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The Impact of the Antiwar Elites' Activities on the International Life and Politics

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Abstract

By examining the elements of a civilization in whole, the importance of elites can immediately be appraised, as the success, which is the strength and prosperity of millions of human beings, comes exclusively from them. But at the other end, there are many elites on which the destiny of humans from certain regions, countries or continents depended. These elites are the political ones that have key roles in the precipitation of wars and, more rarely, in their avoidance.

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1. Introduction

The first explanations given to the term 'elite' were made exclusively by approaching the term on the basis of the value criterion – distinguished, special, talented, valuable, chosen (Latin) – namely everything that can be better. By examining the elements of a civilization in whole, the importance of elites can immediately be appraised, as the progresses (scientific, artistic, social), which are the strength of a country and the prosperity of millions of human beings, come only from them. Individual achievements of the elites represent a collective gain, a real social gain and indeed, as Gustave le Bon highlighted, the wealth thus acquired is not stolen from the people or from anyone in particular, but a wealth from nowhere gained only by means of the sweeping efforts of elites. (Le Bon, sine anno, page 87). Previously, D'Avenel noted in his writings that at the beginning 'people were getting rich by means of private war by ruining their neighbours (Le Bon, p. 87).

Those who were born in the bosom of dynasties, royal or dictatorial, were placed in positions that gave them the possibility to decide on the course of history.

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But there also existed many elites, at the other end of the social hierarchy, who did not enjoy any advantage obtained by birth. Some of these elites had the luck of distinguished professors, as seems to have happened to Shakespeare, while others have simply enjoyed the chance of a good idea at the right time. Alexander Fleming (Aderhold, Faure, Talamon, Oschner, 2004, pp. 70-71.), discoverer of Penicillin, is just one example in this respect.

The determination, the enthusiasm and the tenacity of elites were certain characteristics that distinguished them from the rest of the people. Sometimes, however, their inner impetus and self-confidence turned into monomania and some of them were not quite normal from a psychological point of view, suffering perhaps narcissistic personality disorders with an exaggerated sense of self-importance. Adolf Hitler belongs to this category of political elite, and Richard Wagner (Castleden, 2011, pp. 308-309) belonged to this category of artistic elite.

The nowadays reality is that of the ultra-ramified very precise division of multiple specialized human activities, any achievement is intended to be regarded as one of elite, but not every achievement confers elite quality. Time imposed the classification of elites into categories: political, scientific, military, religious, property, sport ... From the word "elite" some expressions have derived (elitist, elitarian, elitarist) whose meaning expresses in part, not at all or the opposite of the basic word. In the explanatory dictionaries, additionally to the source of value, there was a need to add another interpretation as well, that of the advantageous position. E.g. in DEX 'elite' is defined as 'part of society whose members, having an advantageous position, consider themselves superior to the masses' (Coteanu et al., 1975, p. 296).

2. Political Elites

In nature, most creatures live in various communities - packs, herds, flocks - where a pronounced hierarchy reigns. They are led mostly by the naughtiest individuals, most brutal, most powerful and sometimes the most intelligent ones. The pack structure of an animal species seems to be genetically determined, due to the fact that during the historical evolution of the species, this structure proved favorable to survival. Of course, there are also other values that belong to a human population, such as culture, education, ethics, morals, etc.

A brief foray into the animal kingdom supports the argument according to which the power structures are generally a consequence of cohabitation of people in larger or smaller groups. The sad reality is that in their hereditary genetic material preserved for millions of years, human beings appear with the behavior of a predatory, parasitic animal, haunted by unpredictable instincts and impulses, brutal selfishness and greed and unnecessary aggression. It is surely that people can also be noble, charitable, kind, but in no case as they are described in the utopic communist hypothesis of the 'new man'.

The power involving many forms - state, political, military, religious, cultural - can be defined by the fact that certain manifestations arise according to the willpower of representatives and to the own ideals of the holders / executors of the power (De Roh & Leinard, 1999, p. 10).

"It is certain that the state, defined as an instrument of power and hierarchy, existed among different populations since prehistoric times and that this form of organization will not fade, even in a hypothetical communist nirvana. The state will always seem like an unavoidable secondary phenomenon, belonging to the human gregariousness of the pack. Wherever people live in groups (societies) there will appear power structures, following the existence of a hierarchy. ... The Parents of Communism, Marx and Engels, likewise their epigones, have tried to avoid the anarchic degeneration of a society without state structures (in Fetscher, 1970, p. 108), preaching - like some equals of God - the creation of the 'sublime new man' who would possess a social conscience so elevated that it cannot be but noble, charitable and kind." (De Roh & Leinard, 1999, p. 13). The three social structures of any population - democracy, dictatorship and anarchy actually appear in the most amalgamated forms.

If the notion of masses (crowd, plebs, flock, common herd) seems unequivocal, the concept of 'elite'-leading, political - is much more complex. It is in the interest of the population that the leading and power positions be assumed by its most able members. This would mean that the entire power belongs to the value elite.

But is it possible? Is it possible that the human being be the exception which hardens the rule?, because in nature, as seen, packs, herds, flocks 'are led mostly by the naughtiest individuals, most brutal, most powerful and sometimes by the most intelligent ones' (De Roh & Leinard, 1999, p. 9), the most ambitious. The evolution of ambition knows no limits, 'the ascension of aspiration towards power may reach the *ideal of identification with the divinity*' (Adler, 1991, p. 163). All aspirations and interests betray the impatience of these humans to surpass the limits of human condition, to rise even beyond time and space. Of course, one may say that the great achievements of humanity wouldn't have been possible without ambition. There is one small detail to be taken into account: 'A work of genius is impossible without considering, in one way or another, the community. Such work always involves one connection with the community, the wish to promote its interests. Otherwise, we could not attribute it any value at all' (Adler, 1991, p. 150.) Ambition and tenacity are terms that sound nicer than vanity or pride, even though they are synonyms. It is asserted that there is no human being in whom vanity is not present. When it exceeds a certain level, it becomes extremely dangerous and determines an increased psychical tension, which makes humans outline more clearly the purpose to obtain power and superiority. And since it is harder to enforce it yourself if you ostensibly display your vanity, most times it camouflages, taking different appearances. Man might be conceited and under the guise of a certain modesty, or may be so conceited as not to care about how others judge him. He necessary becomes subjective, by losing the touch with reality, being permanently concerned only by his own interests.

Usually, winning the masses for their own interests is made with few exceptions by a chatty army, who have never exercised a true profession, who are in a protective way appointed to as the political elite. The ideology, the programs and the methods of the so-called political parties resemble one another so much that the only distinguishing mark is their name. But the 'positive' features, such as: the lust for power, the boldness, the cunning, the megalomania, the deceit, the arrogance, etc. are excessively possessed by the entire political elite. They stand out in a more direct, overt and brutal way in dictatorial regimes.

"The history of mankind is the history of the continuous conflict, which is an inevitable part of the human condition. It seems that we, as a species, cannot live without it. We think that we want peace, but we cannot survive without disputes". (Castleden, 2009, p. 527).

Many times, the destinies of some people from certain regions, countries or continents depended on the personal action of some individuals. These individuals are none other than the political elites that have key roles in precipitating wars, or more rarely in their avoidance. "Napoleonic wars would not have happened if it were not for Napoleon Bonaparte; World War II from 1939-1945 would not have happened without Adolf Hitler. On a smaller scale, the Anglo-Zulus war would not have happened without Sir Henry Bartle Frere". (Castleden, 2009, p. 526).

By only taking a glimpse at the effects of the second world conflagration, when over 70 million people died and hundreds of millions suffered, we realize how complex the concept of elite is, which includes in its definition the term *special*. And there cannot be said that the death and enormous suffering of a large part of the planet population caused by an individual, elite, is not something "special".

If natural disasters, from the inside of Earth, from the atmosphere and climate, follow scenarios and regular cycles easier and easier to predict, human conflicts, which are hundreds or thousands of times more catastrophic are impossible to predict. The only thing that can be certainly admitted is the fact that they still exist.

It is incomprehensible that such a tragic and unscrupulous character as Hitler inspired more writings than any other historical person whose life, ideas and facts really deserved to be recorded. Probably, "for the simple fact, hard to accept, that he embodied the ugly part of the human personality." (Roland, 2012, p. 200).

Antisemitism was one of the cultural and political connotations common to a large part of Europe after the end of First World War. The phenomenon was based on both national characteristics and specific motivations. 'The stereotype of *Judeo-Bolshevism* was a formula with rapid effect and represented a powerful resonance factor. One of the fundamental writings of anti-Semitism, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* - dedicated

to a hypothetical conspiracy hatched by Hebrew people in order to conquer the world - began circulating, in the interwar period, in Europe, and the first German edition dates back to 1919.‘ (Minerbi, 2004, p. 98).

In March 1935, the Pastor Martin Niemöller from Berlin made public an appeal addressed to congregations in Prussia, warning them about a new form of idolatry. ‘Our nation is threatened by a danger of death. This danger is a new religion.’ (Roland, 2012, p. 115)

The ridiculous aspects of nazification emerged, amongst others, also by the desire to cleanse the world of the Jewish culture, trying to make a distinction between the Aryan art and culture and non-Aryan art and culture. Aryan Art praised Nordic virtues, namely heroism, physical strength, comradeship, patriotism and sacrifice, while non-Aryan art (degenerate, as they called it) was that which distorted the symmetrical perfection or presented the most unpleasant aspects of life. It is perhaps too little known the fact that Hitler's favorite paintings were only those which had morbid scenes, such as *Plague in Florence* by Hans Makart, or the paintings of Franz von Stuck, which presented naked women surrounded by snakes or pursued by centaurs. Also, Göring had bought many pieces of ‘degenerate art’ (which included at the moment all modern art, as Cubism, Dadaism and Expressionism) for his personal collection. It is obvious that, after the *Crystal Night*, he didn't have to buy such pieces anymore, as the decree by means of which he was ‘aryanising’ the goods that Hebrews had to abandon, also permitted other practices. On May 10th, 1933, in the markets of university cities, thousands of books were burned, books belonging to authors such as Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Carl von Ossietzky, Erich Maria Remarque, Kurt Tucholski.‘ (Minerbi, 2004, p. 37). These demonstrations, to which attended all student fraternities and the majority of teachers, were deliberate actions coordinated by Goebbels. By his violent and abusive speech against convicted authors, held in Berlin, he tried to leave the impression that these manifestations were spontaneous and designed to demonstrate the true sentiments of the Germans, who will not oppose any resistance measures taken by the regime. The bonfire that turned books into ashes, was not only an act of barbarism, but also a demonstration of the Nazi government of acquiring cultural hegemony.

If, in relation to literature, music, film, theatre, plastic arts, the Nazis could force the distinction between Aryan and non-Aryan culture, in the case of sciences it was more difficult to demonstrate that an Aryan formula or an Aryan law is something else than a non-Aryan one. And yet, the Nazi regime found an ‘expert’ that accepted to be ridiculous and help them. This was none other than the Nobel Prize laureate in physics, Philip Lenard (Roland, 2012, pp. 128-129), who made himself available to Goebbels, Minister of Information and Propaganda. The immediate result was a ‘brain drain’ towards England and then towards the United States. Scientists and other intellectuals, homeless, sought refuge in a Europe that was inexorably heading towards war.

The elites’ activities during the interwar period were directly related to how they got involved in the events before and during the Second World War.

Due to the very extensive geographic coverage area and to the huge number of combatants (over 100.000.000) the Second World War had a different character from the previous wars in the sense that it became a total war. There were no distinctions between military and civil activities: all was subordinated and directed towards the war effort. Technological progresses have resulted in widening the arenas of war. It was inevitable for the civil populations not to become victims. Towns and villages were destroyed in their entirety, sometimes as collateral damage, sometimes deliberately. Almost two thirds of those who died in war were civilians, over 10 million innocent civilian victims of the Holocaust, a sinister war directed against certain minority groups, primarily Hebrews. Most victims of the Holocaust died in Eastern Europe. The Allies decided even since 1942 that the war crimes be judged. The final plan for a trial of war criminals was the work of Henry Stimson, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, and approved by President Truman. The entire political and military elite was prosecuted for participation in wars of aggression, for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Hitler managed to avoid the consequences of his actions by committing suicide just before his probable capture by the Soviet army entered in Berlin, and Göring managed to kill himself the day before his execution. The others, Hermann Göring, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Julius Streicher, Rudolf Hess ... were sentenced to death by hanging or imprisonment (Castleden, 2009, pp. 419-420).

As for the Nürnberg trials, at that time there were objections to the possible illegality, claiming that judges were appointed only by the victorious ones and that they were therefore not impartial, and as well, there had been invoked the wild bombardments to which the civilian populations from cities (like Dresda) were exposed as well as the nuclear attack from Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Similar trials of war criminals were held in the Far East as well (between 1946-1948, Hideki Tojo, General Masaharu Homma, Tomoyuki Yamashita, who were sentenced to death) (Rodney, 2009, p. 421). These trials did not "enjoy" the same notoriety as that of the Nazi leaders due to the Allied propaganda that took care not to defame the Japanese Emperor Hirohito because of the special position that the emperor has in the Japanese culture.

These trials had a profound influence on the development of international criminal law, leading to the Genocide Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention concerning the Laws and Customs of War and finally, to an International Criminal Court. Furthermore, European countries considered the economic integration as a way of ensuring that a European war could not burst anymore. European Union bases were established when the European Coal and Steel Community was founded, after the Treaty of Paris from 1951, and in the following 50 years it grew and developed into an economic and political confederation. In an attempt to ensure that any future conflicts can be solved, the United Nations system was established in 1945.

3. Conclusions

The war and its end determined side consequences as well, such as: the colony independence movement, the division of Europe into two camps that cultivate a climate of mutual distrust (Cold War), the resumption of the Chinese Civil War in the Far East, and the discovery of nuclear energy has been exploited both for the production of the atomic bomb and for the construction of nuclear plants, so controversial nowadays.

British and Dutch colonies including India and Indonesia as well as the Philippines Archipelago became independent. As the independence movement grew, it brought new relationships of diplomatic, political and economic nature between the new nations. World Map has radically changed, with many new nations and names; when the Gold Coast became independent, it changed its name into Ghana.

Churchill and Truman agreed with Stalin regarding the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. 'Western powers have been so grateful to Stalin for his resolute resistance against Hitler, that they gave him everything he asked for. These compromises made to Stalin remained popular in Eastern Europe as the *West betrayal*. Churchill even agreed to force the Soviet refugees who had found shelter in Great Britain to return to the Soviet Union. Many of them preferred to commit suicide rather than return to a certain death; those who returned were shot on the spot' (Rodney, 2009, p. 422).

In the Far East, the Chinese civil war resumed. The National Army, who had been much weakened during the war, fled to Taiwan in 1949, where, for a long time, maintained a kind of government in exile, and in mainland China, Mao established a communist state, People's Republic of China.

The Cold War was in some way a Third World War which lasted nearly half a century. It was a generalized conflict between capitalism and communism, between East and West, and, above all, between two global super powers, the Soviet Union and the United States who brought into the orbit their satellites and their allies.

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