

Hilaire Belloc on Walking, Inns, and the Recovery of Europe: 1911-1919

Epigraphs

“In Goethe's journey to Italy [*Die Italienische Reise: 1786-1788*] he lamented: **Traveling** through interesting [and beautiful] places **at horrifying speed: the coachman [of our horse-drawn stagecoach] travelled in such a way that you often lost all sense of sight and sound!**” (Josef Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight: An Autobiography 1945-1964* [*Noch nicht aller Tage Abend*] (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2017), page 75—my emphasis added)

“It is an old dispute among men...**whether Will be a cause of things or no** [sic—an archaic word for “not”]....The intelligent process whereby I know that Will **not seems** but **is** [a cause], and can alone be **truly and ultimately a cause**, is **fed with stuff and strengthens sacramentally as it were, whenever I meet, and am made the companion of, a great wind**....It is the shouting and the hurraing that suits a man.

....Note you, we have not many friends. The older we grow and the better we can sift mankind, the fewer friends we count, **although man lives by friendship**. But **a great wind is every man's friend, and its strength is the strength of good-fellowship; and even doing battle with it is something worthy and well chosen.... We were...made for influences large and soundly poised....It is health in us, I say, to be full of heartiness and of the joy of the world, and of whether we have such health our comfort in a great wind is a good test indeed**. No man spends his day upon the mountains when the wind is out, riding against it or pushing forward on foot through the gale, but at the end of the day feels he has had a great host about him. It is as though he has experienced armies. **The days of high winds are days of innumerable sounds, innumerable in variation of tone and of intensity**. And the days of high wind are days in which a physical compulsion has been about us and we have met the pressure and blows, resisted and turned them; **it enlivens us with a simulacrum of war by which nations live, and in the just pursuit of which men in companionship are at their noblest**.” (Hilaire Belloc, “On a Great Wind,” in his own essay collection, entitled *First and Last* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1911, 1912), pages 285-290—my emphasis added)

Just as with Walkers, so, too with Sailors in their own tests before the Wind: for “No man has known the wind by any of its names who has not sailed his own boat and felt life in the tiller. **Then it is that a man has most to do with the wind**, plays with it, coaxes or refuses it, is wary of it all along; yields when he must yield, but comes up and pits himself again against its violence; trains it, harnesses it, **calls it if it**

fails him, denounces it if it will try to be too strong, and in every manner conceivable handles this glorious playmate....Any man to-day [in 1911] may go out and take his pleasure with the wind upon the high seas....**even though he be only sailing, as I have sailed [from the coast of Sussex], over seas that he has known from childhood, and come upon an island far away, mapped and well known, and visited for the hundredth time.**” (Hilaire Belloc, “On a Great Wind,” in *First and Last*, pp. 288 and 290—my emphasis added)

On this 64th anniversary of the death of Hilaire Belloc (and fitting Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel), I thought to select a few passages from our beloved friend's versatile writings both before and shortly after World War I: from the years 1911¹ and 1919 respectively. For, so much of intimate consequence had happened during that eight-year interval.

Just before the formal, late July outbreak of the momentous and very consequential Great War, Hilaire Belloc's wife Elodie so unexpectedly died of influenza, and he was as a consequence almost inconsolable. (Her death occurred on 2 February 1914, Candlemas). And Belloc's oldest son, Louis, a combat aviator as a Second Lieutenant, was to die late in the War (in late August of 1918), and his body was never found. (Belloc was to lose another son, Peter, early in World War II, in 1941. Belloc's youngest son, Peter Gilbert Belloc, was then a Captain in the Royal Marines and he died after being evacuated with some kind of diseased wound.) We may well imagine what these intimate losses—to include the death of Cecil Chesterton late in World War I—cumulatively did to a whole-hearted and loyally affectionate man like Belloc. Especially after the death of Peter, too.

With this personal background in mind, I hope to convey a little more of Belloc's resilient and varied — sometimes antic — spirit in his more light-hearted Introduction to a 1911 Anthology, entitled *The Footpath Way: An Anthology for Walkers*.² Belloc himself, of course, was a great and formidable walker and long-distance hiker, as most of his grateful readers know. (See *The Path to Rome*, *The Four Men*, *Hills and the Sea*, *Esto Perpetua*, and *Towns of Destiny*, for example.)

As but one example, Belloc has us reflect a little more upon how we do — or should — approach a little village on foot:

- 1 We should note that Hilaire Belloc's wholehearted and enlivening essay, “On a Great Wind,” was also published before World War I, in 1911—that is, before he lost both his wife and his eldest son..
- 2 *The Footpath Way: An Anthology for Walkers—with an Introduction by Hilaire Belloc* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1911), pp.1-16. The book is some 240 pages in length (17 Chapters, 15 different literary writers). All future references will be to pages 1-16 (Belloc's Introduction) and placed in parentheses above in the main body of this essay.

Consider how a man walking approaches a little town; he sees it a long way off **upon a hill**; he sees its unity, he has time to think about it a great deal. Next it is hidden from him by a wood, or it is screened by a roll of land. He tops this and sees the little town again, now much nearer, **and thinks more particularly** of its houses, of the way in which they stand, and **of what has passed in them**. **The sky, especially if it has large white clouds** in it and is for the rest sunlit and blue, **makes something against which he can see the little town, and gives it life**. Then he is at the outskirts, and he does not suddenly occupy it with a clamour or a rush, nor does he merely contemplate it, like a man from a window, unmoving. **He enters it**. He passes, healthily wearied, **human doors and signs**; he can note all the names of the people and the trade at which they work; **he has time to see their faces**. The [village] square broadens before him, or the market-place, **and so very naturally and rightly he comes to his inn, and he has fulfilled one of the great ends of man**. (11—my emphasis added)

Belloc had also said, only two pages earlier: “**Walking**, also from this same natural quality which it has, **introduces particular sights to you in their right proportion**.” (9—my emphasis added) But that is **not so** when a man “gets into his motor car, or... into someone else's” (9) or “even riding upon a horse”! (10)

At this point our Belloc chooses to make a graciously proportionate, often charming and blustery, digression on Inns and on “the Enemies of Inns!” (11):

Lord, how tempted one is here to make a list of those monsters who are the enemies of inns!

There is your monster who thinks of it [an inn] as **a place to which a man does not walk but into which he slinks to drink**; and there is your monster who thinks of it as a place to be reached in a railway train and there to put on fine clothes for dinner and **to be waited on by Germans**. There is your **more amiable** monster, who says: “I hear there is a good inn at Little Studley or Bampton Major. Let us go there.” He waits until he begins to be hungry, and he shoots there in an enormous automobile. There is **your still more amiable monster** [like a fabled griffin!], **who** in a hippo-mobile [a horse-drawn vehicle, or a rider upon a horse itself!] **hippogriffically tools into [i.e., rides upon a horse sauntering into] a town** and throws the ribbons to the [attendant] person in gaiters with a straw in his mouth, **and feels** (oh, men, my brothers) that he is doing something [with his splendid gesture] like someone in a book. **All these men, whether they frankly hate or whether they pretend to love, are the enemies of inns, and the enemies of inns are accursed before their Creator and their kind**. (11-12—my emphasis added)

In this above passage, some of Belloc's remaining Rabelaisian linguistic ebullience has a special tone and delight for us, especially if we know the Greek and Latin roots of some of his antic words. Even if he “metagrobolizes” us, Belloc also sequentially and deftly shows us the kinds of people who do not robustly and gratefully WALK to an Inn: namely, the mere slinkers and drinkers; those who

come “in a railway train” (12); those who arrive “in an enormous automobile” (12); and those who come in a horse-drawn buggy or, preferably, even manfully on horseback (*i.e.*, “in a hippo-mobile” (12)). With his characteristic irony, Belloc was also to give the name “Monster” to one of the good horses that he often used to ride in the valleys and hills of Sussex. (He likely dismounted, however, when he found himself to be in the known and hospitable proximity of a warm and welcoming inn!)

Our Belloc will now speak to us in praise of the nourishing oases and special beauty of inns, as such, so many of which he has himself visited on foot and vividly remembered:

There are **some things** which are **a consolation for Eden** [*i.e.*, for the loss of Eden] **and which clearly prove to the heavily-burdened race of Adam that it has retained a memory of diviner things.** We have all of us done evil. We have permitted modern cities to grow up, **and we have told such lies that now we are accursed with newspapers.** And we have so loved wealth that we are all in debt, and that the poor are [thus] a burden to us and the rich are an offence. **But we ought to keep up our hearts and not to despair, because we can all of us still pray when there is an absolute necessity to do so,** and we have wormed out [*sic*—gradually figured out] the way of **building up that splendid thing which all over Christendom** [as of 1911, a century ago now] men knew under different names and which in England **is called an inn.**

I have sometimes wondered when I sat in one of these places [inns], remaking my soul, **whether the inn would perish out of Europe.** I am convinced [that] the terror was but **the terror which we always feel for whatever is exceedingly beloved.** (12-13—my emphasis added)

While likely (and affectionately) remembering his long hike (mostly afoot) from France to Rome in 1901, at 31 years of age, he now specifically recalls the warmly hospitable inn in Piacenza, Italy and its subsequently plangent fate:

There is an inn in the town of Piacenza into which I once walked **while I was still full of immortality** [at 31!], **and there I found such good companions** and so much [Carrara] marble, rooms so large and empty and so old, and cooking so excellent, that **I made certain it would survive even that immortality** [marble sculpture and marble decor] which, I say, was all around. But no! **I came there eight years later, having by that time heard the noise of the Subterranean River** [*i.e.*, the River Styx] **and being well conscious of mortality.** I came to it [that Old Inn] as to a friend, and the beastly thing had changed! (13—my emphasis added)

Now with his lighter Rabelaisian hyperboles and colloquialisms, Belloc describes the manifest decadence—with another poke at Prussian rule and architectural culture:

In place of the grand stone doors there was **a sort of twirlygig** like the things **that let you into the Zoo**, where you pay a shilling, **and inside there were decorations made up of meaningless curves like those with which the demons have punished**

the city of Berlin; the salt on the table was artificial and largely made of chalk, **and the faces of the host and hostess were no longer kind.** (13-14—my emphasis added)

Taking us now from Italy to South East England (and one 70-mile range of chalk hills and escarpments), Belloc gives us another personal example of welcoming hospitality and later loss:

I well remember another inn which was native to the Chiltern Hills. This place had bow windows, which were divided into medium-sized panes, each of the panes a little rounded; and these window-panes were **made of that sort of glass which I will adore until I die**, and which has the property of distorting exterior objects: of such glass the windows of schoolrooms and of nurseries used to be made. **I came by that place again [afoot] after many years** by accident, **and I found that Orcus, which devours all lovely things, had devoured this too.** [Orcus, a god of the pagan underworld and punisher of broken oaths!]

The inn was [now] called “an Hotel,” its front was rebuilt, **the windows** only had two panes, **each quite enormous** and flat....**All the faces were strange except that of one old servant in the stable-yard.** I asked him **if he regretted** the old front, and he said “Lord, no!” Then he told me in great detail **how kind the brewers** had been to his master **and how willingly they had rebuilt the whole place. These things reconcile one with the grave.** (14—my emphasis added)

Such an itch for innovation and such a persistent lust for the enormous and for the incongruously disproportionate things always pierced Hilaire Belloc. The destruction of beauty — even the beauty of a gracious bell tower, as in war — was always a deep tragedy to him. Although Belloc at times was a hesitantly willing breaker of some minor oaths and vows, he was certainly no friend of Orcus, nor of the spreading Spirit of Orcus in modern civilization. And he always had a “detestation of humbug.”

Near the end of his introductory essay to the “Footpath Way” Anthology, Belloc acknowledges that the theme of “walking...has led me into this digression” (14) **on inns** and thus “**prepares one** for the inns **where they are worthy.**” (15—my emphasis added) He then adds his considered opinion that walking “has another **character** [just] as great and as symbolic and as worthy of man [as are good inns].” (15—my emphasis added). Rumbustiously, Belloc also more boldly wants to remind us of the whole matter of escape and evasion, if necessary and if it also be wise: “For remember that **of the many ways of walking** [as a wondrous form of balance and dynamic equilibrium in itself!] there is one way [on the many and often arduous paths of life] which is the greatest of all, **and that is to walk away.**” (15—my emphasis added) For, perhaps, after the noise and sometimes overmuch human companionship, one — not only Belloc — needs solitude and silence.

Belloc evokes some of his own earlier choices of detachment and his spontaneous decisions to go

apart into the quietness of nature:

Put your hand before your eyes **and remember, you that have walked**, the places from which you have walked away [such as a bakery and the good baker preparing further hospitality and fragrant bread in a village early in the morning!], and **the wilderness** [*e.g.*, alpine wilderness] **into which you manfully turned the steps of your abandonment**.

There is a place above the Roman Wall [Hadrian's Wall] beyond the River Tyne [to the far northeast, near Northumberland and the Scottish border] **where one can do this thing** [of going fittingly apart and purposively walking away]. Behind one lies **the hospitality and the human noise which have inhabited the town of the river valley** [*i.e.*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne] for certainly two thousand years....The earth is here [especially with “the complete emptiness of the moors”] altogether deserted and alone [as of 1911]: you go out into it because it is your business [and your “object”] to go: you are walking away. As for your memories [of that retreat and purifying desolation], they [may only, or at least, be of good to you]...**to lend you that dignity which can always support a memoried man....** (15—my emphasis added).

Moreover, Belloc had earlier said:

There is one kind of knowledge a man does get [in such circumstances] when he thinks about **what** he is [not just “**that** he is”], **whence** he came and **whither** he is going [also in his walking], which is this: **that** it is the only important [and finally inescapable] question he can ask himself.” (1—my emphasis added)

Such is Belloc's wholesomely searching and soul-quickening “philosophical eros.” He applies it even to walking with an object and with a purpose and a final destination. A Wayfarer (a “*Viator*”) who may become, under Grace, also a reverent Pilgrim.

Like a good poet, Belloc also invites us to some framing reflections and closer perceptions concerning the very character and the variously expressive movements of a walker:

Just watch a man walking, **if he is a proper man**, and see the business of it: **how he expresses** his pride, or his determination, or his tenacity, or his curiosity, **or perhaps his very purpose in his stride!** Well, all that business of walking that you are looking at is a piece of extraordinarily skilful trick-acting [an achievement of ongoing poise and regenerative equilibrium!]....This is what happens when a man walks: first of all he is in stable equilibrium, though the [precarious] arc of stability is minute....If it oscillates beyond that five degrees or so, the stability of his equilibrium is lost and down he comes. (3-4—my emphasis added)

Belloc continues to tease us a little to make us even more attentive to this adventurous (and somewhat risky) process of walking:

But wait a moment: he [the walker] desires to go, to proceed, to reach a distant point, and instead of going **on all fours, where equilibrium would indeed be stable**, what

does he do? He **deliberately** lifts one of his supports off the ground, **and sends his equilibrium to the devil**; at the same time he leans a little forward so as to make himself fall towards the object he desires to attain. **You do not know that he does that**, but that is **because you are a man and your ignorance of it is like the ignorance in which so many really healthy people stand to religion, or the ignorance of a child who thinks his family established for ever in comfort, wealth and security**. What you really do, man, when you want to get to that distant place (and **let this be a parable of all adventure and [a parable] of all desire**) is to take an enormous risk, the risk of coming down **bang and breaking something**: you lift one foot off the ground, and, **as though it were not enough**, you deliberately through your centre of gravity forward so that you begin to fall!....And you have come to do all this [recurrently] so that you think it is the most natural thing in the world! (4-5, 6—my emphasis added)

Belloc then finds it fitting to bring in a little more truth and vivid concreteness at this stage:

You can walk quickly or slowly, or look over your shoulder as you walk, or shoot fairly accurately as you walk; you can saunter, you can force your pace, you can turn which way you will. **You certainly did not teach yourself to do this marvel** [of walking so versatily—and even “in a thousand ways,” like “a really clever acrobat”], **nor did your nurse. There was a spirit** [even Actual Grace, at times?] **within you that taught you and that brought you out**; and **as it is with walking, so it is with speech, and so at last with humour and with irony, and with affection, and with the sense of colour and of form, and even with honour, and at last with prayer.**

By all this you may see that man is very remarkable, and that should make you humble, not proud; **for you have been designed in spite of yourself for some astonishing fate**, of which these mortal extravagances [manifold versatilities] so accurately seized and so well moulded to your being are but the symbols.

Walking, like talking,..being so natural a thing to man, so varied and so unthought about.... (6—my emphasis added)

Moreover, as we learn from those “who understand the human body” (7):

Walking of every form of exercise is the most general and the most complete, and that while a man may be endangered by riding a horse or by running or swimming, or while a man may easily exaggerate any violent movement, **walking will always be to his benefit—that is, of course, so long as he does not warp his soul by the detestable habit of walking for no object but exercise**. For it has been so arranged [in Creation and createdness] that **the moment we begin** any minor and terrestrial thing as an object in itself, or with merely the furtherance of some **material** thing, **we hurt the inward part of us that governs all. But walk** for glory or for adventure, or to see new sights, or to **pay a bill or to escape the same**, and you will find **how consonant is walking with your whole being**. The chief proof of this...is **the way in which a man walking becomes the cousin or the brother of everything**

round. (7-8—my emphasis added)

Our beloved Belloc now commences another intimate colloquy with his reader:

If you will look back upon your life and consider what landscapes remain fixed in your memory, some [landscapes] perhaps you will discover to have **struck** you at the end of long rides [on horseback] or after you have have been driven for hours, **dragged** by an animal [by horse or by ox] or a machine. But much the most of these [remembered] visions have come to you when you were performing that little miracle [of versatile walking] with a description of which I began this [introductory essay]: and what is more, **the visions you get when you are walking**, merge pleasantly into each other [as in Belloc's long hikes over the Alps on his Path to Rome!]. Some are greater, some lesser, **and they [the visions] make a continuous whole. The great moments are led up to and are fittingly framed.** (8—my emphasis added)

In one of Hilaire Belloc's other vividly moving essays, “On a Great Wind” (1911) — a part of which deals with a man's going out to sea under sail — he essentially says that **the test of a man is how he responds in a great wind!** We may remember this robust criterion again as Belloc now considers how a walker will come soon to face all kinds of challenging weather, and he thus properly strives to accept the various adversities and adventures to be faced on land while he is manfully going abroad on foot:

There is no time or weather, **in England at least**, in which a man walking does not feel this cousinship with everything round. **There are weathers that are intolerable if you are doing anything else but walking:** if you are crouching still against a storm or if you are driving against it; or if you are riding [a horse] in extreme cold; or if you are running too quickly in extreme heat; but that is not so with walking. You may walk by night or by day, in summer or winter, in fair weather or in foul, in calm **or in a gale**, and in every case you are doing something native to yourself and going the best way you could go. All men have felt this. **Walking**, also from this same natural quality which it has, **introduces particular sights to you in their right proportion.** (8-9—my emphasis added)

Belloc now politely anticipates an objection:

You may say that riding a horse [instead of being in a motor car] one has a better chance [to see things clearly and in their right proportion]. **That is true, but after all one is busy riding.** Look back upon **the very many times** you have ridden [a mirthful premise, indeed!], and though you will remember many things you will not remember them **in that calm and perfect order** [another chivalrous exaggeration!] in which they presented themselves to you **when you were afoot.** As for **a man running**, if it be for any distance, the effort is so unnatural as to concentrate upon himself all a man's powers [as in a Marathon], and he is almost blind to exterior things. Men at the end of such efforts are actually and physically blind [in their fatigue and breathlessness]; they fall helpless.

Then there is **the way of looking at the world** which rich men imagine they can

purchase with money when they build a great house looking over some view—but it is not in the same street with walking! You see the sight nine times out of ten when you are ill attuned to it, when your blood is slow and unmoved, and when the machine [the corpus!] is not going. **When you are walking** the machine is **always** going, **and every sense** in you is **doing** what it should **with the right emphasis and in due discipline** to make a perfect record [sic] of all that is about. (10—my emphasis added)

Along with his intentionally ironical and chivalrous hyperboles — and with his unmistakable persiflage and chaffing “epic boasts” — Hilaire Belloc stirs us, nevertheless, with his vividness and with his charm; and he manfully encourages our own capacious walking (and thus its spiritual enlargement), even if we now be somewhat physically hampered and slack!

A complementary passage about the adventurous Tall Ships and their Sails may help us understand a little better **the concept and reality of enlargement** as Hilaire Belloc understood it and has encouraged it. The passage again is to be found in Belloc's 1911 essay, “On a Great Wind.” Once again, he anticipates and then answers an objection about the high adventure and larger purpose of sailing, “especially using the wind with sails” (288):

As for those who say that men **did but** use the wind as an instrument for crossing the sea, and that sails were **mere** machines to them, **either they have never sailed or they were quite unworthy of sailing**. It is not an accident that **the tall ships of every age** of varying fashions **so arrested human sight and seemed so splendid**. **The whole of man went into their creation**, and they expressed him very well; his cunning, and his mastery, **and his adventurous heart**. For the wind is in nothing more capitally our friend than in this, that it has been, **since men were men**, their ally in the seeking of the unknown **and in their divine thirst for travel** which, in its several aspects—**pilgrimage**, conquest, **discovery**, and, in general, **enlargement**—is **one** prime way whereby man **fills himself with being**.³ (288-289—my emphasis)

CODA

Hilaire Belloc's Two-Part 1919 Essay, Entitled “The Recovery of Europe”⁴

Eight years after his robust and varied Introduction to the Anthology, entitled *The Footpath Way: An Anthology for Walkers* (1911), Hilaire Belloc had to face the aftermath of the destructive First

- 3 Hilaire Belloc begins his own 1911 Introduction to *The Footpath Way: An Anthology for Walkers* with the following, admittedly somewhat abstract, but quite teasing, words: “**So long as** man does **not** bother about **what** he is [“which is more than thinking **that** he is” (1)] or **whence** he came or **whither** he is going, the whole [unexamined and incurious] thing **seems** as simple as the verb 'to be'.” (1--my emphasis added) Belloc's cautionary note, however, alerts us to what might then happen “the moment he [man] does begin thinking” (1) **about such fundamental convictions and inescapable things!**
- 4 This two-part essay was first printed in the 1914-1919 wartime Journal, *Land and Water*, which Belloc largely edited. But the two-part essay on “The Recovery of Europe” was later also conveniently re-produced in *The Lotus Magazine* (Volume 10—1919), from which text we shall henceforth give our references and pagination, and, once again, up in the main body of our essay, in parentheses.

World War — to include the dissolution of several Empires: the German, the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, and the Ottoman Empires. Belloc was especially concerned that the “Prussian Empire” not be re-constructed in Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*). He was also attentive to strategic geography, to include “the control of the Baltic and the Black Sea” and “the weakening of the Eastern nationalities” (64-Part II, Volume 10).

However, Belloc makes no mention of such things as the destructive Freemasonic Revolution in Portugal, nor of the subsequent 1916-1917 events at Fatima. Nor does he mention the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and its own then-recent aftermath (1917-1919). Moreover, in spite of his great and warm support of Poland and the courage of the Poles, he seems unaware of the already planned Bolshevik attack on Poland from the East, *en route* to Germany itself, **if** the prior 1920 attack were to have gone well — **which it did not!** For, in 1920, the Poles themselves were to stop Marshal Mikhail Toukhachevsky and Trotsky's hordes at “the Miracle on the Vistula.”⁵ That heroic battle is now often fittingly called *The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World: Warsaw, 1920* — which is the very title of Vicount Edgar Vincent D'Abernon's own reliable and important 1931 book.⁶ Would that Belloc had known more in 1919 about this eastern front of combat and conquest, and how the Bolsheviks had intended and were already planning to move through Poland, and then to move then even more rapidly and destructively **into Germany**, into the weakened and vulnerable German lands, and not only into Prussia. Germany had also been weakened by the inhumanly sustained economic blockade of Germany for over a year after the Armistice. Much starvation resulted, also among the children.

In addition to my encouragement to a reader to read soon the entirety of Belloc's two-part 1919 essay, I now only want to consider how he begins his longer essay, and then how he speaks of “**The Financial Interest**” (66-67—Part II). Belloc will then end his full two-part essay with “**the question of reparation**” (69) as a key part of the recovery of Europe. He thus even dares to say:

Indeed, if reparation were not made to the utmost, civilisation could not endure. The example of such crimes [allegedly and especially committed by “the people formerly composing the German Empire” (69)] escaping their consequences would be too much for the survival of Europe.” (69).

These thoroughly shocking statements coming from such a magnanimous and generously good

5 <http://catholicism.org/more-on-the-battle-of-warsaw-general-fullers-insights.html>
http://apropos.org.uk/documents/TheHopeandHelpoftheHalfdefeated_000.pdf

6 This book of 178 pages was first published in 1931 by Vicount D'Abernon (1857-1941) in London by Hodder and Stoughton. This book was later reprinted in 1977 in Westport, Connecticut, by Hyperion Press, Inc., and this is the edition I have at my fingertips, in my own library at home now. It is a very fine book, well supported with evidence and personal experience, diplomatic and military.

man in the dark year of 1919 now help me better understand the vengeful “Carthaginian Peace of Versailles” so myopically inflicted, especially upon the purportedly guilty, widespread **German Nation** (and hence Austro-Hungary itself) in the Aftermath of World War I.

Now let us turn to the beginning of Hilaire Belloc's two-part essay on “The Recovery of Europe” and also concurrently think of Europe now a whole century later (in 2017), especially with the alien migrations and other strategic challenges the New Europe now faces.

Belloc freshly, and characteristically, begins his reflections with the question of definition:

Europe must recover: Now what is Europe? Europe which came within an ace of destruction **through the Prussian poison long absorbed and permitted, long increasing in effect**, has, at an immense cost in vitality, cut out that [Prussian] growth. But in the effort Europe stands exhausted and must recover. If it does not do so, the operation [cutting out that tumescent growth] will have killed the patient.

Well, what is Europe?

We must answer the question exactly if we are to face the problem at all, let alone to solve it. Even if we are lucky enough to get statesmanship instead of demagoguery, statesmanship itself will fail unless it knows **the factors** of its task.

What is Europe?

Europe is **not** a congeries of nations. **That view of our civilisation** [and of the former culture of Christendom] **is terribly dangerous in its crude simplicity, its vast ignorance of the complex reality**. True, **the religion [sic] of nationality** [often in an admittedly all-too-neo-pagan way] has been **the sustenance in this war**. Without it the strain could never have been endured. Those in whom **the emotion** was weakest failed first, those in whom it is strongest are now the ultimate victors [sic]. True **the general motive of nationalism** has inspired its policy....Nevertheless, to regard Europe as **a congeries of clearly marked nationalities**, a sort of **tessellated map the boundary lines** on which exactly **contain** highly individual States...is to see something that is not there. **To act on such a concept would be to build upon no real foundation, to mistake the nature of one's material.** (8—Part I—my emphasis added)

As part of the now precarious, but unmistakably essential complexity that Belloc saw in the cumulative civilisation of Europe in the aftermath of the Great War, he also dared to speak of the question of High Finance:

If...there were a country called “Germany,” which actually had certain definite economic interests of its own, different from those of France and England, the matter [of a just reparation] would be a simple one. We should [in that case] make this clearly defined economic entity supply reparation for the evil it has done in its military aspect. **But, unfortunately, the modern world** [even as of 1919] **is not built along those lines. The great capitalised interests**, especially the largest of all, **are**

not only interlocked, uniting Central and Western Europe in one group: **that phase is already passing, and we were arriving before the [1914-1918] war at a state of affairs in which the control of great staple interests was really international.** (66 —Part II—my emphasis added)

Belloc now goes on to get a little more specific:

It was pure accident [or perhaps intelligently strategic?] that one man [say a man of interlocking High Finance] should be living in London, and perhaps sitting as a member of a British Government, while his brother or cousin [as with the Warburgs] should be living in Hamburg or Frankfurt [Germany]. They might both of them have been living in London or both of them be living in Germany, **for it makes no difference to the arrangement of the financial interests which they controlled.** The great mass of the people to whom reparation is due know nothing of these things [these oligarchic concentrations and overlapping networks]. (66—my emphasis added)

Such operations of “High Finance” (“*Haut Banque*” or “*Hoch Finanz*”), which grew even more (and more **unaccountable**) during World War II, 1939-1945, are more fully and candidly presented in French Socialist Jacques Attali's 1987 book, entitled *A Man of Influence: The Extraordinary Career of Siegmund G. Warburg*.⁷

Still writing in 1919, however, Hilaire Belloc goes on to affirm the following:

Now, this international financial force, which is the greatest power of our time, is closely interlocked with the Prussian system and opposed to the resurrection of the free nationalities in Eastern Europe. Of the various great States over which it [“international finance”] has spread its power, and upon the politicians on which it [this “high finance”] **relied for its positive influence** [*sic*], **none was more necessary to international finance**, none was more cordially related to it, or more intimately, **than that of what was but yesterday the German Empire.** (66—my emphasis added)

To support his contention and to stand by and further sustain his own integrity, Belloc gives some further evidence and apt illustrations:

The great interests, textile, mining, shipping, the great energies of production and transport, which [as of 1919] are the support and basis of **national** financial interests, were **organised upon a system** which took for granted the German Empire and its dependents to be arranged as they have been arranged **for a generation.**

The **economic expansion** of this system, through tentacles which it has thrown out all over the world [to include the colonies], was **stamped upon** the subject nationalities

⁷ See Jacques Attali, *A Man of Influence: The Extraordinary Career of Siegmund G. Warburg (1902-1982)* (Bethesda, Maryland: Adler & Adler, Publishers, Inc.) The book was originally published in 1985, in French, and was, in part, entitled *Un homme d'influence*. For a more recent update, and especially for a further consideration of the recurrent link between High Finance and Revolution, please see the following: <https://onepeterfive.com/president-macron-jacques-attali-influence-hidden-oligarchies/>

[like Poland]. When I visited Warsaw in 1912 the most striking thing I saw was the contrast between the old high, refined civilisation of the Poles and the sprawling Germanised industry **imposed** upon the town **in quite recent years**. The exploitation of the Balkans was about to begin when the war began [in 1914] and, beyond it, the exploitation of the nearer East had already begun. **The control of the seaboard was and is necessary to this economic interest**. That is why, **when we come to the test point of Danzig**, we shall find it [this economic expansion along with high finance] acting with full vigor. (66—my emphasis added)

In his conclusion of this section of his essay on a European Recovery, Belloc will return to the matter of Poland and the needs of its seaboard geography; and he will then add another somewhat undifferentiated and thus seemingly unjust indictment of Prussia itself and its dire effects upon Europe:

Now, as is nearly always the case **when you have a difficult task to perform**, [namely] the particular task of **resurrecting a free nationality**, especially in Eastern Europe, **at once a duty and the prime interest of the Western allies**—and in particular of England—is subject to a *test*. You may know [then] whether you have or have not succeeded; you may know **whether you are or are not deceiving yourself** by taking some clearly defined point, one aspect of which would be **the mark** of your achievement: **its contrary, the mark of your defeat or slackness**. **The test in this case is not only Poland, but the kind of approach to the sea which the new Poland would be granted**. If we re-erect Poland as a great State, and give it **access to the sea such as it possessed for centuries**, and by which alone it [Poland] can live, we have done what is necessary **to restore the equilibrium of Europe**. But if we give it that kind of access to the sea which spares the enemy [Prussia] and which leaves the isolated group of Eastern Prussia in contact with the rest of the Germans, then what we have done will not last [hence the seeds of World War II also with the multiple betrayals by the Soviets!]. The whole point of our effort is to make something permanent. **All the vast evils** which have fallen upon the world during the last four years [as of 1914-1918 and its cumulative aftermath] **have proceeded from the fact that the equilibrium of Europe was unstable**. Power in the hands of Prussia was an unnatural thing, for Prussia was not fit to exercise power, but degraded, and making vile everything which its expansion affected. (66-67—my emphasis added)

And, soon after 1919-1920, it came to pass — before and during and then also in the Sovietized aftermath of World War II — that Poland — then still a largely Catholic Poland — was to be many times betrayed.⁸ That is to say, both by the Soviet Union and by the so-called Western Allies themselves. Even in its own 1920 heroic defense on the Vistula River at Warsaw against a Soviet

8 See, for example, the keen and candid report of Arthur Bliss Lane, the American Ambassador to Poland, 1944-1947, especially his witness just after 19 January 1947 and then for a few additionally intense and pivotal months, until 31 March 1947, when his resignation was accepted. See his 344-page book and the specific and detailed evidence he has presented. Arthur Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948). That book was published five years before Hilaire Belloc's death on 16 July 1953.

invasion, Poland had been largely left isolated and alone — with but a few exceptions.

As to our beloved Hilaire Belloc: After his own unexpected succession of strokes in 1941 (and then again recurrently afterwards), Hilaire Belloc perhaps never fully came to know about all of that intimate perfidy and the breaking of trust, especially with respect to Catholic Poland. But Belloc himself already bore his many sufferings and inner sorrows with magnanimous and persevering fortitude and loyal love.

We thank him for all he has taught us, and has exemplified so vividly. May he now know the fullness of Being and Beatitude which he so yearned for.

--FINIS--

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