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Why There Won't Be a Nuremberg 2.0



View from above of the judges' bench at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. In opening the Nuremberg Criminal Trial on 21st November 1945, US Prosecutor, Justice Robert Jackson, emphasised the responsibility of the victors in bringing proceedings against Nazi Germany. And the lofty reason he gave was because the wrongs which the court sought to condemn and punish were deemed “so calculated, malignant and devastating” that civilisation couldn't tolerate their being ignored,” and the reason for that, Jackson suggested, was because “civilisation could not survive their being repeated.” The first part of that statement is clearly untrue: The West has happily tolerated the genocide being perpetrated in Gaza and has even offered Israel military support and diplomatic cover for its crimes. As for the second part, it is too soon to tell.

Following the precedent set by Nuremberg, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant for crimes against humanity, provoking outrage in the US, and thereby affirming Churchill's interpretation of Nuremberg as 'Victor's Justice'. President Biden 'fundamentally rejected' the ICC's decision and described the warrants as 'outrageous'. Senators, from both parties have called for the prosecutors of the 'Kangaroo Court' to be punished and sanctioned. Senator Lindsey Graham has reminded us in the UK of our 'special relationship' with the hegemon: warning that the British economy will be 'crushed' if such arrests are carried out or even enabled. Other, more gung ho political representatives have cited the 'Hague Invasion Act' and called on the administration to promise to break Bibi out of prison should any one dare to arrest him. Such an escapade – which has precedent: the SS broke Mussolini out of a mountain stronghold when his fascist government collapsed in 1943 – would presumably be called something naff, like 'Operation Free Our Boy' given the American love of handles and the fact that this war criminal received endless standing ovations in congress.

Justice Jackson described Nuremberg, which was very much an American initiative, as "the most significant tribute power has ever paid to reason." It's unlikely that American foreign policy could be couched in such august terms today, but it wasn't true even then. Allen Dulles, head of the soon to be formed CIA, had already communicated to the Nazi government that a strong Germany was what the allies were seeking in a post-war Europe which needed to be kept safe for capitalism. The real enemy was perceived to be the USSR, notwithstanding the fact that they had just lost 27 million of their number in the fight against fascism. And to counter that imagined Soviet threat, the US was busy recruiting hundreds of Nazi scientists – many straight out of concentration camp research facilities – to work on various weapon programs. 'Operation Paper-Clip' was the name given to the plan – whereby Nazis with useful backgrounds were identified by attaching a paper clip to their file so that they could be surreptitiously funnelled over to the US and given new lives.

Whilst an ambitious scheme, Paper-clip was fairly sedate in its operation. Having taken off their Nazi uniforms these scientists settled into American suburbia, drawing salaries and pensions, getting promotions and even winning awards for their work. Meanwhile in Europe, a more dynamic fascist-affiliated project was under way. 'Operation Gladio' – another Dulles initiative – involving former Nazis and local collaborators, so called 'stay-behind' units, who had assisted in the genocide of East European Jewry, were being recruited and trained to quell the imagined Soviet menace. Over the next few decades these NATO-aligned military

units deployed terror tactics in false-flag operations all over Europe with the aim of ensuring there was no swing to the political left.

Interviewed in 1992, Vincenzo Vinciguerra – a former member of the neo-fascist organisation ‘Ordine Nuovo’ or ‘New Order’, now serving a life-sentence for murder, whose occupation is described by Wikipedia as ‘Terrorist. Writer’- explained the Gladio operation as follows, “You had to attack civilians, the people, women, children, innocent people, unknown people far removed from any political game. The reason was quite simple. They were supposed to force these people, the Italian public, to turn to the state to ask for greater security. This is the political logic that lies behind all the massacres and the bombings which remain unpunished, because the state can’t convict itself or declare itself responsible for what happened.”[1]

It wasn’t just in Italy that these CIA operatives worked with far-right militants – just about every single West European country appears to have had its cell. But it was in Italy, probably because of the extraordinary level of violence there: the so-called ‘Years of Lead’ that forced an investigation into what had become almost a shadow government with parallel power structures. Accordingly, in August 1990 Italian Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti revealed to the press that a secret NATO-linked stay-behind army had been working covertly in Western Europe for decades[2]. Such a revelation might be thought to have been a bombshell, a scandal or at least news, but that wasn’t the case. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of European leaders then followed Andreotti, publicly acknowledging the existence of similar covert operations in their own countries – Greece, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg, France, Portugal and Turkey – unsurprisingly, the UK kept shtum -there was little journalistic interest. Later that year the UK Observer newspaper ran an article calling Gladio, “the best kept and most damaging political-military secret since WWII.” But damaging to whom? The notion of European political independence had already passed into fiction and the ‘exposé’ barely raised an eyebrow. For the wily Dulles, foreseeing the potential problems of an independent press, had in 1953 initiated yet another operation: ‘Operation Mocking Bird’, to forestall them. According to author, Paul L. Williams, “This operation involved recruiting leading journalists and editors to fabricate stories and create smoke screens in order to cast the Agency’s agenda in a positive light.”[3]And here we are. And so when Declassified UK journalist, Mark Curtis, describes the US as a rogue state, who could argue, particularly given Nord Stream; but we all know that it doesn’t really matter. Because going rogue is of no consequence when you are the biggest rogue of them all and have adjusted the world to echo your narrative.

Justice Jackson was wrong: Western power wasn't stooping to reason, rather the victors were co-opting it to serve the new imperialist agenda. Because a different kind of empire was coming into being. One that worked through the colonisation of minds rather than territory. America had realised that global dominance could be attained through the infiltration and corruption of national civic structures. It didn't need to go to war, though a coup here and there would send the right signal. Rather the US Empire would control the globe through an endless process of self-propagation: ousting uncooperative leaders, collapsing economies, and destroying all contrary forms of communal existence. Under cover of 'promoting democracy' it would implant its own oligarchic model of governance into every other nation state. And in the process undermine and subvert aspects of that society's intellectual and cultural life not conducive to its goals. Thus, all foreign institutions would be remade in America's image: subservient to corporate power and culturally inert. And what those newly formed bastions of corporate America would then help shape in their own domains would be a new form of pliant citizenry commensurate with America's demands of production and consumption.

In 'The Closing of The American Mind', cultural critic, Alan Bloom described America as a 'land of souls without longing', of beings comfortable with a sort of 'soft nihilism,' and it is this exemplar of citizenship that the US has energetically exported. And it is thanks to the corrosive power of such easily placated nihilism which appears to have seeped out just about everywhere in The West that European culture has dissolved into a form of ubiquitous 'lifestyle' focused on the heavy promotional demands of a shallow individualism. But worse than the dissolution of social life and the ugly McDonaldisation of much of Europe is the perversion of reason and the corruption of the human soul that such engulfing emptiness has brought. I doubt many of us could have imagined how smoothly the world would continue to tick along against the backdrop of an ongoing live-steamed genocide: that a life/genocide balance would be so easily struck. But, of course, creating a cultural milieu in which genocide is socially acceptable has precedent.

If you thought that Nazi Germany was a land of rabid racism in which the populace was constantly ranting anti-Semitic tropes, you'd be wrong. In reality it was just the opposite. Having been persuaded of the historical necessity of Jewish extermination – primarily through it being sanctioned by the country's intellectual class – the populace sought distraction. And that is precisely what the Third Reich provided. The German people readily accepted Nazi jurist, Carl Schmitt's slogan that 'Not every being with a human face is human.' but they did not want to be reminded of it.^[4] Accordingly, Goebbels' genius was

not so much in selling genocide, but a way of life that made it normal. As Claudia Koonz points out in 'The Nazi Conscience', it was this 'deceptively mild and objective form of racism that ultimately proved to be the most lethal'. The German people were not brainwashed into hating Jews, rather all feelings of empathy for outcasts were simply disabled within popular culture. And what was presented in its stead was the 'historical truth' of German supremacy. How could the populace resist their destiny?

And that remains the task of geo-political propaganda today: turning some mythical destiny into objective reality, securing the endorsement of the intellectual class and providing the populace with diversion. The myth America's power-hungry oligarchy needed to sell, in order to pillage the earth and monetise just about every aspect of human life on it, is that of American Exceptionalism. That America, being the 'Exceptional nation' is special and not bound by the same constraints as lesser nations. First female secretary of state Madeleine Albright updated the myth to 'Indispensable Nation' when serving in the Clinton administration. America was 'Indispensable' to the world according to war-monger Albright, because it 'Stood taller' and 'Saw further'. And this is the self-serving mantra that has for decades been used to justify a plethora of coups, assassinations, economic sanctions, terrorist attacks, wars and colour revolutions. All with the intention of extending the reach of the American Empire around the globe. Maybe some incurious Americans still buy it, but nobody else does. And, given America's complicity in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, any vestige of soft power the Empire might have retained has now evaporated.

The foundation of the American Empire was laid by President Truman in The National Security Act of 1947 which founded the CIA and installed the military industrial complex at the heart of American society. With its emphasis on expanding weapons programmes, raising taxes, and funding covert operations – largely through crime, this initiative enabled the US to become the global hegemon it is today. And whilst the economic costs of that expansionist enterprise are evident in the suffering of a massively neglected US populace, the moral toll American Imperialism has taken on humanity runs far deeper and has longer-lasting significance.

It was Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state and advisor on foreign policy, who observed that the average American spends less than 10 minutes a day thinking about foreign policy.^[5] This was important because in order to be able to sell the destruction 'over there' what was required was a quiescent population at home. And, as Acheson noted, as did De Tocqueville before him, the US property-owning class had been gifted with precisely that. To Acheson, the ideal American citizen presented with three main attributes – they were docile

workers, enthusiastic consumers and obedient soldiers. What more could a power-hungry elite intent on global domination wish for? Although, as observed by Gore Vidal, who has written extensively on the American Empire, an extra boon was provided in the shape of America's unique art form – the TV commercial. Through its mastery of propaganda, the US Empire could easily maintain a sufficiency of ignorance and political support back home however violent, destructive and immoral its practices abroad. Filling the puny ten minute observation window was no problem, particularly after Iraq got flattened and 'Militainment', another American art form, came into being.

The significance of the 'at home' aspect of Imperialism should not be underrated. Nor should the fact that the relationship between the perpetrators of violence and the community that condones those crimes is a dialectical one. Meaning that the more egregious the horrors the community allows, the more fractured its own moral foundation ultimately becomes. Initially, partisanship in the form nationalism or ethnic loyalty may be used to mask moral double-standards – like the dubious notion of 'protecting western values' – i.e., 'whiteness' currently being pushed by the European right-wing intent on absolving Israel of war crimes. Such ethno-supremacist views are commonly expressed in brief throwaway comments, casually dropped into the everyday – often with a conspiratorial nod towards immigrant communities. As Koonz writes, it was precisely such 'small doses of poisonous racism' that were the most powerful in Nazi society because they were the most insidious and could subtly garner support. But eventually in any form of totalitarianism – and here it is not difficult to see Liberalism fitting the mould previously filled by Fascism and Communism, which at least did not pretend to be democracies – the moral collapse turns inwards and dissent is outlawed. Dissent has to be driven out because of its challenge to the immoral status quo: "The everyday decency of a few magnifies the complicity of the many," as Koonz puts it. Which is why the Zionist lobby in the West has so strenuously fought to silence protests and arrest journalists. And it is why Tik Tok is likely to be banned in the US and why students there may face criminal charges, or even deportation for criticising Israel. But in this massive crack-down on freedom of speech what has been exposed is the true nature of an ailing, morally bankrupt, and violent Civilisation. So when Justice Jackson suggests that Civilisation – by which he means Western Civilisation – may not survive another genocide, one is tempted to ask, "Should it?"

In his address to Harvard in the 1970s, Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn laid out a few home truths. Having been exiled from the USSR and given sanctuary in the US, many expected to hear Solzhenitsyn sing the West's praises. But he did not. Unsurprisingly, he

heavily criticised the Communist regime under which he had suffered so much, but he did not see life in the West as a model to emulate. He framed his views as those of a respectful outsider, but opined to being shocked at the shallow materialism and moral degeneracy of western life. He found the notion of conquering people and imposing a western lifestyle on them not only immoral but borne out of a blind superiority and a foundational ignorance that rendered the West incapable of recognising the essence of other cultures and civilisations. And, in its inability to adapt to a changing, post-colonial world, he saw a sign that the West had come to the end of its development. A declining Empire is, of course, a dangerous thing, as it crashes and burns and destroys as much as it can in the process. But the fading of The Imperial West is not the end of western values but an opportunity to rediscover them.

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Notes.

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUvrPvV-KQo&t=29s> Operation Gladio – State-sponsored Terrorism

[2] Nato's Secret Armies – Daniele Ganser, 2005

[3] Paul L. Williams – Operation Gladio, 2015

[4] Claudia Koonz, The Nazi Conscience, 2003

[5] Gore Vidal, The History of the National Security State. 2014

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