was that India was a source of pillage and exploitation. In the latter it enshrined a reality; in the former an aspiration. This was their common denominator. They were kindred spirits each in his own way. As I said in my other lectures on Colonialism it was not fortuitous that Churchill was the guiding butcher of the incipient October Revolution. In so doing he rose to the defense of his class and its profits.

Churchill and his Wars of Intervention (1918-1921) which the British government bankrolled escalated him and Woodrow Wilson and Clemenceau to the highest summits of State Terrorism. What was more shocking as the historical record now discloses was that a sizeable chunk of the money for the 'wars of intervention' in Russia (resulting in the death and massacre of millions by death and starvation) was borne by the 'Indian' government. Or if you prefer, the oppressed peoples of colonial India with the taxes imposed by their oppressors bankrolled the counter-revolution in Russia .

His love of empire and his anti-communist credo were the guiding lights - he had no others - of his diseased social class from which he never departed. In the United States he saw as the major historical agency for the perpetuation of the values of his visibly defunct empire. It was not surprising that he resurfaced again with his Fulton Speech (March 1946) with his familiar baggage. Note the volte face and hypocrisy. Barely one year earlier he was referring glibly to the leader of the Soviet Union "as my good friend Marshal Stalin". It exposed the nakedness of his bankruptcy and his sanctification of the Cold War. A war for which the coloured peoples of the world starting from China would exact a human toll of tens of millions of dead. A blood letting that shows no signs of ending.

The Fulton declaration of war was the product of a blood-drenched colonial regime in its death throes. And it was not surprising that he made that declaration in a land whose leaders, more akin to political Gauleiters, exalted their crimes of bestiality in glaring contrast to that of Hitler and his acolytes, in the mantle of human freedom. The Fulton fulminations was a Manifesto of genocide as the subsequent decades revealed.

Let me say if I had not said so before, that my loathing for his persona and his policies during the war years and after were incommensurable . That was one measure of my polarization or my growing up if you prefer a more nuanced tone. I regarded him like many of my own class as a class enemy. A corollary of this is that I would never have shed a tear if his ancestral residence in Marlborough had been obliterated. I refused to visit it even when the occasion presented itself.

Rather, I spared my tears for the proletarians of the East End whose degouted homes and smashed streets and broken lives I personally visited with certain Comrades. I refer here specifically to the vestiges of the 1940 Blitz and the V2 bombings. For me, and I was not alone, this was not merely the artifact of war, but the deadly iniquitous face of the counter-revolution. This was my education or a very important part of it.

Hence to speak of Churchill as a Democrat and Hitler as a tyrant is to obscure as I have stressed their commonalities. Churchill the aristocrat was the gang leader of the coalition bent on the annihilation of the emerging October Revolution. His celebrated words were the rallying cry of the dispossessed exploiters: "Either we nip it in the bud now or they shall devour us." That as we saw was also Hitler's template. You will recall what I said in my lectures on Versailles and the counter revolution. Nor should we forget what Thorsten Veblen said in his polemic with the young Keynes. On that score he was unique among American intellectuals in his prescience and wisdom.

Hitler never dissimulated his colonial ambitions. It is not surprising that he was one of the greatest admirers of the British Empire. Being a rabid racialist - Gypsies, Negroes, Jews - was only one of his facets; Hitler was irrevocably wedded to the old order and its propertied class relations. They rocketed him into power. He was their anointed creation. He correctly saw the British Empire for what it was: a Plunderbund in that exquisitely succinct German expression for imperial parasitism. He wanted to be a part of it.

This was precisely the British empire that the legendary Paul Robeson, who in the presence of Harry Truman, excoriated it as 'the world's biggest prison of the peoples.' An outburst that was anathema to Truman that had now embarked on the path of global military, political and economic hegemony, unwaveringly followed by his successors.

Understandably so for he himself was the butcher of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One of the vilest war crimes of all times perpetrated as a warning signal to the Soviet Union (as was Dresden too which was Churchill's greatest of war crimes in February 45). It was not by chance that the Fulton speech was hurled at the world in the State of Missouri - the fiefdom of that pedestrian war criminal that was Harry Truman: the first of all Presidents - and the rest followed suite - to incarnate genocide, torture and State Terrorism as instruments of war and diplomacy. Truman had set the clock.. There would be no Presidents of the United States that would not be guilty of the most heinous of war crimes.

As one of Hitler's recent biographers have noted his 'model' for domination, pillaging and exploitation was the British Empire with its inexhaustible raw materials, and its gargantuan mass of undifferentiated subsistence work-force. The British Empire was thus a model to which The Third Reich must aspire. The Master race (*Das Herrenvolk*) was the British Raj. Let us stress once again that The Third Reich and the British Empire were anchored in the nostrum of racial supremacy. Racial supremacy was not an aberration but an organic part of the system.

No doubt this was what David Lloyd George meant when he said: "scratch a Tory and you will always find a Fascist". And in Hitler's case slave labour. Hitler had voiced on many occasions his amazement that a tiny island that lay off the coast of the Euro-Asian land mass had been able to achieve such a prodigious scale of self-enrichment thanks to the pillage of its Empire.

This was a pointer of what the Third Reich could achieve. The British showed that it was possible to occupy the colossus of India Hitler admiringly argued with merely 250,000 men of which white men were less than 50,000. In his morbid psyche this was his grand vision: "The Soviet Union will be turned into our India ." Before I proceed I should like to interject a personal note. My thinking of the nature of British imperialism in India was moulded by that very great work: India Today by Rajani Palme Dutt and of course Labour Monthly.

And as you know from my own writings on the exploitation of India it was to become the focal point of my own teachings and writing. It was at that moment that I read and studied RPD's Fascism and the Social Revolution. I had become not only an anti-fascist combatant but an ideologically armed one. I had ceased to be unarmed. As my Maltese comrade would have said.

A Personal Note

I should like to interject a personal note. Before I came to the UK in the autumn of 1943 I had never heard of the racist nostrum of *Untermensch*. Getting to understand the meaning of that word and its terrible implications was one of the scintillating educational and creative leaps in my life. I asked a Maltese comrade who was a bombardier. He was much older than I was. And immensely educated. A man of very words. His taciturn nature concealed the white hot anger that bubbled within him. And which he shared with few. I being one of them. His entire family of more than 10 people were wiped in a Luftwaffe raid on Valetta. He escaped their fate because he was staying that night with his grandmother who lived in the countryside.

He fleshed out the intricacies of its vile multi-faceted meanings. He told me that it meant a sub-human species. Reaching into the entrails of the word I asked: does that mean that Joe Louis (who was one of my childhood heroes) who smashed Max Schmeling in the first round was a sub-human being? He laughed but not contemptuously at my assimilation. I retorted that this was a load of rubbish.

I agree with you, he said but that is not the point. Those who used that word are beasts with human faces. And he was one of the first to remind that colonialism is incompatible with human dignity. The colonial subject is an *Untermensch*. It is not limited to Germans. Look at America. Look at the Rhodesians and the South Africans. They brandish the word wogs, niggers and yids unflinchingly.

We are not dealing with a system based on science and logic he argued. Its Fascism he went on and that spells the devaluation of human beings starting from the 'lower breeds' and moving up and up. He was a great teacher. Its like the word 'Aryan' he went on. Don't look for definitions. They don't and cannot exist. They have their own meaning and their logic. Their logic is punitive deployed to kill and maim.. He elaborated his explanation on that day and in days to come. He was more than a beloved and irreplaceable brother. He was an inspired teacher that guided my reading.. He was also, or rather had become, by the force of things a cold blooded killer. He killed with no remorse. In the spring of 45, his Avro Lancaster was hit by enemy fire but they limped on to the English coast where it crashed.

Operation Barbarossa

The aborted *Operation Sea Lion* was important no doubt but it was a side show to Hitler's greatest counter-revolutionary ambition: the annihilation of the Soviet Union. It was the grand climacteric of his life; the *raison d'être* of his capitalist paymasters. At least he was honest. There was no beating around the bush. "We are fighting to save the world from Bolshevik Asiatic barbarism." How could that scum speak of civilization? In that sense he was a true internationalist.

The butchered victims of Guernica, Coventry, Warsaw, East London, Antwerp and Rotterdam indubitably would have had a divergent understanding of that word. That would of course not be the end of the Luftwaffe's 'civilizing mission.' There was much more to come, the thousands of Soviet villages and towns that would be razed. For the onslaught against the Soviet Union was conceived as early as May 1940; a blueprint given its final imprimatur in December 1940 by Halder. In its sheer breadth of evil it revealed the Führer as an irrepressible optimist as well as a self-deluding fantasist. For Hitler and his likes it was an act of deliverance.

Just as the French bourgeoisie had proclaimed at the moment of the 'Front Populaire: "Mieux Hitler que le Front Populaire" their unwavering class loyalty to their surging Messiah was never in doubt. What I am saying to you is that Hitler unleashed his genocidal machine with the supreme benediction of the European and world bourgeoisie, and that engulfs the Japanese who nourished ambitions of their own. They had entered a state of ecstasy; the agony would come later. And the American bourgeoisie which had already repudiated democracy save in its formal frills was no exception.

In this Hitler was joined to such excrementas Atonescu, Horthy, Mussolini and others. They were the feeder base to his genocidal machine. The neutrals: Switzerland and Sweden were big-time indirect backers of his war machine. In the case of Switzerland that meant credits, arms, machine tools, you name it. And there were no exceptions. Many Swiss fought in the ranks of the Wehrmacht.

In the case of Antonescu's Romania, Nazi Germany did not pay a single pfennig for the food and indispensable oil it consumed with such profligacy and without which his military and industrial powerhouse would have ground to a halt. The entire iron and steel, agricultural, mining and manufacturing and engineering industries of Western capitalism was shoveled into his grandest of Holocausts. The race and class enemy - the *Übermensch* and the *Untermensch*, the exploiter and the exploited, had been identified and was to be destroyed.

The goal was the military defeat of the USSR and its annihilation as a political entity. The cost to the Soviet Union, in dead alone, was of the order of 20-25 millions and tens of millions wounded. And that is only the human cost as even a perfunctory visit to Stalingrad and its smashed productive engine would tragically remind you.

In the early pre-dawn hours of the 22 June the biggest military offensive that the world had ever seen would be unleashed. The long delay was now over. The war machine was thirsting for blood. At no point in history had an attacker benefited with such overwhelming advantages. The clang of the sledgehammer reverberated from the Arctic (Finland was now corralled into the Nazi death machine) to the Black Sea. The attacking force of ethnic Germans - *Das Herrenvolk* - amounted to slightly over 3 million. Superimposed on this was a million European mercenaries from all countries of occupied Europe that topped one million. A sum of over 4 million. This had no precedent in

the annals of military history; one fourth of the invading killers were non German.

In short, joined to the Wehrmacht's colossal economic and military firepower (supplemented as you will recall by millions of slave workers) was Western capitalism's industrial powerhouse and its massive demographic base. The Nazi juggernaut that surged forth on that early morning of 22 June included 3,600 tanks, 600,000 motorized vehicles, 7,000 artillery pieces, 2,500 aircraft supplemented by 650,000 horses. Obviously not all was Blitzkrieg.

Well could Hitler gloat from his Wolfschanze in East Prussia. "The world will hold its breath". They did. But for different reasons. The unfolding of Barbarossa aroused the passion of the global bourgeoisie. He served the interests of his class that believed in his Crusade and rapturously applauded him. For years they had known that he was their man. The proof was now at hand.

It is not merely what the printed historical record says, but from what I learnt from my own personal contacts with the bourgeoisie of occupied Europe many of whom I had got to know at very close range. My mother who was a forewoman in the apparel industry did not however hold her breath in anger but after the appalling initial surprise and terrible setbacks she said: "He has attacked the October Revolution and raped the working class of the world and out of this he will never win." These were not solitary utterances. They were the emanations of the world of labour. It articulated the pain and the thoughts and aspirations of countless millions the world over. That was a force that Hitler and his likes could not match.

This seething anger was not confined to individuals but like a typhoon it swept over tens of millions. It was the particular in the general. My mother's sentiments of defiance were echoed by Nehru, Krishna Menon. General Chu Teh of the Chinese Eight Route Army, by Ho Chi Minh and by the young Giap himself. I presume you have read my brochure on Stalingrad. You will recall that I started my comment with Operation Sea Lion. But behind its shadow was something of far greater substance.

The liquidation of the Untermensch

But we are not dealing with a war of military conquest and the plunder of its peoples. That was classical imperialism. It went beyond that and in what follows I shall use some of my archival materials to illustrate the horrors and reverberations of the doctrine of the Untermensch. In the writings of Ilya Ehrenbourg which I and others read (I was introduced to his writings by my Maltese comrade-in-arms) I became aware of some of its dreadful implications but it was only after the end of the war that the diabolical power of its meaning hit me with such force. Ehrenbourg was by no means - far from it - the unique source of my enlightenment. Let us begin with Heinrich Himmler, the number 2 in Der Fuhrer's cabal.

"What happens to a Russian does not interest me in the slightest. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death like cattle interests me only in so far as we need them as slaves for our Kultur; otherwise it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an antitank ditch interests me only in so far as the antitank ditch for the Third Reich is finished."

Erich Koch, Reich Commissar for the Ukraine, masterly articulated the goals of the Nazi Übermensch.

“We are the Master Race and we must govern hard. I will draw every drop of blood out of this country. I did not come here to spread bliss... The population must work and work and work again. We definitely did not come here to give out manna... We are a Master Race, which must remember that the lowliest German worker is racially and biologically a thousand times more valuable than the population here”.

And there is Martin Bormann, Hitler’s ventriloquist dummy and party secretary.

“The Slavs are to work for us. In so far as we don’t need them, they may die. Therefore compulsory vaccination and health services are superfluous. The fertility of the Slavs is undesirable. Education is dangerous. It is enough if they can count up to 100... Every educated person is a future enemy. Religion we leave to them as a source of diversion. As for food they won’t get any more than is absolutely necessary. We are the Masters. We come first.”

Herman Goering, as you will remember, was not merely the boss of the Luftwaffe. He was to be boss of the Soviet Plunderbund, one of the most ruthless killers of all times. And his personal wealth was one of the highest in Germany.

“It used to be called plunder in other times. But today things have become more humane. In spite of that, I intend to plunder and to do it thoroughly.” He was true to his word. In that year (1942) he told Ciano the Italian foreign minister: “this year between ten and thirty million will die of hunger in Russia and it is well that it should be so.” And the fat man without a glint of contrition boasted that Russian prisoners of war “had begun to eat each other” In the scale of infamy we can sink no lower.

The thunders of Retribution

I started my letter to you that was far longer than I expected. But of course, the span between aspirations and reality can be very wide as Hitler noted in his bunker. As so it for the masters of the Third Reich and their mass serial killers. It was merely a period of exactly ten years that separated Hitler’s power grab (January 1933) and The Third Reich’s apocalypse at Stalingrad.- the 30 January 1943. Which brings me to the wisdom of Hegel’s teachings elaborated in his History of Philosophy. “Out of the actions of men comes something quite different from what they intend and directly know and will”.

And this applies not merely to the mass serial killers of The Third Reich’s counterrevolution, but pressingly so in our times to its successor the Gringo’s crumbling imperio as it hobbles like a drunk from one lamp post to another exhibiting its horrendous crimes. But the play is not yet ended. For where there is oppression there will always be resistance.

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See also: [*The World in Their Web: Dynamics of Textile Multinationals \(Imperialism series\)*](#) by Frederick Clairmonte and J. Cavanagh (Hardcover 1 Dec 1984).

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