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Britain: A paragon of hypocrisy

Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey

4/11/2015

Hypocrisy, Triumphalism and a "Corporate Covenant"

" ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:3-4.)

England's Easter was the culmination of recent events which have brought the would-be great and good to their knees - and knee deep in hypocrisy.

Prime Minister David Cameron, after attending an Easter service near his rural Oxfordshire home said it was "shocking" that people abroad were still being "threatened, tortured - even killed" because of their faith.

Felicity Arbuthnot

Britain's crusade

There was no mention of Britain's hand in this result of the ongoing "Crusade" to which Tony Blair committed Britain's forces in 2003 and which generated the horrors. Cameron is on record as calling Blair his mentor - moreover, when Blair was Prime Minister, Cameron aspired to be "heir to Blair."

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg tweeted of the: "cruel and barbaric killings that took place in Kenya." Indeed, but it was Christian students - nearly one hundred and fifty of them - mercilessly singled out and slaughtered. Was the massacre another misconceived response to the "Crusade" - an expression which reverberated around a horrified Muslim world. **The word and our deeds has resulted in violence engulfing the Middle East and North Africa with ever increasing ferocity - and ever spreading twelve decimating years on.**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, referred to the Coptic Christians killed in Libya last month - a country subject of another illegal Western overthrow, assassination of the Head of State, resulting in a now ruined, failed nation.

Western duplicity

However those who are dying are of all faiths and none, in numbers unimaginable. Tortured, crucified, beheaded, dismembered, incinerated, bombed. Their homes, countries, histories looted, destroyed, erased in unending pogroms (dictionary definition: "to destroy, wreak havoc, demolish violently") by land, sea and air.

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu opined that Christians were at greater risk in many parts of the world because: "they follow Jesus Christ." He ignored the reality that until the "Crusade's" unleashing, believers of all religions had, broadly, co-existed in the affected regions for centuries. Being from Uganda he should also know a fair amount about Western duplicity.

Ignored in all statements were the Muslims, Yazidis, Mandeans, Sabateans, Druze, Zoastrians, Shabaks and others of faith, dead and dying in this very democratic (ie no one excluded) holocaust which has engulfed from Baghdad to Bengazi, Aleppo to Aden, Kabul to Kerbala, Helmand to Homs.

Justin Welby, in his Easter address referred to murdered Christians being: "witness, unwillingly, unjustly, wickedly ... martyrs in both senses of the word."

Criminal policy

The sense of the loss of every single precious human life was starkly missing in the mayhem created by the most criminal of actions - wars against the peace, wars of aggression - unleashing individual tragedies on a cataclysmic scale.

Perhaps the Archbishop's mind was still on a service he had conducted on Friday 13th March - in Western superstition an unlucky day when the 13th day of the month in the Gregorian calendar falls on a Friday, states Wiki, succinctly. He will certainly also have been aware of the Easter connection, a belief springing from the thirteen guests at the Last Supper on the 13th of Nisan, the night before Christ's death on Good Friday.

In London's great St Paul's Cathedral a ceremony of thanks to the 220,000 British troops who had served in Afghanistan was held, a commemoration of the four hundred and fifty three who died and a tribute to an estimated seventy five thousand wounded, disabled, sick or psychologically damaged. (1) The last troops left Afghanistan in October 2014 - almost thirteen years to the day since they first deployed.

To an onlooker, it seemed less tribute and more triumphalism. The royal family attended in force, all the men dressed military uniform, laden with orders, decorations and medals, adorned with golden braid, tassels and chains to dazzle.

The Lord Mayor of London wore a long black velvet frock, a crimson velvet cape, trimmed with another ermine one, silk stockings, patent court shoes with steel buckles and a tricorne hat. Tradition.

Blair, the unwanted guest

No Event would be complete without an unwanted guest and Tony Blair, who as Prime Minister obeyed his Master, George W. Bush's voice and sent troops to die and be maimed in a country posing no threat to anywhere, duly turned up. Having suffered a backlash from relatives of those who have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, he was faced with them asking why on earth he had been invited.

Bob Wright, whose son Corporal Mark Wright was killed in a minefield in 2006 spoke for many, telling the Daily Express that **Blair was: "the last person I would want to see", calling it "cheek" he added: "He took the country to war, cost all those lives and he's got blood on his hands."**

Gordon Brown, Blair's Chancellor of the Exchequer, thus wrote the cheques for the carnage for six years was also there. As Prime Minister after Blair's resignation in 2007 he did not change

policy. Afghans continued to be murdered in the guise of being "freed" and British coffins and medevacs continued to be flown home.

The service included the Archbishop of Canterbury's public thanks to those who had served. Prime Minister Cameron - with Britain on a permanent state of high alert - said the country was safer because of the efforts of the troops.

Cameron in cloud cuckoo land

Cameron also talked of the scale of achievements in vanquishing Al Qaida. Where has he been? As USA today noted, multiple insurgencies across multiple lands have taken up its cause. It has simply morphed into new movements. (USA Today, 10th September 2010.) And apart from the trumped up 9/11 reason, were we not told that the Taliban the reason for going to Afghanistan?

Perhaps the real reason lay in Afghanistan's untapped Trillion \$ bonanza of "mineral wealth and energy resources (including natural gas)" which have been known of since the 1970s. (2) In the light of which one homily at the service was particularly ironic:

Lord we pray with one accord,

For a just and equal sharing

Of the things that earth affords

...

It ends: "All that kills abundant living, Let it from the earth be banned."

A bit late for that, after the firing by the UK of *forty six million* bullets. Further, in just one instance, according to the Ministry of Defence, at least eighty thousand 105mm shells (costing £100 million) were fired within five seconds of support being called in.

Which brings us to the most bizarre part of the service. A cross made from used shell casings, mounted on a 105mm shell case base, bearing the names of the British dead, was borne through the Cathedral by representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force and presented at the Altar for the Archbishops's blessing and dedication. Formerly hung in the HQ at Camp Bastion, it is now to hang at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire in the north of England.

The cross, made from shells which had ended lives, mired in flesh and blood was dedicated:

To the greater glory of God

And in thanksgiving for lives well lived

And good examples set ...

Tell that to the grieving, bereaved, orphaned, homeless of Afghanistan. Not so much swords to ploughshares, but killer casings for Crusaders. It also has to be wondered whether it is a radioactive cross. **The British certainly used depleted uranium in shells the first Gulf war,** whether they still are is not certain, but to have abandoned its use would have been a major change of policy unlikely to be missed.

Onward Christian soldiers

The commemoration ended with a triumphal military parade and fly past, which included a Chinook helicopter and Apache attack helicopter, presumably to remind of the "special relationship" which had brought about the whole bloody mess. At least "Onward Christian soldiers" was not on the hymn sheet.

In an interview with Forces TV, Tony Blair said he had not foreseen just how long the troops would remain in Afghanistan. Clearly history is not his strong subject. In this "graveyard of empires" Britain was roundly defeated in 1812 and 1842. In 1919 in a territorial spat with Russia they decided not to return.

In a blistering assessment Will Hutton views the last twelve years as little better, writing: "**The Ministry of Defence and the military establishment are revealed as over-optimistic boneheads. Everything militated against success.** The amount of money that was squandered beggars belief ... Too much of what was planned was driven not by military need or political calculation - but by trying to impress the US."

The ceremony's venue was another irony. St Paul's was the greatest of the creations of Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) whose passion for Islamic architecture is mirrored in his buildings. It is witnessed in the structure of the domes in the aisles and the vast one atop the Cathedral. Were it gold, one would surely be looking at a mosque.

Archbishop Welby, with Archbishop Sentamu had another military related occasion in the last weeks. They signed a "corporate covenant" with the armed forces in an: "expression of moral obligation that the government and the nation owe the Armed Forces Community."

We have come a long way from "Thou shalt not kill", "love thy neighbor" and "do unto others as you would have them do to you." But perhaps as a former oil man, the Archbishop has a different perspective. His son, Peter, incidentally, works for Tony Blair.