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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**The Ukrainian Vigil opposite Downing Street.
Inside: Ukraine: North Korea: Taiwan.**

EVENTS

28th- 30th March Scottish Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, AECC, Aberdeen

4th-6th April Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Welsh Liberal Democrats) Spring Conference, City Campus, Newport.

24th-27th April LI Congress, Rotterdam.

2nd June LIBG Forum - Egypt. NLC 7.00pm

5th June Tim Garden Memorial Lecture: Sir Menzies Campbell MP will speak on 'Whither Europe?' Chatham House 6.00pm

30th June LIBG AGM followed by joint meeting with Liberal History Group on 1914.

4th –8th October Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Glasgow

For bookings & other information please contact the Chair below.

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Underground: Embankment

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Team LIBG at the Diplomatic Reception: John Innes, Mark Smulian, Anuja Prashar, Jerry Asquith, Adrian Trett, Wendy Kyrle-Pope, Simon Hughes, Julie Smith, Nick Harvey, Nick Hopkinson, Rabi Martins, Claire Tyler, Robert Woodthorpe Browne & Sue Garden.

Paddy Ashdown on Ukraine

**Dermot Murnaghan interview with Lord Paddy Ashdown about the situation in Ukraine,
Sky News, March 2nd 2014**

DERMOT MURNAGHAN: Well Ukraine says it's preparing its forces for combat. President Putin has been given the go-ahead to send more Russian troops to Crimea and David Cameron says the world is watching, so are we witnessing the beginning of potential war? In a moment I'll be speaking to the former Foreign Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind and I'm also going to speaking right now to the former Lib Dem leader, Lord Ashdown, Paddy Ashdown. So let's say a very good morning to the former Lib Dem leader Paddy Ashdown. First of all of course, the burning international issue, do you think this could lead to war in Ukraine?

PADDY ASHDOWN: Good morning, Dermot. Yes, I think we're a pace away from catastrophe at the moment. It would require one foolish act, I don't know, a trigger happy Russian soldier, a Ukrainian guard who acts aggressively at one of his institutions that has been taken over by Russian or Russian supporters, a foolish act now could tip us over the edge. I think at the moment ... let's take the sort of good news first, Dermot. The good news is it's still possible that Russia's aims are limited, I think increasingly unlikely but still possible. They have legitimate rights under international treaty to the use of the port of Sebastopol for the Black Sea fleet. They may be posturing, overreacting or at least using muscle to preserve that right. I think what we've seen recently, the installation of what is essentially a puppet government in the semi-autonomous region of Crimea, above all that decision of the Duma yesterday to use Russian troops anywhere in Ukraine it appears, leads you to a conclusion that that's less likely but we still have to test out what are Russia's aims. If the evidence that's before us is to be believed, then it looks to me that they are going further than limited aims. They've already made a power grab in Crimea and are preparing to make another, so what should our reaction be? Well the one thing that is absolutely essential now is that the West speaks with a single voice. Mr Hague is going to Kiev, I'm not sure anybody should be going anywhere unless they're expressing the view not of just Great Britain but of the entire international community. That's not to say he's

wrong but it is to say that when he goes there he is to express a view which is the united purposed decided Western unanimous view. Only in the face of that can we exercise diplomatic leverage. Putin has used force, he knows that is going further than any of us are prepared to go, he is calling our bluff – the only response is diplomacy. I think the most important international visitor at present probably is Chancellor Merkel to go to Moscow. The Germans in the past have been closer to Russia, Russia has always felt it could divide them off on energy matters so it is really important that she carries an international view to Moscow and does it very quickly. Only if you take those highest level moves could we restrain Russia from an act which would be clearly illegal and create a circumstance in which we could begin to pull back from that but absent that, the smallest tremor, the smallest act now could take us over the edge.

DM: But what can be done you say to call President Putin's bluff? Well it's not a bluff given that the forces are in there, there's nothing that the West can do even if it speaks with a unified voice to change that on the ground with the military.

PADDY ASHDOWN: Well, President Putin has taken the view that if he uses the military card we will not out-trump him and he's right, we will not respond in a military fashion, these are not the circumstances in which it is possible to do that I imagine. I mean I'm not privy to all the information here but one has to presume that, in which case the only option left is the diplomatic option and we have to make that as powerful as possible and the quintessential element of that is to look for the West to be utterly united, utterly decided and to show the will to take action together, not individually. If we want to go travelling across the world let's do so but when we do that we speak as a united voice. Only if we do that I think can we create circumstances in which we may pull this thing back. Look, this is not alone, the Russians tried this in Kosovo when they tried to unilaterally take over the airport, I don't think this is going to end so happily. They tried it in Georgia, by the way this has always played out to their long term disadvantage and this

will too, but we're not considering the long term here, we're considering the short. We have to know what to do now and what Russia seems to be doing is lining up, setting up the Sudetenland excuse, the excuse of Hitler which was if anybody of a nationality which is the same as ours, in this case Russian, suffers then we reserve the right to intervene. Here is the bottom line misunderstanding, or if you like cultural clash, whereas the whole of the West has moved towards a new standard that the fate of nations is decided by the will of their people, Russia seems to be regenerating and bringing back the old standard, which is the standard of the 19th century which is great powers have the right to subjugate the wishes of their neighbours in order to preserve their spheres of influence. That way lies catastrophe I'm afraid but it is only diplomacy now, if we will not use force and I can't see that that would be a sensible thing to do, which can pull us back from this and this diplomacy will only work if it is united and powerful.

DM: But whatever happens, can you see Ukraine remaining territorially intact as it is now? Crimea is in effect gone, whatever happens Putin will not let that go.

PADDY ASHDOWN: Well let's wait and see. Crimea already was a semi-autonomous element of Ukraine, I don't see why that should not continue to be the case if you can create a context in which that becomes possible. Again it is the Sudetenland excuse, Hitler said of Sudetenland, if you will not give me Sudetenland I will take the lot and it appears Russia is lining itself up to do the same thing. But look, I come back to the central thing, we do not yet know for certain that Russia's aims are not limited, limited to the preservation of their legal rights in Sebastopol. They may be using high muscle power to be able to preserve that, I think that has to be looked at, that has to be investigated, we have to explore that possibility but I'm bound to say I take the pessimistic view that it looks to me as though her aims are now much wider than the preservation of Sebastopol and they include the territorial acquisition of bits of Ukraine. If that is the case I frankly cannot see the break-up of Ukraine occurring without bloodshed and it is that which at all levels and by whatever means, we have to try and avoid and that's why the diplomacy which is now exercising the West has to be united, strong and decisive. It is the only means which we have to pull this back and we have to make sure we use it with effect.

DM: Okay, great to talk to you, Paddy Ashdown, thank you very much indeed.

York conference debates tough UK approach to Ukraine crisis

Paul Reynolds

At our spring conference in York, there was an emergency 'Topical Debate' on the Ukraine crisis.

The debate reflected United Kingdom attitudes to the Ukraine crisis, but there were some far-reaching implications for some of the views expressed. Importantly, the UK was a signatory to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, whereby Ukraine gave up its massive nuclear weapons stockpile in return for full guarantees of its territorial integrity – an agreement now clearly breached by one of its other signatories, the Russian Federation.

Today, the UK has military surveillance aircraft flying along the Polish and Romanian borders with Ukraine, monitoring Russian military activity, and military assets also monitoring Southern Ukraine including Crimea, and its Russian borders. If diplomacy fails, the UK would almost certainly be involved in any military measures that follow.

Conference speeches by Robert Woodthorpe Brown and Jonathan Fryer emphasised the legal position – the 1994 Memorandum and breaches of international law, including Russian troops in unmarked uniforms (contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Accords).

Conference speeches also criticised the weak Russian justification for de facto annexation of Crimea – citing the absence of threat to Russians and the fact that the Ukrainian Parliament, including Russian speakers, removed Yanukovich from office.

The position of the British 'left' was also reflected in a couple of speeches – that the second Ukrainian revolution in 2014 was supported by US and European security institutions which provoked the Russian response in Crimea – since they feared the loss of their Sebastopol naval bases. Although no speaker refuted this directly, Western support for the uprising would hardly be surprising given the extraordinarily kleptocratic and brutal nature of the Yanukovich regime and its alleged theft of \$70bn in three years and sympathy for all the people's desire to join the EU as a way out.

In my own speech I made three additional points.

First, that despite there being a pre-World War 1 West-East divide in the Ukraine, the problem for Putin is that even the Russian minority noticed that neighbouring Poland's economy expanded rapidly after EU membership. Poland even grew 17% since the 2008 financial crisis. This is in contrast to a decline in median incomes in Ukraine over the same 9 year period, and worsening conditions since Yanukovich took over. A clear majority of Ukrainians want to join the EU, including Crimea which is only 58% Russian speaking.

Second, that Putin's actions in Ukraine are part of a pattern. In Georgia Putin effectively annexed the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. In Moldova Putin reversed moves to contain the mafia-ised pro-Russian 'Trans-Dniester' region on the Ukrainian border, known for its illegal arms exports. The policy which



Paul Reynolds, Anuja Prashar, Michael Ndivaye (Minister Counsellor, High Commission of Namibia) & Acácio Chacate (Embassy of Mozambique) at the Diplomatic Reception.

these annexations support is Putin's colonial pledge to keep the old Soviet Union republics under Moscow's domination – creating pro-Russian areas as bargaining chips.

Third, I suggested that the UK should support measures to undermine Putin's justifications, in Crimea – including multilateral guarantees over language and the Russian naval port.

Conference speeches in York mostly supported sanctions against Russia. Other measures under discussion were not mentioned. These include cancelling the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 – which pledged to keep NATO forces away from the Russian-facing borders of EU members - and abolishing the NATO- Russia Council. Some experts have argued for a protection force in Western Crimea

to ensure ethnic Tatars and other Ukrainians in Crimea are not ethnically cleansed.

Given Putin's obsessive inability to let go of Russia's former colonies, a firm stance is needed to prevent escalation.

Paul Reynolds works with multilateral organisations as an independent adviser on international relations, economics, and senior governance.

This piece originally appeared in LibDem Voice Wednesday 12th March 2014

'Mr Putin, keep your gas!'

LI President, Hans van Baalen MEP, has addressed a large audience of LI members, FDP and German Group of LI, and LI cooperating organisation, FNF, concerning Russian President Putin's deliberate destabilisation of Ukraine, at the Atrium of Deutsche Bank in Berlin on Monday 24th March 2014.

In illegally occupying and annexing the Crimea, the LI President told the audience that Putin has violated the Helsinki Accords, which have provided stability in Europe for almost 40 years. The unlawful action by Putin must be a wake-up call"

The LI President called for a coherent European Union energy policy, to make the EU independent from Russian oil and gas. Hans van Baalen continued: "The unlawful action by Putin must be a wake-up call to start laying the foundation of this policy as soon as possible. It will not be effective overnight but we must start now. The US and the EU must strengthen NATO in order to make clear that the US and Europe are prepared to defend their values and their borders."

Van Baalen did explicitly not call for military action but asked that civilian observers be sent to all regions of Ukraine to monitor the presidential election on May 25 and make sure that Moscow will not be able to cause more chaos by trying to create trouble in the Russian speaking areas. "The best way to prevent Putin from further destabilising Ukraine and Europe is to stand firm, to have a military deterrent and to assist Ukraine, and to say to Putin: 'keep your gas!'", concluded Van Baalen.

Hans van Baalen MEP has made a number of trips to Ukraine, where he addressed huge crowds in Independence Square of protesters and met with government officials, as liberals around the world condemn the actions of Vladimir Putin.

Robert Woodthorpe Browne on Ukraine at York

The Liberal Democrats elected to hold an emergency debate on the crisis in Ukraine at their Spring conference in York. One of the first delegates to speak on this important subject was LI Treasurer on the Bureau, Robert Woodthorpe Browne MBE, who is also the Chair of the Party's International Relations Committee. Addressing an audience of hundreds of Liberal Democrats, as well as numerous diplomats, the LI Treasurer delivered a clear message, as follows.

Good morning conference. A quick word of explanation. This is a discussion. There is no conference resolution. How could there be, when events are moving so swiftly

I had to watch the 6 am news this morning to include the latest developments in this speech. I and the other speakers, and doubtless Nick later this morning, will deliver a message to the Russian government, which will surely be relayed by my friend Sergey Nalobin from the Russian Embassy who is with us this morning.

First, we understand that Russia has legitimate interests in Ukraine. I have visited both countries for the last quarter century. Most Russians have never accepted that Ukraine is a different country. However, they did sign an agreement recognising the sovereign borders of their large neighbour, and this agreement must not be breached.

What is happening in Crimea is simply unacceptable. To hold a referendum in a week's time, denying entry to an unarmed OSCE observer team - from an OSCE of which Russia has always been a member - is by international standards totally invalid.

Liberals believe in free and fair elections with all parties having equal access to media and security and independent scrutiny of the process. This is simply not possible in Crimea today and the referendum in one week's time is a farce

Furthermore, Crimea's 2 million people, many of them Ukrainians and Tatars, depend on Ukraine for the vast majority of their electricity and water, and are subsidised by the mainland. It is not in Russia's economic interest to spend billions in subsidies and

building a huge bridge to Russia, especially when Russia's economy is not in a good state.

And another message. Soldiers without insignia are illegal under the Geneva Convention. We do not accept that these armed men are a bunch of locals who have called in at an army surplus store!

And then there is the dangerous doctrine that native Russian speakers resident outside Russian borders have a right to protection from Moscow. Such people must seek redress for any grievances from their legitimate governments, in Kazakhstan, the Baltic states or wherever. They must participate fully in the political and economic life of their countries. Russia



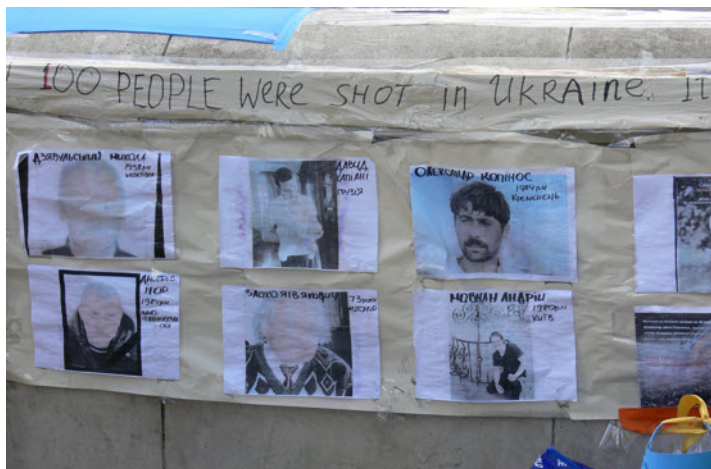
Robert Woodthorpe Browne with Counsellor Sergey Nalobin of the Embassy of the Russian Federation at the LIBG Diplomats Reception.

has no military role and no justification for intervention.

I haven't heard recently that Hungary intends to invade Slovakia or Romania!

Turning to the wider Ukrainian issue. A hugely corrupt convicted criminal was elected president of Ukraine. He promised a path for his country which he suddenly decided not to deliver following Russian offers of economic assistance and warnings of the consequences of any agreement with the EU.

The result was the demonstrations in the Maidan Square in Kiyiv. Mr Nalobin told us yesterday that there were swastikas on display. It is true that some neo Nazis, from Ukraine and outside, were among the demonstrators. But it is not realistic to believe that Arsenyuk, Tymoshenko and Klitschko are seeking to establish a Nazi government.



Many Ukrainians were shot in the Maidan. The supreme Rada, including members of Yanukovich's party of the regions, voted to depose him and he fled. There will be new presidential elections in which the whole country will take part, including the Russian speakers in the east of the country, at the end of May.

What Ukraine now needs is proper governance and an end to the corruption which has seen a quarter century of stagnation when Ukraine's western neighbours have enjoyed significant improvements in their living standards. And to get this they need the IMF, the EU, America and, certainly, Russia, to give them the loans they need, conditional on good governance and a Georgia-style campaign to eradicate both petty and macro corruption.

Russian companies own a large proportion of Ukrainian commerce and industry. A prosperous Ukraine, with trading relationships fashioned to benefit Russia too, is in Russia's own economic interests. Ukraine, which has 70% of the world's black earth, could be an economic power house. Instead it is a basket case. But it is not beyond rescue. Russia is concerned that it will have another NATO state on its borders. There is no need for that, and assurances can be given.

But the EU must pull its weight. I believe that we let down the Orange Revolution 10 years ago by not saying that we believe Ukraine in the fullness of time, when it is ready, should become a candidate country for EU membership. Why not? They are as European as we are. And what if Russia continues its aggression in Crimea and, worse, in any other part of

Ukraine's sovereign territory? I have written some weeks ago, and Nick's Guardian interview says it too, that Crimea is probably lost in the same way as South Ossetia and Abkhazia were lost to Georgia.

But the international community does not have to accept this, and as President Obama said overnight, there will be consequences. Expulsion from the G8, OSCE and the Council of Europe. Surely the Tories must kick Putin's United Russia Party out of their grouping!

But jaw jaw is better than war war. Sanctions would be reciprocal and harm everyone.

Grigoriy Yavlinski and Sergei Mitrokhin of our Russian sister party, Yabloko, as well as Gary Kasparov and other Russian opposition figures, are expressing their horror at what is being done in their name.

Sergey. Please tell your government that we do not regard Russia and its people as anything other than friends. Let us work together for a prosperous, intact Ukraine, where the rights of all are respected and Ukraine's wealth of human resources can work in harmony with us all.

Belfast One World Run

Alliance South Belfast MLA, Anna Lo, has officially launched the Belfast One World Run at an event at Stormont. It is the 28th annual run and aims to raise money for Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam Ireland and Trócaire. The run will take place on Sunday 18th May at 3pm in Ormeau Park, Belfast. The event consists of five categories, a 10km run, a 3km run, a 2 km run, and 3km and 2km family fun walks. For more information please visit www.belfastoneworldrun.co.uk

Anna Lo MLA said: "I have taken part in several One World Runs and I am delighted to officially launch this year's event. It is a great way to get some exercise as well as raising awareness and money for some great international development charities.

"I would encourage everybody to get involved on Sunday 18th May, whether they are keen runners and wish to do the 10km run, or those who may just want to do the family fun walk. It is not about your ability that is important, it is about taking part.

"Our community can come together to help those who live in developing countries. We have the opportunity to do our bit for those less fortunate. It is important to think beyond ourselves, to recognise that there are those who live in conditions that are incomprehensible to us.

North Korea and the United Nations Commission of Inquiry

David Alton

Two recent events, inextricably linked, are harbingers of significant change in North Korea, and they pose significant questions to the international community about how best to respond.

First, in December last, came the execution of Chang Song-thaek, the uncle of the country's leader, Kim Jong-un. Chang's death was both a sign of Kim Jong-un's ruthlessness but also a sign of weakness and fear. Chang Song-thaek had to be killed because he had questioned an ideology which has paralysed economic development, incarcerated hundreds of thousands of its citizens, and which has conferred pariah status on the country. His execution became the most high profile of a succession of killings, symptomatic of a system which routinely murders and imprisons its own people, and which subjugates them through indoctrination and propaganda.

Now, on March 17th, has come the unprecedented publication of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) report calling for the prosecution of North Korea's leaders for crimes against humanity. After a year collecting evidence from North Korean escapees, the COI compared the country's egregious violations of human rights with those of the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and has called for their referral to the International Criminal Court. Despite their angry protestations, the leadership should be fearfully reflecting that, as at Nuremberg and at the Hague, a day of reckoning may one day come.

Unlike their former allies in Burma – who have also faced allegations of crimes against humanity but have begun to alter course, the North Korean regime has eschewed the path of reform, staking their future on the world's indifference. It is a huge miscalculation.

Mr. Justice Kirby, the highly respected Australian Judge, who chaired the Commission, and his fellow Commissioners, say in their 400-page report that North Korea's crimes against humanity are sui generis: "the gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world". They detail what they describe as "unspeakable atrocities" and spell out their scope in graphic detail: "*These crimes against*

humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation." Judge Kirby has drawn parallels with Auschwitz, with Hitler and with Stalin and says that the country's leadership and the system which it sustains - "policies established at the highest level of State" – must be held to account and brought to justice.

Chang Song-thaek's high profile execution is certainly redolent of the period to which Michael Kirby alludes. Chang was seen as a potential alternative. He had been the power behind the throne and was close to China and admiring of its reform programme. China's anger at his killing sits alongside their barely concealed contempt for an "ally" which routinely aborts North Korean babies, fathered by Chinese men, who are regarded as a contamination of Korean blood line.

Chang's execution – some unsubstantiated reports in China allege that he was thrown to the dogs; the purges; the reign of terror; the falsifying of history; the show trials; the network of gulags which incarcerate between 200,000 and 300,000 people; the estimated 400,000 people who have died in the prison camps in the last 30 years; and the attempt to obliterate religious belief and all political dissent; all bear all the hallmarks of a regime which has carefully studied, admires and imitates the visceral brutality of Joseph Stalin. Not for nothing, on a visit to North Korea, was I shown the bullet proof railway carriage which Stalin gave as a gift to Kim Il Sung.

Thanks to the COI, the free world may no longer claim that it had no idea of what happens inside North Korea or the scale of the depredations in North Korea. One of the relatively new factors which has made possible the COI's report are the first-hand witness statements to which the Commission has had access. Just as North Korea can no longer completely keep out information and contact from beyond its borders, so the presence of around 30,000 North Koreans living in democratic countries has been a game-changer. The first-hand

evidence of escapees has opened the eyes of the world and aroused the anger of many who were previously disinterested.

It is now ten years since I urged the British Parliament to highlight human rights violations in North Korea with the same emphasis we place on security issues. Perhaps the COI report will finally make this happen. As the world discovered during the Helsinki Process, after the West and the Soviet Bloc had reached a military stalemate, human rights engagement (at a number of different levels) tipped the scales and brought fundamental change. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 linked foreign policy to basic human rights principles. A firm stand on human rights, linked to a strong non-appeasement military policy, is the catalyst for change. That is why I have argued for Helsinki with a Korean face, and why I strongly welcome the COI's report.

Ten years ago I told the House of Lords that: "By championing the cause of those who are suffering in North Korea, the international community will create the conditions for the establishment of democracy Learning the lessons of [the] Helsinki [process], we must do nothing to licence the regime in Pyongyang to commit further atrocities against its own people. We should enter negotiations which guarantee human rights, such as free exchange of people and religious liberties ... By linking the present crisis with the human rights violations, a crisis can be turned into an opportunity. To do nothing about North Korea would be the most dangerous option of all."

During the intervening decade I have chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea and have often felt frustrated that we have pursued that dangerous option of doing nothing at all. As Judge Kirby discovered once confronted by the personal accounts of those who have suffered at the regime's hands doing nothing cannot be an option.

Part Two of the COI report relies heavily on personal stories. It cites evidence given by individual victims and witnesses, including the harrowing treatment meted out to political prisoners, some of whom said they would catch snakes and mice to feed malnourished babies. Others told of watching family members being murdered in prison camps, and of defenceless inmates being used for martial arts practice. This is of a piece with the accounts which my Committee has been given.

It is more than ten years since I met Yoo Sang-joon. Yoo's story was particularly harrowing and disturbing. He told me how he had seen his wife, and all but one

of his children shot dead. He subsequently escaped across the border to China with his one remaining son. The boy died en route.

Yoo Sang-joon himself became an Asian Raoul Wallenberg – the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Yoo Sang-joon bravely re-entered North Korea and has helped many people flee across the border. This led to his arrest in China in 2007, but, on compassionate grounds, China relented, allowing him to be repatriated to Seoul knowing that in the North he would be executed.

My Committee heard the story of Lee Keumsoon. Her death camp supervisors stripped off Lee's clothes to establish whether she was pregnant. Like others who have become pregnant in China she was forcibly aborted. The dignity, integrity and bearing of the women and men who have suffered so much is striking. None more so that Shin Dong-Hyok, whose story is movingly told by Blaine Harden in "Escape from Camp 14", extracts of which were serialised in 2012 by BBC Radio Four. I have now met Shin several times. It would be impossible not to be deeply affected by both his story and by his demeanour. Despite everything that has been done to him and his family he still loves his country and wants the best for North Korea and its people. Shin is nearly thirty and spent the first 23 years of his life in North Korea's Political prison Camp 14, where he was born. Camp 14 is one of five sprawling prison camps in the mountains of North Korea, about fifty five miles north of Pyongyang. No one born in Camp 14 or any other political prison camp - "the absolute control zone" - had previously escaped from North Korea. These are places where the hard labour, the malnutrition, or freezing conditions, minus 20 Celsius in winter, will often get you before the firing squad.

Shin told my Parliamentary Committee that as a child, he witnessed fellow child prisoners being killed through accidents and beatings. He told me that children and parents were required to watch and report on one another. He was forced to work from the age of 10 or 11. His parents were sent to the camp in 1965 as political prisoners. Thirty years later, after family members tried to escape from the camp, Shin was interrogated in an underground torture chamber. Following this failed escape attempt, he was forced, on April 6th 1996, to watch as his mother and brother were publicly executed – common in the camps.

Guards bound the hands and feet of the 13-year-old boy and roasted him over a fire. The burns still scar Shin's back, the memories have indelibly scarred his

mind; and he remains haunted by the double life he was forced to lead and the lies he had to tell to survive. In 2005, having been tortured, mistreated and discriminated against as the son and brother of a declared traitor - and suffering from constant hunger - Shin and a compatriot tried to escape. His friend died on the barbed wire - not realising that it carried a high electric current - but, although he was badly burnt, Shin literally climbed over the corpse of his friend and for 25 days he secretly travelled towards the Yalu River and over the border into China. In Shanghai he found a way over the wall of the South Korean Consulate and, after 6 months there, he was allowed to travel to Seoul. Physically and emotionally Shin was deeply scarred.

Shin was joined at our Parliamentary Hearing by Ahn Myeong-Cheol, aged 37, who worked as a prison guard at four political prison camps - also within the "absolute control zone" between 1987 and 1994. He described how his father killed himself when he realised that he had been heard criticising the regime; his mother and brothers were sent to prison camps; Ahn was re-educated and became a prison guard in the "absolute control zones." Vividly and harrowingly he described how he witnessed guard dogs imported from Russia tear three children to pieces and how the camp warden congratulated the guard who had trained the dogs; he said that even when prisoners died they are punished- their corpses and remains simply left to disintegrate and rot away on the open ground.

Particularly harrowing was the evidence given by two diminutive North Korean women who, speaking through an interpreter, recounted their experiences. From time to time their stories were interrupted as the women wept. Jeon Young-Ok is 40. When she was a little girl her mother took the family across the Tumen River to try and flee to China. They were caught and her father and brother imprisoned. Her mother died of a heart disease and left her three children alone. Years later, now married with three children of her own, Jeon managed to make furtive forays from North Korea into China to secure money and food for her children. Twice she was apprehended and jailed. Movingly she told the parliamentary hearing: *"I couldn't bear to die with my children in my arms. As long as I was alive I couldn't just watch them die."* This was an allusion to the starvation of the 1990s when anything from 1 to 2 million North Koreans starved to death.

In China Mrs. Jeon remained at risk "nowhere was safe." If she was caught the Chinese would send her back. And this is exactly what happened to her. Caught in 1997 and again in 2001 – she was sent to

Northern Pyeong-an Detention Camp. "I was put in a camp where I saw and experienced unimaginable things. We were made to pull the beards from the faces of elderly people. Prison guards treated them like animals. The women were forced to strip. A group of us were thrown just one blanket and we were forced to pull it from one another as we tried to hide our shame. I felt like an animal, no better than a pig. I didn't want to live." Jeon Young-Ok added: "They tortured the Christians the most. They were denied food and sleep. They were forced to stick out their tongues and iron was pushed into it." Despite all this, she harbours no hatred for her country and shows extraordinary fortitude and equanimity: "The past is not important but these terrible things are still happening in North Korea. These camps should be abolished forever."

In 2011 Mrs Kim Hye Sook gave evidence to my committee and described a normal working day in Camp 18. She recounted the manual labour undertaken by prisoners and scarcity of food provisions and the regular public executions and cannibalism which she saw over her 27 years imprisonment during which she saw the death of her son in the camp. Here are the stories of religious persecution, the lack of freedom of movement, the lack of labour rights, the non-implementation of legal codes, the lack of a fair trial, the lack of judicial oversight of detention facilities and the severe mistreatment of repatriated persons- mainly repatriated from China. Throughout the hearings which I have chaired I have been struck by the consistent picture which has emerged of appalling violence against women in detention facilities and the chilling accounts of life in prisons and labour camps. The individual stories bring home the enormity of the suffering that lies behind individual statistics. The COI report brings many of these dark stories into the light.

My Committee also took evidence from Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, the previous United Nations Special Rapporteur on North Korea. Like his successor, Indonesia's former Attorney General Marzuki Darusman and, like the COI, they were refused all access to North Korea. It is often said that the North Korean regime has managed to exist behind a wall of secrecy; that it treats the international community with contempt by refusing to allow outside observers into the country. Prof. Muntarbhorn described North Korea's human rights record as "abysmal" due to "the repressive nature of the power base: at once cloistered, controlled and callous." The exploitation of ordinary people, he said, "has become the pernicious prerogative of the ruling elite". All eight of Muntarbhorn's reports to the UN detailed an extraordinarily grave situation, in which he says the abuses are "both systematic and

pervasive” and “egregious and endemic”, and he has concluded that “it is incumbent upon the national authorities and the international community to address the impunity factor which has enabled such violations to exist and/or persist for a long time.”

Little wonder the COI comments in its conclusions that “*the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea...has for decades pursued policies involving crimes that shock the conscience of humanity*”. This raises questions about the inadequacy of the response of the international community” and it trenchantly tells the international community that it “*must accept its responsibility to protect the people of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea from crimes against humanity, because the Government of the DPRK has manifestly failed to do so.*” If we are to accept the responsibility which the COI places upon us, the Korean Diaspora (which includes 3-4 million Korean Americans) must take a more prominent role. Just as the Jewish community galvanised international opinion about life in the Soviet Gulags, the Korean Diaspora needs to catch our collective imagination and create a worldwide movement for change.

In thinking about the harrowing accounts in the COI report it is hard not to be reminded of life in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago - the archipelago of labour camps and prison camps spread across the USSR – which were known only to those who were unfortunate enough to enter them. Solzhenitsyn remarked that “*someone that you have deprived of everything is no longer in your power. He is once again entirely free*” and that is undoubtedly the case with those who have bravely risked so much in telling their stories to the UN Commission of Inquiry.

As it comes to consider the COI report, the question for the United Nations Security Council – and perhaps especially for China – is whether it will continue to be the silent witness to evil deeds. Before deliberating it should re-read the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It would find that in North Korea is in breach of virtually every one of its articles. Whether, by referring the findings to the International Criminal Court, sequestrating assets, setting up reparation funds, using economic leverage, and doing all it can to break the information blockade into the country, it deserves to be held in universal contempt if it now fails to show the necessary resolve to act on the findings of its own Commission of Inquiry .

David Alton is an Independent Crossbench Peer who served for 18 years in the House of Commons. A former Liberal MP and Chief Whip he was also President of the National League of Young Liberals. He is Chairman of the All Party Group on North

Korea and Professor of Citizenship at Liverpool John Moores University.

www.davidalton.net<<http://www.davidalton.net>>

A selection of online talks, videos and documentaries provide informative first-hand accounts of human rights violations in North Korea. Along with the UN’s Commission of Inquiry report on North Korea, these videos are worth watching for moving and informative background. They can be found on David’s website.

Protests follow KMT's dodgy deal with China

Parliamentarians from LI full member, DPP Taiwan, are among hundreds of protesters taking part in exceptional demonstrations in front of the Taiwanese parliament as the ruling KMT disregards cross-party procedures over relations with China. The protests started as the ruling KMT party unilaterally passed a proposal in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan relating to a deal between Taiwan and China, violating inter-party agreements for an item-by-item review of potentially volatile cross-strait policies.

As news of the KMT's under-the-table negotiations broke, hundreds of Taiwanese citizens immediately staged a sit-in inside the parliament building, protesting at the ruling party's disregard for such sensitive agreements, which have typically been based on open, democratic principles. In solidarity with the protesters, senior DPP legislators, including Chair Su Tseng-chang, former LI Vice President of the Bureau Bi-khim Hsiao, former DPP leader and premier of Taiwan Frank Hsieh, and Dr Tsai Ing-wen, joined the sit-in. *This is the first time that a civil movement has ever occupied the parliament in Taiwan.*

The DPP's Chair Su, who recently lead a high-level delegation to LI headquarters to London, has vowed to "fight until the end" alongside the protesters at the Legislative Yuan. The DPP is not against free trade with China and strongly supports relations with Europe and the United States, but the party has often questioned the ruling KMT party's willingness to cede sovereignty to China.

Commenting on the lack of transparency surrounding the KMT's shock move, Chair Su said: "This is a key moment for me and my party to improve our democracy." The DPP's demands include 1 - an apology from President Ma. 2 - A call for the KMT to respect the negotiation procedure at the Legislative Yuan. 3 - An assurance from the police that the protesters will not be harmed for expressing their democratic right to protest.

DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION

reviews

Nick Harvey opened his speech at the Diplomatic Reception with a challenge to protesters against globalization – ‘Globalization is happening, you can’t stop it, so let’s get on board and take it in the direction we want it to go’. He spoke of the need for international cooperation to deal with problems of the environment, climate change (the floods besetting the Somerset Levels this winter had their origins in the south Pacific), economic development, open trade, poverty, health, education, crime, terrorism and people trafficking.

The UK can help in this through its EU trade influence, membership of NATO and the UN Security



Council, where we are willing to act, and the Commonwealth. We are proud that DfID has now achieved their 0.7% target for international aid.

Liberal Democrats can help through promoting Liberal values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and international cooperation. We will not flinch in defending the rights of gays and women, be that unpalatable to some governments.

Things are changing fast. By the next decade the USA will become self-sufficient its energy requirements, indeed an exporter. This will have profound implications on their foreign policy and on the BRICs and MINT nations.

He thanked British Influence for their sponsorship of the Diplomatic reception and Adam Nathan for his recent contributions to the European debate, and congratulated Simon Hughes on his recent appointment as Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties.

**Ad & Wal, by Peter Hain
Biteback, 2014 £16.99**

Though I personally hold Liberalism to be a revolutionary doctrine, set against the experiences of contemporary Britain this may be hard to recognise. For Adelaide and Walter Hain, as apartheid increasingly took hold in South Africa, there would be no such difficulty. Small acts of kindness were conducted at tremendous personal risk and would ultimately lead to their exile. As Hain puts it *‘the Liberal Party’s unity and its radicalism sprung from an uncompromising support for human rights and a fierce anti-racism’*. Black Liberal activist, imprisoned on Robben Island, Eddie Daniels, adds that he met *‘some of the nicest and bravest people dedicated to the principles of non-racialism and justice.’*

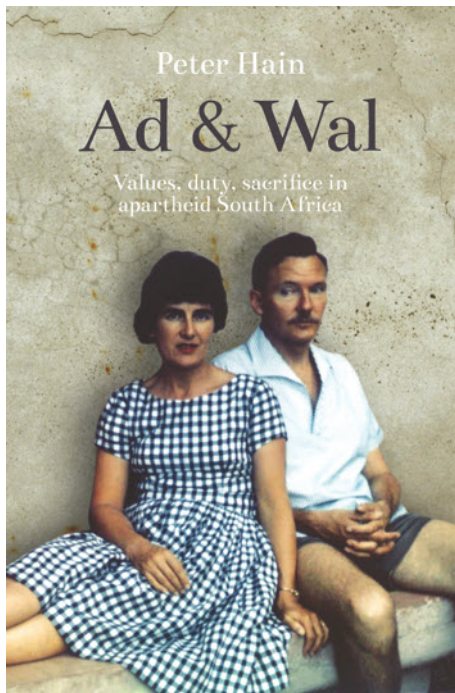
Hain’s biography of his parents focuses primarily on their roles and those of their friends and colleagues in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. He makes their day-to-day struggles much more personal than anything I recall hearing or reading myself, and when exiled to England, credits them with a more significant role in the Stop the Seventies Tour campaigning than I recall in his book at the time (now buried in a box in the attic somewhere). His accounts of the problems of exiles in settling in our cold and damp clime are a useful in themselves as a response to the carping of our racist press and its followers.

The Hains active involvement in Putney Liberals is small beer alongside all of this. Since the book makes it clear that they are close family, one suspected that their move to Labour had more to do with their son than anything else. Putney was at one time in the early 1980s, the home of the Liberator paste-up and they remained quite friendly on chance meetings. Peter on the other hand, seemed to have a problem with his former involvement; sad man.

Rosemary Tilley recalls that Peter’s selection as a Labour candidate drew Ad away first, though the merger was the official excuse for her resignation. Walter was evident for longer, he masterminded the fundraising book sales and carried on after he was no longer a member. Rosemary always got the feeling that he was less keen to leave the Party than Ad, but had no specific basis for saying that.

Jo Stocks, Ad’s sister, who also lived on Fawe Park Road was the last member of the clan to be involved.

John Tilley adds that in the mid 1990s, Walter attended the naming ceremony for Donald Woods Close, in Kingston. He was invited by the Borough's Liberal Council, as he had been Donald Woods' chess partner.



**The UN's Lone Ranger, by John M Sellar
Whittles Publishing 2014**

The Chair will doubtless express concern that the National Theft Register reports that during the last two years there has been an ever developing series of small bird thefts where thieves are targeting the breeders of quality exhibition Budgerigars, Canaries and Finches. There has been over 40 separate burglaries comprising of hundreds of birds valued at many thousands of pounds, mainly in the Midlands and the South. This is organized crime; the website of the National Wildlife Crime Unit will give you more details. Wildlife crime

is in our own backyard and budding Police Commissioners should swot up on it.

It is likely that the African Elephant, tigers, leopards and rhinos will become extinct in the wild within the remainder of my lifetime. Loss of habitat is the main reason for this; man cannot bide sharing the planet with anything else. But in the case of these species vanity and greed are driving forces.

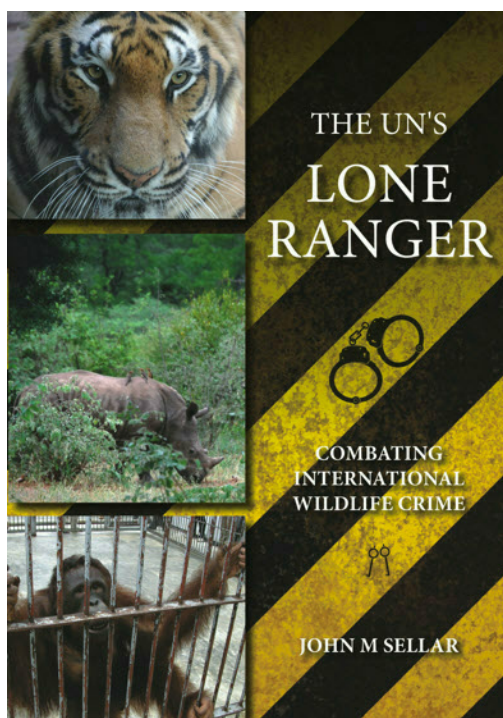
John Sellar began his career fighting wildlife crime along the river Dee in Scotland, combating commercial salmon poachers. This gave him a specialist insight, which led to his becoming Chief of Enforcement to the UN body, CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Sellar now shares this insight with us, part real life adventure

whilst getting into the detail of the problem. It is international crime at a high level and is invariably related to crimes that conventionally have a higher profile – drug and people trafficking.

Much of the running, in terms of prosecutions, is made in the USA where there is current controversy over the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking impacting on ivory in the art and antique worlds and concern that if the EU were to adopt similar measures it would drive the trade underground. Antique pieces aside, the boom in demand coincides with the growth of Chinese market.

The title of the book alone suggests that tackling this crime is under-resourced and insufficiently understood. Sellar has a number of recommendations to that end. One of these would presumably be for the National Wildlife Crime Unit to be a part of National Crime Agency as part of the wider collaboration that Sellar calls for.

Stewart Rayment



**Triangle Ted Books, by Alan Barr with
Peter Oram & Dave Parkin
Starborn Books, 2014 £3.99 (each)**

We have to thank Jenny Tonge for introducing us to these charming little books. They are aimed at six to nine year olds, introducing them to various geometrical shapes whilst keeping them entertained in travel. The characters invariably undergo some hardship before it all works out in the end, in rhyming couplets redolent of Rupert the Bear.

The first five titles are *Triangle Ted and the Grand TV Dance Competition*, who has trouble dancing cheek-to-cheek, *Jessica Vesica in the Land of Wedge Women*, captured by pirates and enslaved, the good Patriarch



Parallelogram secures her release, but what becomes of the statue left behind in her honour? *Penny Pentagon and the Hat Hunt*, where does she get one? *Rectangle Rex and his Pompous Pride*, which invariably comes before a fall, and *Lucy Lune and the Baby* – a plea for multi-shapism.

More details at www.starbornbooks.co.uk

Are these the new Mr. Men & Little Miss?

Stewart Rayment

Bunker Girls

**Waterloo east Theatre, Brad Street,
London SE1 8TN**

Playwright Mike Punter is on the stage in London with his new production *Bunker Girls*. The play is a tour de force for Suzanne Kendall and Victoria Johnston, who are on stage practically all of the time.

Controversially set in the Führer's Berlin Bunker in 1945, Hitler's secretaries, typists rather, ponder the impending crisis as the Red Army gets ever closer. Top brass (referred too rather than seen) flees, but the girls are trapped by indecision as their loyalties conflict. Devotion to the cause switches as crisis looms. Devotion to charisma & the eroticism of power rather than cause; I struggle to recall actual accounts of some of the bunker secretaries, some of whom survived until quite recently.

With our benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to imagine the effect that Hitler's personality had on ordinary people (only Tony Blair of recent British politicians, has been anything like as charismatic) – indeed at one point I questioned was Ilsa's (Kendall) jealousy of Gretl in not feeling the same sense of specialness from the Führer. I say this because Hitler is known to have had this knack, at least in his early days.

By frequent reference to the 1941 Administration Directive, Punter cunningly raises the question of collective guilt, which the girls undoubtedly fear and for which they anticipate retribution (rape was a general tactic of the Russian army on Stalin's orders, but also a general tactic of the Germans in the East). Around this, ironically, the girls discuss how the Wehrmacht was welcomed in Ukraine as liberators. The Red Army was still fighting partisans in western Ukraine into the mid 1950s.

Suzanne Kendall made a splash in *Sisters Grimm* and Victoria Johnston in *The Ballad of the Lonely Highwayman*. They have both recently performed in the film *Heckle*. Their works typically have a comic role, which carries us through the otherwise serious matter in this case.

Waterloo East is a small theatre and attracted a full crowd for the opening night (11th March), but if the play gets the credit it deserves it will make their careers.



The play runs until 30th March, 7.30 in the evening with a Sunday matinee at 4.00pm.

Stewart Rayment

**Landscape and Society in Contemporary Ireland,
by Brendan McGrath
Cork University Press, 2013**

I was walking across Slieve Bawn, and ahead of me, to the north, was what appeared to be a large question

mark on the land. This happens to be a new build estate that ground to a halt with the economic crash in 2008 at Scramoge. So far as I am aware it is still empty. Whilst I say it is at Scramoge, this doesn't mean much nowadays. It is in the middle of no where, all utilities for its 40-50 detached houses had to be (perhaps have to be) brought in. To some extent, to say it is a distinct group of houses might be better than to have 40 or 50 new houses scattered randomly across Scramoge, as has happened elsewhere (with all utilities brought in). It is (from Slieve Bawn) a blot on the landscape; it doesn't have anything going for it close up. The local community has nothing but contempt for the development. If there were a realistic demand for this many houses they might have been built a mile or so up the road on the edge of Strokestown, where at least the necessary infrastructure of utilities and other services – schools, shops etc. exist. Around Longford – the nearest town of any size, are warehouses and industrial units left incomplete from the crash – the land floods regularly. Not far away there are (mostly empty) housing developments aside the Shannon, which will flood. Nothing would induce me to buy into them.

This is an angry book, and rightly so. McGrath is a planning consultant in the 'west of Ireland'. He has worked in County Clare, notably in the Burren, where he lives. Ireland is a mess so far as planning is concerned. One of the things that struck me about the Burren was that it appeared to be better managed than much of Ireland (particularly the west). McGrath begs to differ, however by contract with the wreckage of the Connemara coast, with its new bungalows every 300-400 yards apart, Co. Clare seemed to have matters much more in hand.

The problems that McGrath recounts are largely those of centralized decisions without regard to the local, the view that 'it is my land and I can do what I want with it', and the corruption and cronyism of Irish politics, particularly under Fianna Fail (paradoxically, now in ALDE). I was speaking with a retired senior Irish local government officer recently who he mourned the lack of purpose (in the sense of the commonwealth) of his body politic and the constant need to keep them on the straight and narrow. Add to this the wholesale destruction of peat boglands by the Bord na Mona (Peat Board), misguided forestation, plagues of golf courses and you have a sorry state.

At root I think it is a matter of attitudes to land – part of which is a rejection of Anglo-Irish imperialism (how many country houses simply destroyed in peek?) – the struggle to acquire land making it 'mine' with greater determination. Add to that the legacy of the

Great Famine – a once populous countryside now empty, and although this might have been a salvation to those who remained, bitterly resented and unresolved. Somewhere in the book I think McGrath notes a loss of confidence in the magic of the land to look after its people.

To my mind, Ireland has a great future; it has two resources which are becoming globally scarce, water and renewable energy. On the latter there are bullets to be bitten. I happened to disagree with McGrath (and probably most people) on pylons – I think they are beautiful, and would go so far as to urge the preservation of that landscape along the A130 south of Rawreth in Essex for its sheer magnificence. I also like wind turbines aesthetically, but agree there are places where they should not be sited for such reasons. Look how the scars of our mining industry vanish – these are equally ephemeral structures, though there are ecosystems in which they should not be placed – they would damage the carbon-sink potential of bogland for instance.

Stewart Rayment



Maurice Robson, Mike Thornton MP, Katie Carroll



Bernard Sande (High Commissioner, Malawi) & Simon Hughes



Shinichi Ishikawa (Second Secretary, Political Section, Embassy of Japan) & Sue Garden



Peter Wilding (British Influence, sponsors of the Reception)



Ivan Romero-Martinez (Ambassador of Honduras), Nick Harvey & Pilar Saborio de Rocafort (Ambassador of Costa Rica)



Laurence Fuller & Cyril Uchemma Gwam (Nigeria High Commission)



Our thanks to British Influence for their sponsorship of the Reception

***The Diplomatic Reception
25th February 2014 – NLC***

David Bartlett, Ahmed Shisan (Acting High Commissioner, High Commission of Maldives), Evelin Sewall & Lauren Keith

