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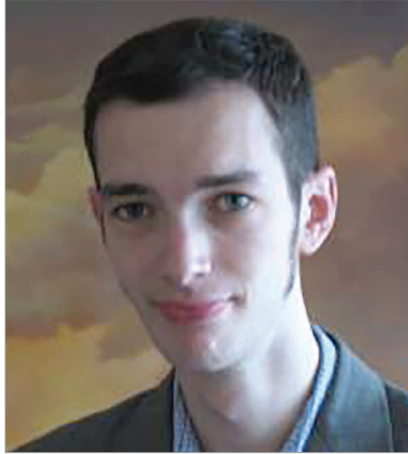
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‘THE TRAVELLER FROM A LESSER COUNTRY’: HUBERT BUTLER AND YUGOSLAVIA

Abstract

This essay explores the writings of Irish essayist Hubert Butler (1900-1991) on Yugoslavia, where he lived for three years in the 1930s and by which he remained preoccupied for the rest of his life. It focuses on his search for connections and analogies between Ireland and Yugoslavia, examining this within wider patterns of deinsulation of Irish cultural and political discourse around the time of the Second World War, a phenomenon which involved both imaginative attempts to understand Irish questions with reference to international analogues and precedents, and sometimes sinister translations of matters of global consequence into local political debates.

Keywords: Hubert Butler, Yugoslavia, Second World War, nationalism

I have always believed that local history is more important than national history. There should be an archive in every village [...]. Where life is fully and consciously lived in our own neighbourhood, we are cushioned a little from the impact of great far-off events which should be of only marginal concern to us.¹

These lines from Hubert Butler’s 1984 essay “Beside the Nore” have been quoted by John Banville and N.J. McGarrigle to assert Butler’s fidelity to the local and to his Irish “home place” – but these assessments risk effacing his profound commitment to inter-community and international dialogue, evident in texts explored in this essay, all of which are rooted in interactions and discussions occasioned by his travels in south-east Europe.² Butler’s localism, therefore, might be apprehended not only as an approach to historiography but also as a gesture anticipating the transnational field

of world literature, promoting the idea that focusing on local rather than national concerns, paradoxically, enables easier and more productive engagement with the rest of the world. As David Damrosch has observed: "The provincial writer is [...] at once cut off but also free from the bonds of an inherited tradition, and in principle can engage all the more fully, and by mature choice, with a broader literary world: Joyce and Walcott are far more cosmopolitan writers than Proust and Woolf."³ Damrosch's call for scholars of world literature to work collaboratively across national boundaries is also anticipated by Butler's active pursuit and promotion of trans-European cultural engagement and encounters.⁴

Hubert Butler (1900-91) occupied an eccentric position in relation to the mainstream of the society in which he lived, and since his death arguably remains marginal to Irish literary and cultural studies, despite some valuable recent critical interventions.⁵ This can, in part, be explained by the form in which he worked – the essay's position in the canon, as determined by literary study and pedagogy (or indeed by commercial success), is far less established and secure than the places of drama, fiction, or poetry. Butler's writings tended to appear in journals and magazines with relatively small circulations, and were not collected and published in book form until the 1980s and 90s.⁶ As we shall see, the subjects on which Butler fastened also drew him away from the cultural and political mainstream, often resulting in apathy and sometimes in opprobrium. This essay focuses on his writings on Yugoslavia, where he lived for three years in the 1930s and by which he remained preoccupied for the rest of his life, describing it as "the foreign country I know best".⁷ Butler's concern with the crimes committed during the Second World War by the fascist Ustaše regime in the Independent State of Croatia, and in particular with the extent to which the Catholic Church colluded in these, made him unpopular with many in Ireland, although more recently he has been hailed as "Ireland's George Orwell" due to his willingness to speak uncomfortable truths.⁸ His search for connections and comparisons between Ireland and south-eastern Europe and specifically Yugoslavia is unusual and significant, suggesting a means of supplementing or circumventing postcolonial approaches to the study of Irish history and culture; in viewing Ireland as one of several "small states" in Europe Butler poses a challenge to historiography and cultural studies which too often remain bound by an exceptionalism which prioritises lines of enquiry with the former colonial ruler, Britain, or with the United States, the destination of many Irish emigrants since the nineteenth century.

Butler was also aware of the malign possibilities of comparative strategies however – material in his archive, held in Trinity College Dublin, shows how Irish-Croatian comparisons were drawn upon to inflame the politics of grievance in Northern Ireland. Drawing on research in this archive, this essay examines Butler’s search for comparisons in the context of the wider desinsulation of Irish cultural and political discourse around the time of the Second World War, a phenomenon which can be observed across the political spectrum, involving both imaginative attempts to understand Irish questions with reference to international analogues and precedents, and sometimes sinister translations of matters of global consequence into local political debates.

Hubert Butler was an Anglo-Irish Protestant and a member of what is often called the Ascendancy – his ancestors had arrived in Ireland in the twelfth century after Henry II’s invasion and Butler’s father was a landowner, farmer and High Sherriff of Kilkenny. Like many sons of Ascendancy families Butler was educated in England, first at a preparatory school, then at the elite boarding school Charterhouse, and then, from 1919-22, at the University of Oxford. During youth, adolescence and early adulthood, therefore, he found himself observing the convulsions in revolutionary Ireland from outside, and was transfixed by these. According to Robert Tobin, Butler neglected his studies at Oxford and instead “immersed himself in the culture of contemporary Irish life”, finding that Irish nationalism, a seemingly remote concern at the family’s ancestral home of Bennettsbridge, became more vivid and compelling when viewed from England.⁹ These years were sometimes uncomfortable for Ascendancy families in Ireland – their properties were targeted by republican guerrillas and many big houses burned down. This distressed Butler – in his essay “Divided Loyalties” (1984) he bemoaned revolutionary “self-destruction” and mourned the loss of buildings and records, suggesting that amidst the upheavals the rebels had been “sawing away the branch on which they were sitting” and arguing that “a new and more suffocating ascendancy, that of international commerce” had replaced the ancien regime.¹⁰ The new Free State established in 1922 also proved uncongenial to Protestants accustomed to an elevated status under colonial rule: public service positions often previously filled by Protestants now required proficiency in the Irish language, while the Catholic Church began to dominate the management of education and health provision, and its influence was also felt in legislation banning divorce. As a result of this new environment

many Protestants left the new state, travelling north across the newly created partition to Northern Ireland, or east to Britain.

Butler returned to Ireland after his studies in Oxford, and worked for a while as a librarian in Northern Ireland. In the late 1920s and early 1930s he travelled widely, teaching English in Alexandria and Leningrad (his time in the Soviet Union is described in the 1984 essay "Peter's Window"). From 1934-37 he taught in Zagreb, supported by a scholarship from the School of Slavonic Studies in London. Butler arrived in the city in October 1934 to the news that the Yugoslav King Alexander had been assassinated by Croatian nationalists in Marseille on the orders of their leader-in-exile Ante Pavelić; a few days later he observed the King's body lying in state at Zagreb railway station, prayed over by the Catholic Primate Archbishop Bauer and his Auxiliary Monsignor Stepinac. This episode was a harbinger for the next decade of Croatian and Yugoslav history and, as we shall see, is of critical importance to Butler's own later preoccupation with Yugoslavia and its ethnic and religious histories.

In 1938-39 Butler worked in Vienna with a Quaker organisation, helping Austrian Jews to escape persecution, a period he later recalled as "one of the happiest times of my life".¹¹ Aware that his linguistic skills and experiences of travelling and living in Europe could be of use in the fight against Nazism, on the outbreak of war he offered his services to the states of both belligerent Britain and neutral Ireland, but neither found a role for him.¹² In 1941 he inherited and took over the family farm and house at Bennettsbridge, where he remained for the rest of his life, pursuing studies which combined a deep and earnest interest in local history and archaeology with a profound concern for developments in global and European affairs (when possible he also continued to travel widely).

Butler first arrived in Yugoslavia in 1934, but as he recalls in his introduction to the collection of essays *Escape From the Anthill* (1985), he had become aware of the establishment of the Succession States in eastern and south-eastern Europe after the end of the First World War while he was at university.

Yugoslavia had been born in 1918 after the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the rise of the Succession States. For the Southern Slavs it was the fulfilment of an ancient dream of harmony between four neighbouring and kindred peoples. I was at Oxford then and there was springtime in the air. There were Serbs, Croats and Czechs, there were Irish too, all rejoicing in their new-found freedom. We all had minority problems and I was surprised

that Ireland, least scarred by war, did not identify herself with the other small new states more warmly, share experiences and take the lead for which she was qualified. The Croats knew about Ulster and some of them talked of Croatia, ruefully, as “the Ulster of Yugoslavia.” This needed a readjustment of roles, but one knew what they meant.¹³

Imaginative leaps such as the one made by Butler’s Croat friends, aligning Croatia with the industrial north of Ireland, are characteristic of Butler’s own distinctive deployment of the essay form: a talented writer, curious analogies such as this propel many of his writings on this subject. Sometimes these leaps are glib and verge on essentialism – four decades earlier in “Report on Yugoslavia” (1947), for example, he wrote that “The Yugoslavs are, like my own nation the Irish, among the least pacifist people in Europe and at the best of times it would not be easy to persuade them that liberty could be won or maintained except by fighting”.¹⁴ A moment of this kind, particularly given its martial emphasis, shows that the pursuit of comparisons and analogies is a fraught and complex means of constructing narratives, and hints at the possible recourse to international conflicts as a means of inflaming local disputes.

Butler published no fiction, but his archive contains two attempts to approach Anglo-Yugoslav and Irish-Yugoslav interactions of the early twentieth century in a fictional mode. “Memoirs of five years in Srednovendia” is a fifty-page handwritten draft of a story addressing a fictionalised Yugoslavia, with reference to earlier invented Balkan locales. From a war-time or post-war perspective (the time of composition is unclear) Butler’s narrator, Janet, recalls time spent during the 1930s in Srednovendia, an invented state composed of a coastal region, Marsovia and an inland region, Ruritania. Sharing several characteristics with Dalmatia, Marsovia carries the same name as the fictional Balkan country in the revised version of Franz Lehár’s comic operetta *The Merry Widow* (1905), while the name Ruritania is lifted from Anthony Hope’s trilogy of popular novels. Butler adheres to some details from Hope’s novels – the story addresses the contemporary reputation of the “immensely Anglophile” Queen Flavia, who remains on the Ruritanian throne at the end of *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898) – but by other turns seeks to emphasise how the modernised “Ruritania”, incorporated into the federation of Srednovendia, differs from that of popular reputation.¹⁵ Srednovendia is an invented state made up of two pre-existing invented countries, which bears considerable similarities to Yugoslavia and yet seemingly co-exists

with interwar Yugoslavia (we are told that the “famous cabarets” on the Marsovian coast “are run largely by Hungarian and Yugoslav gypsies and by Jews”).¹⁶ Butler’s engagement with the Ruritanian precedent suggests that he was aware of the extent to which literary representations conditioned intercultural relations, and aware too of how perceptions of the Balkans had been constructed in Britain and Ireland.¹⁷ The second story describes a Yugoslav living in London but deeply interested in Ireland, studying its history and culture intensively and feeling an affinity between fellow “small states”:

Five years ago Milan was very consciously a member of a small state and he was interested in other small states. He had learnt English at school so it was not altogether surprising that the small state he chose for his special and devoted study was Ireland. His knowledge was stupendous and accurate. No bye-election or border incident escaped his notice and his excited comment. He was able to correlate them all well enough with domestic problems. Ulster played the part of Croatia. In both lands there were the memories of an old imperial connection and a native culture to be resumed from the domination of a foreign one. In both there were land hunger and religious problems and political assassinations. There were the rich ranch-lands of Meath and Voivodina there were Connemara and Herzegovina full of rocks and ass-carts and tourists. There were the Chetniks, the Ustashe and the [Orangemen] and the IRA. Historically too Belgrade as Smigidunum had been a Celtic capital before Dublin.¹⁸

It is unclear when this was written, but probably during the Second World War.¹⁹ The story establishes parallels between Ireland and Yugoslavia in terms of their shared experience of foreign domination by the Western European powers, but also through correspondences in landscape, rural economy and political activism. The correspondence here between Northern Ireland and/or Ulster and Croatia returns us to the phrase “the Ulster of Yugoslavia”. According to Butler this parallel originated in Croatia itself – in “Yugoslavia: The Cultural Background” (1947) he relates an anecdote in which a Yugoslav professor travels to Ireland in the interwar period to deliver a lecture on his home country, before returning home to Dalmatia and giving a lecture on Ireland. The professor was then apparently taken to a police station and charged with subversion and separatism, on the grounds that his Yugoslav audience would understand that in discussing “Ulster” he intended to refer to “Croatia”. In “Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo” (1956), an essay recounting the Sarajevo plot to kill Franz

Ferdinand, Butler explicitly addresses the origins of the comparison in Croatia:

Frequently you will hear an Irish nationalist lamenting the collapse of Austria-Hungary and explaining that Yugoslavia and the other succession states were mere puppet contrivances of the League of Nations, rag-bags of racial oddments, doomed to disintegrate. He ignores that these states all have living languages and often a more distinctive culture, a longer history of independence than our own. And since the Succession States owed their existence to England and France, their citizens often scoffed at Ireland's independence. The Croats used to call themselves "the Ulster of Yugoslavia" because they considered the Six Counties as progressive as themselves and in equal danger of being absorbed into the peasant economy of a more primitive people.²⁰

These observations align industrialised Northern Ireland with Croatia as comparable provinces attempting to cling to more advanced and civilised economies or societies in the face of political change, in the first instance to Britain and in the second to Western Europe. Paradoxically, and by extension, this also serves to align Orthodox Serbia with the Catholic-dominated southern state in Ireland, while Catholic Croatia appears the double of Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland: the "readjustment of roles" mentioned by Butler above.

There are precedents for Butler's search for parallels and harbingers. In their introduction to *Ireland: East to West* (2013), Aidan O'Malley and Eve Patten cite the example of Arthur Griffith. In 1904 Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin, published *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*, in which he suggested that whereas sixty years previously Irish nationalism had presented an example for Hungarians fighting for greater autonomy, Hungary's gain in sovereignty following the 1867 compromise meant that it could now be seen as "Ireland's exemplar". Griffith's suggestion was of course simplistic, as Michael Laffan and Stipe Grgas have observed: Griffith ignored elements of Hungarian history which did not fit his case (significantly, as Grgas observes, he ignored the power subsequently wielded by Hungary in Croatia and the Balkans).²¹ As O'Malley and Patten note, and as the inexactitude of the Croatia-Ulster analogy suggests, such parallels are necessarily built around blind spots, but the simplifications themselves offer useful illustrations of how apparently distant conflicts or movements can stimulate domestic political discourse.

The pursuit of comparisons also stimulated many of Butler's contemporaries. In 1941 Rebecca West published the vast modernist travelogue *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, which features strikingly similar expressions of romantic, nostalgic enthusiasm for the foundation of the Succession States, and also draws fraught and problematic connections between their histories and that of Ireland:

Freedom was for these people an ecstasy. That I knew to be true, for I had seen it with my own eyes. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, they were all like young men stretching themselves at the open window in the early morning after long sleep. To eat in a public place in these countries, to walk in their public gardens, was to fill the nostrils with the smell of happiness. Nothing so fair has happened in all history as this liberation of peoples who, during centuries of oppression, had never forgotten their own souls, and by long brooding on their national lives had changed them from transitory experience to lasting and inspiring works of art.²²

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon resulted from three journeys taken through Yugoslavia by West and her husband in 1936-38 and was published three years later, coinciding with the invasion of the country by Germany and its allies – it is dedicated “To my friends in Yugoslavia, who are all now dead or enslaved”.²³ The shadow of impending conflict hangs heavily over the narrative. Early on she describes the handover of Croats as “chattels” to Hungarian rule during the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in 1867 and claims “I do not know of any nastier act than this in history.” A footnote to this line reads “It must be remembered that this journal was written in 1937”, implicitly invoking contemporaneous atrocities.²⁴ *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is not, of course, a journal, but such moments of deliberate artifice call attention to the European war raging at the time of publication: in the following paragraph West writes that “I had come to Yugoslavia because I knew that the past has made the present, and I wanted to see how the process works.”²⁵

As the Anglo-Irish West attempts to make sense of the complex and interdependent convoluted histories and contradictory political identities that she encounters on her travels, she draws a number of comparisons between the respective courses of Irish and Yugoslav history.²⁶ In Croatia, for example, in the midst of a tense exchange between a Croatian former revolutionary who believes in Yugoslavian unity and a Serb who is

pro-Croat in politics, she detects "the authentic wail of poverty, in its dire extreme, that is caused by a certain kind of politics. Such politics we know very well in Ireland."²⁷ West goes on to draw an extended comparison between the political impasse in Croatia following its incorporation into interwar Yugoslavia and developments in the Irish Free State, identifying "obstinate solids" which linger after a "proud people" have "driven out their oppressors" and hinder political stability and progress.²⁸ Elsewhere and more contentiously, West suggests that "The nationalisms of Hungary and Ireland have always been intense, but Hungary has always been industrially ambitious and resolute both in maintaining a feudal land system and in oppressing the aliens within her frontiers while Ireland, though she desires to annihilate Ulster, wishes to be a peasant state with industries well within manageable proportions."²⁹ West's analogies are sometimes inexact and ill-advised and her language hyperbolic (apart from particularly fevered loyalists, who in 1941 would have suggested that Northern Ireland faced "annihilation" from the south?), but her desire to draw these connections bears comparison with approaches taken by Butler and others in Ireland around the time of the Second World War.

Despite the comparative isolation of north and south at this time, the war years encouraged many to explore connections and draw such parallels between the cultural and political histories of Ireland and those of states in central and Eastern Europe. In an article entitled "The Barriers", published in Dublin literary magazine *The Bell* in July 1941 Butler expressed depression at Ireland's isolation and the effect of this on its internal cultural politics, writing "To-day we are cut off completely from the outer world, and between north and south, between cities and provinces the barriers are rising. The war has forced on us a cultural self-sufficiency more complete than the most fervent Separatist could have imposed by law", and arguing that "Great cultures have always risen from the interaction of diverse societies."³⁰ In Butler's analysis, the attempted retreat to cultural self-sufficiency in Ireland following independence had failed, as it had failed for small states elsewhere: "Anglo-Irish culture, which should comprehend all literature from Swift to Edgar Wallace in translation, could never become the focus of a nation. The same might be said of the old Austrian civilisation, on which the Succession States of Eastern Europe tried to base their new national cultures. It was too strong and powerful to be assimilated."³¹ In "The Barriers" he proposed a positive programme to overcome this, suggesting that since the cultural future of Europe was easier to influence through dialogue and exchange

than its post-war political structures, this was a process in which Ireland as a small state could and should participate, unhindered by imperial baggage (here Butler anticipated later notions of Irish cultural capital). Butler went on to describe small cultural clubs in Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, where “life in the provinces is not unlike our own”.³² These offered spaces in which peripheral cultures could encounter each other away from official state nationalist discourse:

The audiences were small and intimate and the visit was sometimes more like a party than a lecture. Once an Irish singer came and in the small clubs of Macedonia Irish songs alternated with Serbian ballads.

That was not the only contact with Ireland, for the visit was returned some months later by a school-teacher from Novi Sad, who lectured, travelled and broadcast in Ireland.³³

In Butler’s account this was later spoiled by official patronage however – the concert halls became too big, state officials began to take an interest in the visits and “The faint smell of power politics pervaded the atmosphere; reciprocity gave place to rivalry, personal exchange to diplomatic courtesies.” Butler argued that:

The smaller peoples must take the lead once more and hold it tenaciously. Round the most ordinary British traveller there hangs an aura of wealth and Waterloo and the British navy, which either antagonises or enthralls. The traveller from a lesser country, rich in traditions but politically weak, can meet and mix fruitfully on a reciprocal basis, as himself alone.³⁴

Butler’s ideas can be read in the context of a wider political debate over Irish unity, in Ireland and in Britain, which often sought to draw connections and parallels between the partition of Ireland and ongoing developments in central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. An editorial by Seán Ó Faoláin in *The Bell* published in February 1944 again emphasises the perils faced by small states, and again draws parallels between Ireland and the Balkans, noting that “Yugoslavia, like ourselves, is a young state” and echoes Rebecca West in the suggestion that the demands by Croats for greater autonomy after 1919 were “much as if Ulster decided to secede from an united Ireland.”³⁵ Ó Faoláin concedes that this analogy is incomplete, given that “No Northern counties in Yugoslavia have a sentimental pull towards Great Britain, or Germany, or, so far as has

hitherto been evident, to Russia, or to any country outside their own borders", but he continues to draw a further and more specific parallel between Northern Ireland and Albania, arguing, like Butler, that isolation for small states is neither desirable nor possible: "Balkan unity was blocked by the refusal of Albania and Bulgaria to co-operate in the Balkan pact of 1934. In practice Italy played Albania as a pawn to keep Yugoslavia from the Adriatic coastline. She was to Italy in the Adriatic what Cuba was to the United States in the Caribbean, and what the Six Counties are to Great Britain in the north Atlantic."³⁶ Comparisons with the Balkans were not drawn only by those who wished to see a united Ireland: a letter responding to Ó Faoláin in the August 1944 edition of the magazine asserted forcefully that Irish unity along Yugoslav lines would not have worked and would have had similarly unhappy results.³⁷

Such exchanges can be read in the context of a wider political debate over Irish unity, in Ireland north and south and in Britain, which often sought to draw connections and parallels between the partition of Ireland and ongoing developments in central and Eastern Europe. In 1938, after Britain had acceded to German demands over the Sudetenland, anti-partition rallies were held in Glasgow, Manchester and London. As Robert Cole has noted, "The theme was that if the Sudeten Germans could have independence from Czechoslovakia, why not the Northern Irish from the United Kingdom?"³⁸ From a diametrically opposed position to such demonstrations and anxious about the future of the province, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland Lord Craigavon declared that "Ulster is nobody's Czechoslovakia".³⁹ To borrow a term used by Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, the events of the 1930s and war years "de-insulated" the political culture of Northern Ireland, and much would be heard about the Sudetenland in the years to come.⁴⁰

After the Second World War Butler was much preoccupied both with what had happened in Croatia and what had not happened in Ireland, and continued to explore parallels and correspondences. In "Ireland and Croatia" (1948) he wrote that "I write as an Irishman, an Irish provincial, and it is the impact on our country of the events in Croatia that interests me, or, if one must widen the range, the impact on us of some external interpretations of those events." In one of his most celebrated essays "The Invader Wore Slippers" (1950) Butler raises the counterfactual spectre of a Nazi invasion of Ireland. The essay opens with these lines:

During the war, we in Ireland heard much of the jackboot and how we should be trampled beneath it, if Britain's protection failed us. We thought we could meet this challenge as well as any other small nation, and looking into the future, our imagination, fed on the daily press, showed us a technicolour picture of barbarity and heroism.⁴¹

Characteristically Butler dissents from this "technicolour picture". He suggests that it never occurred to the Irish that "for ninety per cent of the population the moral problems of an occupation would be small and squalid", and would involve instead choosing between two "inglorious" courses of action.⁴²

We did not ask ourselves: "Supposing the invader wears not jackboots but carpet slippers or patent leather pumps, how will I behave, and the respectable Xs, the patriotic Ys and the pious Zs?" How could we? The newspapers only told us about the jackboots.

In this essay Butler attempts to debunk simplistic narratives of invasion and resistance promoted across Europe in the post-war period, with reference to three circumscribed occupied or semi-occupied zones in which "precedent and analogy" could be observed. These were the British territories of the Channel Islands, where "respectable Xs" were in the majority; the French province of Brittany, where the influence of romantically "patriotic Ys" was dominant, and "Croatia, where the Ys were reinforced by the fervently pious Zs."⁴³ Butler analyses the policies pursued by the German occupiers and their fascist acolytes and the responses of the occupied by examining newspapers published during the respective occupation periods, including extensive research in archives in Zagreb.⁴⁴

Reading the *Guernsey Evening Post* Butler found that respectable middle class life continued untroubled by Nazi occupation, observing how reports of the torture of local shopkeepers and measures taken against Jews on the island were sandwiched on the newspaper pages between reports of table tennis matches, wedding anniversaries: "Lubricated by familiar trivialities, the mind glided over what was barbarous and terrible."⁴⁵ In Brittany the occupiers could make only "half-hearted" efforts to exploit the patriotism of the Ys and the piety of the Zs, largely due to the lack of Catholic support for Breton separatists.⁴⁶ In Croatia by contrast, according to Butler, these efforts had been triumphantly successful, largely due to the success of the Germans in "perverting piety".⁴⁷ As a result Pavelić's

Croatia “deserves the closest study” while Pavelić, he argued, “was the epitome, the personification, of the extraordinary alliance of religion and crime, which for four years made Croatia the model for all satellite states in German Europe.”⁴⁸

Butler’s conclusions regarding counter-factual wartime Ireland are pessimistic: he suggests that due to the Germans’ Protestant bias the “respectable Xs”, identified as “Anglo-Irish *Herrenvolk* of Ulster and the Dublin suburbs” would have proved “satisfactory accomplices in establishing the German hegemony” over the Catholic majority.⁴⁹ Although the Ustaše regime was Catholic Butler suggests that even so Croatian Catholics “must have felt their position precarious”, citing efforts made by Croatian scholars during the war to deny any Slavic ethnic or linguistic heritage.⁵⁰ Turning to the Breton precedent, Butler argued that as in Brittany, in Ireland “the Celtic nationalist would [...] have been regarded as a valuable tool for undermining a non-German hegemony, but of decidedly less value for the reconstruction of a German one.”⁵¹

Butler concluded that the Channel Islands and Brittany presented more persuasive analogies for Ireland, but in the course of his research discovered that the Ustaše themselves had sought to exploit cultural connections between Croatia and Ireland as part of a supposed German plan for Europe:

In a Zagreb newspaper of 1942, *Deutsche Zeitung in Kroatien*, I read that Ireland, with Croatia and Slovakia, was to be one of the three model “allied” states in German Europe. In other papers too there was much of flattering intent about the common loyalty of Croats and Irish to Faith and Fatherland, our similar histories, romantic temperaments and literary gifts. Irish plays continued to be played in Zagreb, when English were tabu.⁵²

Such post-war connections as existed between Ireland and Yugoslavia were largely mediated by the Catholic Church. Stridently anti-communist, the Church in Ireland was keen to highlight actions taken by Tito’s regime against the Church in Croatia on foot of its activities during the Second World War under the Ustaše regime of the Independent State of Croatia. Stories of Titoist persecution of the church were promoted by the anti-communist print media in Ireland: Butler’s archive includes cuttings of many reports in Catholic newspapers (specifically the *Sunday Independent* and the *Standard*) from the 1940s and 50s describing attacks on priests and confiscations of church property. The lead front page report in *The*

Standard on 17 August 1951 for example, is headlined “It Is Time The Truth Was Told In Yugoslavia”, and credited to “A Correspondent in Central Europe”. It describes the confiscation of church property, the occupation of churches by the army and claims that 400 priests have been jailed in Yugoslavia. The report concludes on the back page with an attack by the anonymous correspondent on other foreign newspaper correspondents who lack the “decency” to report this programme of persecution. The front page also features a report on national voluntary organisation Muintir na Tíre’s “Rural Week”, entitled “Parish Parliaments or State Octopus?” The report quotes the president of the organisation P.P. Bansa arguing that “We see already the growing octopus of the State gradually grasping everything and destroying the true independence of a people. To-day all over the world the power of the State is growing, finding its logical conclusion behind the bars of the Kremlin.” Inside the newspaper an editorial entitled “Tito – No Convert” (p. 6) addresses the incarceration of Stepinac. It seems as though these reports had the desired effect with some readers at least: in an unpublished draft Butler mentions meeting the Yugoslav Nobel Laureate Ivo Andrić who had recently visited the Boyne Valley in Ireland and who told him that locals “were not very kind to us Yugoslavs [...] and appeared to think we were always murdering priests”.⁵³ It is striking that the *Standard* also sought to address the effects on Croatian peasants of the programme of collectivisation pursued by the Yugoslav state in the immediate postwar period, deploring this Soviet-style policy and declaring in a 1948 report that “small bourgeois” landowners would never submit to it.⁵⁴ Such reports must be read as appeals to a rural Irish readership of farmers and small business owners, and can also be interpreted in the context of a wider Church-sponsored campaign against state ownership, nationalisation, or provision of services in Ireland at this time.⁵⁵

It was against this hostile context that Butler attempted to raise awareness of the Ustaše mass killings and campaign of forced conversions and, through the church, to address Ireland’s “complicity” in what had happened. The figure of Aloysius Stepinac, the Monsignor whom Butler had observed praying over the body of King Alexander at Zagreb railway station in 1934, was central to his investigations.⁵⁶ In 1937 Stepinac had become Archbishop of Zagreb and remained so throughout the existence of the Independent State of Croatia, a matter of enormous and continuing controversy. After the war he was tried by the new communist authorities and imprisoned, as a result of which he attained considerable celebrity in

Ireland where he was seen as a martyr.⁵⁷ In parliament the leader of the Irish Labour party referred to the cleric as a “valuable divine exposed to the insults of the rabble for his devotion to Christ.” On May Day 1949 a crowd of 150,000 (by some estimates the largest ever demonstration in Dublin) gathered in O’Connell Street in the centre of Dublin to protest against the imprisonment of Stepinac and that of Cardinal Mindszenty in Poland.⁵⁸ During the demonstration a young man suspected of handing out Communist leaflets was struck on the head and hospitalised.

Butler was deeply troubled by the pious portrayals of Stepinac, in the context of his apparent closeness to the regime which had committed mass killings, and role at the head of a church hierarchy which had cooperated with and implemented forced conversions. He recounts his involvement in the controversy in the 1952 essay “The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue”. Soon after his first post-war return visit to Yugoslavia in 1947 he gave a talk describing his impressions on Radio Éireann. He did not attempt to address the Communist persecution of Catholics, he writes, since in order to do so he would have had also to address ‘the more terrible Catholic persecution which had preceded it, so I thought silence was best.’⁵⁹ Even this silence, however, incurred the wrath of *The Standard*, which published a lengthy editorial excoriating Butler and the broadcaster for his perceived sin of omission. Butler’s subsequent legal battle with *The Standard* was unsatisfactory, and he “found it increasingly difficult to be silent” when the foreign editor of the newspaper, Count O’Brien, published to considerable acclaim the book *Archbishop Stepinac, The Man and his Case* (1947), complete with endorsements from the Archbishop of Dublin and many other senior clergy from Ireland, Britain and Canada.⁶⁰

In response to such encomia, Butler translated a number of documents written by the archbishop, including a long letter from Stepinac to Pavelić which was published in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* in 1950, and which he also later self-published. In this letter Stepinac hailed Pavelić’s leadership but deplored atrocities that had been committed, blaming these nevertheless on “irresponsible persons”. Butler observed later that reaction to this had been non-existent on the part of Catholics since “They did not wish to think of Stepinac as a real man who wrote letters and made mistakes. They wanted him merely as a mascot in a campaign of hatred against communism and heresy.”⁶¹ Butler did see Stepinac as a real man and visited him in prison during his visit to Yugoslavia with a delegation of the National Peace Council in 1950, described in the essay “A Visit to Lepoglava” (1951). In the course of the visit Butler questioned Stepinac

over his choice to collaborate with the notorious Uniate clergyman Monsignor Shimrak, an avowed enthusiast for the forced conversion campaign, but received the same reply that Stepinac had given at his trial, "*Notre conscience est tranquille*".⁶² Butler's essays on this subject are even-handed and dependent on careful research; he does not seek to attack Stepinac personally and in this essay describes him as "a figure who commands respect" who should be released in the interests of pursuing "a dispassionate enquiry into the tragic story of 1941" but whose cause "has been mishandled by ill-informed champions."⁶³ The reaction to Butler's interventions highlights the difficulties of pursuing these subjects in the political and intellectual climate of Cold War Ireland; his description here of the promoters of Stepinac's cause as "ill-informed" signals a liberal faith in enquiry and investigation rather than any interest in becoming involved in ideological conflict.⁶⁴ A manuscript entitled "On convincing the Americans about the persecution in Yugoslavia" further illuminates the zero-sum approach of the Cold Warriors whose convictions, swiftly entrenched after the end of the Second World War, Butler was attempting to unpick. If Tito was dismissed as a "godless communist", writes Butler, then Stepinac "must certainly be innocent". Few who did believe that people of Orthodox faith had been persecuted in Croatia thought Fascists were responsible or simply responded by asking "What else do you expect in the Balkans?"⁶⁵ Since Yugoslavia was communist and on poor diplomatic terms with the United States in the years immediately following the Second World War, both the religious and secular press in that country "almost without exception vied with each other in exalting Stepinac as a hero and martyr not only for the cause of Roman Catholicism, but for all religions, for freedom of conscience and for belief in God."⁶⁶

In 1952 Butler attended a meeting at the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin of a group called the International Affairs Association, at which the editor of *The Standard* read a paper entitled "Yugoslavia – the Pattern of Persecution". Butler was irritated that none of the speakers on the platform had ever visited Yugoslavia (except one who had once taken a cruise along the Dalmatian coast) and at the end got to his feet and attempted to raise the matter of mass killings and forced conversions. The Papal Nuncio, who was also in the audience, walked out before Butler had uttered more than a few sentences.⁶⁷ His peremptory exit caused uproar. Butler was castigated and smeared in the national press and removed from such small public offices as he held in Ireland: Kilkenny County Council expelled him from its ancient-monuments subcommittee. The

Kilkenny newspapers also printed attacks on him (Butler kept cuttings of these which are preserved in his papers). The *Kilkenny People* of the 8 November 1952 reported that the Nuncio had been “offended by a remark made by a Kilkennyman at a lecture on Yugoslavia” but claimed that “Irishmen and women of all denominations – are pained at the affront to the Papal Nuncio.” Significantly the newspaper also noted that Stepinac had been born a peasant rather than (like Butler) “under the roof of the Big House – the Big House that we know so well in Ireland, to our cost.”⁶⁸ The newspaper also gave thanks that “In Ireland we have no People’s Court of the Tito calibre – pray God we may never have such – but we have another court, the charitable, well-informed democratic court of public opinion.”⁶⁹ Reporting on Kilkenny County Council’s insistence that Butler resign from his committee post two weeks later, the *Kilkenny Journal* records surprise that “a man who was born and reared in Kilkenny and a man who claimed to be Irish” would make such a statement, “trying to foist it over on the people, that those behind the Iron Curtain had religious liberty”. The newspaper makes determined efforts to fold this into a broader narrative of Irish transgression across established Cold War lines, also deploring the landing of timber from Archangel in the Soviet Union, and the importation of million of pounds worth of barley from behind the Iron Curtain.⁷⁰

Evident in these responses is a determination to silence Butler, and a desire to weaponise the politics of the Cold War in Irish domestic political debates. Attempts to do so were crude, and so too were attempts in Northern Ireland to harness the bloody recent history of Croatia in the services of anti-Catholic rhetoric. The Loyalist Protestant cleric and politician Ian Paisley’s campaigns in the late 1960s and early 1970s raised the issue of Ustaše mass killings and forced conversions with the publication of a booklet entitled “It Could Happen Here”. Following the pattern of debates in the interwar period and war years, here again we can observe the politics of the eastern European periphery imported into Ireland as a means of pursuing historic sectarian disputes newly reconfigured following partition. According to Butler, in speeches at this time Paisley raised the prospect of Catholic persecution of Protestants with reference to the actions of the Pavelić regime in the Independent State of Croatia. The characteristically intemperate tenor of these interventions can be gauged from an advertisement published in Paisley’s newspaper the *Protestant Telegraph* in November 1968 for the London-based champion of the Serbian Orthodox Church Avro Manhattan’s *Catholic Terror Today*, a

polemical account of Ustaše atrocities. The advertisement appears beside a photograph of Paisley in the act of punching his open left hand with the fist of his right:

IT COULD HAPPEN IN ULSTER!

If the R.C. bigots in our midst have their way

The suppression of Civil Liberties ... The arrest of Protestant clergymen ...

The closing down and burning of Protestant churches ... Roman Catholic

padres as commanders of Protestant churches ... Long-term imprisonments

without trial ... The execution of Protestant individuals and groups

AND MORE HORRORS!

Impossible ... Incredible ... Unbelievable?

Then my answer to the Roman Catholic extremists is ... read

Catholic Terror Today

by Avro Manhattan

These things happened – not long ago – in a country with the same religious and political problems as Ulster

It is the most sensational

the most dramatic

the most revealing book ever!⁷¹

The advertisement includes an order form and the recommendation to “Buy one for your Roman Catholic neighbour!” It is striking how this advertisement avoids all mention of the state of Croatia or indeed of the Second World War, and the summary of this book published in the newspaper similarly largely circumvents the wartime context of the events (there is one reference to Hitler, and one to the Nazi Party, but no direct reference to the war itself) and aims instead to emphasise the Catholic character of the Pavelić regime. Butler severely disapproved of such attempts to inflame tensions in Ireland, describing Paisley as “mentally arrested”, “babyish”, a “‘wee cheeld’ who takes notes”, a boy “who said such rude things about the emperor’s clothes”, but who had “none of the innocence of children”. “In such hands”, Butler wrote, “the truth can be more dangerous than lies – and, in fact, much of what he says is true [...] Pavelic was quite as wicked as the *Protestant Telegraph* makes out and it is quite true that he was sheltered by the Vatican after his defeat”.⁷² Butler feared that “By lying about ourselves, we put ourselves at the mercy of our enemies”, meaning that the inability to confront clerical connivance in atrocities enabled these to be weaponised by malign forces such as Paisley’s movement.⁷³ Drawing connections between Irish and European

historical narratives has destructive, as well as constructive potential, and references by Manhattan and Paisley to Ustaše atrocities in pursuit of their respective vendettas present extreme illustrations of the dangers of deploying uncontextualised international comparisons.

Following the nuncio scandal Butler largely withdrew from public life but continued to pursue his interests in Yugoslavia and its recent history – perhaps his most impressive piece of work is “The Artukovitch File”, in which he painstakingly recounts his attempt to establish how the Ustaše Minister of the Interior, a desk murderer responsible for killings of Jews and Orthodox, had sheltered in Ireland for a year following his escape from Yugoslavia via Switzerland, before eventually making his way to California. Here too Butler uncovered Church complicity and immovable clerical anti-communism. The writer John Banville has identified Butler’s preoccupation with “‘epiphanies’ which make currents of social and political change visible through the lens of some small accident or absurdity” – the pieces of writing by Butler that I have quoted here demonstrate how the form of the essay enabled Butler to use a relatively minor incident, episode or historical figure to address events of global consequence.⁷⁴ At the beginning of the 1980s, the decade in which his work was republished and reached a wider audience, Butler wrote that:

There are two big drawers in my desk, one is full of my researches about the massacre of the Orthodox by the Roman Catholics of Croatia in 1941 to 2. The other contains some of my work on the early Irish Saints, a portion of which I published in Co. Kilkenny as “Ten Thousand Saints”. What has appealed to me about both these subjects is just what makes normal people recoil from them. They are not dead issues but living ones, one cannot touch them without hurting someone emotionally or intellectually. To work on them is more like a necessary surgical operation than an exercise in history.⁷⁵

Butler wrote in the introduction to *Escape from the Anthill* in 1985 that “even when these essays appear to be about Russia or Greece or Spain or Yugoslavia, they are really about Ireland”.⁷⁶ His published and unpublished writings testify to the diversely productive and destructive ramifications of such a conviction.

NOTES

- ¹ Hubert Butler, "Beside the Nore", in *The Eggman and the Fairies*, ed. by John Banville (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2012), pp. 195-204 (p. 204).
- ² John Banville, "A much travelled thinker rooted in his home place", *Irish Times*, 1 December 2012, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/a-much-travelled-thinker-rooted-in-his-home-place-1.392>; N.J. McGarrigle, "Hubert Butler and a love of the local", *Irish Times*, 18 October 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/hubert-butler-and-a-love-of-the-local-1.2834099>
- ³ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 186, quoted in O'Malley and Patten, *Ireland: East to West*, p. 12.
- ⁴ Published and unpublished writings testify to Butler's interest in Yugoslav literature and culture. See Hubert Butler, "Nazor, Oroschatz and the Von Berks" (1947), *Balkan Essays*, eds Chris and Jacob Agee (Belfast: Irish Pages Press, 2016), pp. 89-102; in Butler's archive, see "The arts in Croatia" (Butler Papers, 10304/342), "Yugoslav Literature: Address to the PEN Club Dublin" (Butler Papers, 10304/343), "I had hoped to have the carriage to myself..." (Butler Papers, 10304/369). Butler's late introduction to *Escape from the Anthill* (1985) suggests that his faith in provincial life in part derived from his reading of twentieth-century history: he writes that in Russia, Italy and Germany "totalitarian beliefs spread from the cities to the provinces where sharp antagonisms had been held in check by a long history of neighbourly interdependence" ("Escape from the Anthill" – Introduction to *Escape from the Anthill* (1985), *Balkan Essays*, pp. 313-26 (p. 319)).
- ⁵ See Robert Tobin, *The Minority Voice: Hubert Butler and Southern Irish Protestantism, 1900-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and essays by Aidan O'Malley, Michael McAteer and Stipe Grgas in Aidan O'Malley and Eve Patten (eds.), *Ireland: East to West* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013).
- ⁶ Lilliput Press in Dublin published the essay collections *Escape from The Anthill* in 1985, *Children of Drancy*, in 1988 and *Grandmother and Wolfe Tone* in 1990. *The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue*, edited by Roy Foster, was published by Penguin and Lilliput in 1990.
- ⁷ Hubert Butler, "Author's Proem" – from the Introduction to *Escape from the Anthill* (1985), *Balkan Essays*, pp. 51-56 (p.51).
- ⁸ Daniel McLaughlin, "Hubert Butler: Ireland's George Orwell", *Irish Times*, 10 September 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/hubert-butler-ireland-s-george-orwell-1.2785734>
- ⁹ Tobin, *The Minority Voice*, p. 26.

- ¹⁰ Hubert Butler, "Divided Loyalties", in Roy Foster (ed.), *The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue, and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 51-57 (p. 57).
- ¹¹ Hubert Butler, "The Kagran Gruppe", in *The Invader Wore Slippers*, ed. by John Banville (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2012), pp. 255-272 (p. 255).
- ¹² Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 83.
- ¹³ Butler, "Author's Proem", *Balkan Essays*, pp. 51-2.
- ¹⁴ Hubert Butler, "Report on Yugoslavia", *Balkan Essays*, pp. 139-53 (p. 139).
- ¹⁵ Hubert Butler, "Memoirs of five years in Srednovendia [=Yugoslavia] and of Oxford", *Butler Papers*, 10304/585, p. 22.
- ¹⁶ Butler, "Memoirs of five years in Srednovendia", p. 22.
- ¹⁷ See Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- ¹⁸ Hubert Butler, "An Irish-Yugoslav experiment: My friend Milan Stoioovich has an obsession: A Yugoslav in Torrington Square discusses Irish problems with Dr Paicek Čurčin editor of Novo Vreme Nova Europe", *Butler Papers*, 10304/585/51-55 (51).
- ¹⁹ The story opens with an ambiguous reference to "before the war": whether this is to the 1914-18 or 1939-45 conflict is not made explicit. The close correspondence between the descriptions of small cultural clubs in the Balkans in this story and those in his essay "The Barriers", published in Dublin magazine *The Bell* in July 1941 suggests that it was written during the Second World War.
- ²⁰ Hubert Butler, "Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo", *Balkan Essays*, pp. 57-70 (p. 68).
- ²¹ Stipe Grgas, "Hubert Butler's Non-Presence in Croatia", in Patten and O'Malley, *Ireland: East to West*, pp. 211-224 (pp. 212-213). Grgas also quotes from Hubert Butler's essay "Yugoslavia: The Cultural Background" (1947), showing that Butler himself was well aware of the inexactitude of Griffith's analogy.
- ²² Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (London: Macmillan, 1942; repr. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), p. 1100.
- ²³ As Tobin has discovered, West met Butler on one of these trips, giving him a lift in her car to his lodgings near Dubrovnik during heavy rain. Tobin, *The Minority Voice*, p. 62n.
- ²⁴ West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, p. 54.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* Seamus O'Malley has suggested that *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* can itself be read as a work of propaganda: "Her work was a call to intervention against fascism, and it is striking to see modernist techniques, that for the most part were limited to literary circles of the European capitals, adopted for a text meant to galvanize several empires into action against the Nazi menace" (Seamus O'Malley, *Making History New: Modernism and Historical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. xx).

- 26 West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, pp. 187-8.
27 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*, p. 1101.
30 Hubert Butler, "The Barriers", *The Bell*, 2/4 (July 1941: Special Ulster Number and The Abbey Theatre), 40-5 (p. 45, p. 41).
31 Hubert Butler, "The Barriers", p. 42.
32 *Ibid.*
33 *Ibid.*
34 *Ibid.*
35 Seán Ó Faoláin, "One World", *The Bell*, 7/5 (5 February 1944), 373-381 (p. 373).
36 Ó Faoláin, "One World", p. 375, p. 379.
37 John Ireland, "Eire and the Commonwealth Irish Confederation", *The Bell*, 8/ 5 (August 1944), p. 445.
38 Robert Cole, *Propaganda, Censorship and Irish Neutrality in the Second World War* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 7.
39 Hugh Shearman, *Northern Ireland: Its History, Resources and People* (Belfast: HMSO, 1946), p. 18.
40 Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *The State in Northern Ireland 1921-72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 103. Several political pamphlets of this time drew explicit comparisons between Northern Ireland and the Sudetenland. See Henry Harrison, *The Neutrality of Ireland: Why It Was Inevitable* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1942), p. 187; John Hawkins, *The Irish Question Today* (London: Victor Gollancz and Fabian Society, 1941), p. 47, p. 49; Jim Phelan, *Churchill Can Unite Ireland* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), p. 68, p. 69; "Ultach", *Orange Terror: The Partition of Ireland, a reprint from The Capuchin Annual, 1943* (Dublin: Capuchin Annual Office, 1943), p. 56.
41 Hubert Butler, "The Invader Wore Slippers", *Balkan Essays*, pp. 205-216 (p. 205).
42 Butler, "The Invader Wore Slippers", *Balkan Essays*, p. 205.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 207.
44 Butler wrote that in the University Library in Zagreb "The assistants, at first very obliging, became a bit weary and suspicious as they brought out volume after volume. It was the most shameful period of their history I was investigating" (Butler, "The Invader Wore Slippers", *Balkan Essays*, p. 542).
45 Butler, "The Invader Wore Slippers", *Balkan Essays*, p. 209.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 213.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Ibid.*, p. 211.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 211.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

53 Hubert Butler, "I had hoped to have the carriage to myself...", "When we crossed...", *Butler Papers*, 10304/369, p. 2.

54 A report published in *The Standard* on 2 July 1948 entitled "Did Peasants 'Ruin' Tito?" begins:

One thing is obvious in the Yugoslav "crisis": the social revolution in Titoland has completely failed. The causes of the failure of this revolution, which was carried out mostly at the writing-desks of some young professor of political economy at the University of Belgrade, and not in the villages and farms in which 80 per cent of the Yugoslav population live, lie deep in the economic and social structure of Yugoslav society.

55 The successful campaign by the Church and others against the government attempt to introduce publicly provided healthcare for mothers and children in Ireland is the best example of this. See Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and Child: Maternity and Child Welfare in Ireland, 1920s-1960s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

56 After the war and the subsequent establishment of socialist Yugoslavia, Butler identified continuities between public reaction to the King's assassination and later displays in celebration of Ustaše and communist triumphs. Describing scenes of public mourning in Zagreb in 1934 he claimed that:

There was not any evidence that anyone was being dragooned into the queues or that their emotion was faked. If the queues proved anything it was that the respectable classes, which modern bureaucracy has multiplied, very seldom have the courage of their convictions. They are incapable of those small unorganised departures from the expected through which the peaceful individual can make his feelings effective. They wait patiently for the assassin who they can repudiate publicly but welcome in their hearts. Seven years later 100,000 citizens lined the streets for a day and a half waiting for the arrival of Pavelitch, who had contrived the murder of the king. And four years later still they turned out with equal enthusiasm to welcome Tito, who, had it been possible, would gladly have carried out upon Pavelitch the death sentence which the monarchist government had passed on him.

(Hubert Butler, "I was three years in Yugoslavia before the war...", *Butler Papers*, 10304/351, pp. 1-2). Butler's apprehensions here anticipate later historiography which seeks to highlight continuities between the interwar and post-war iterations of Yugoslavia. See Vesna Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Sabrina P.

- Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005* (Bloomington, Ind. & Washington D.C.: Indiana University Press & The Wilson Center Press, 2006).
- 57 Butler professed perplexity at this, writing in 1948 that “Croatia is a remote, little-known part of Europe, and this made it very strange that our press, our parliament, our county council, which had been silent when one country after another had been overrun by Germany, should suddenly pass resolutions of protest in the strongest and boldest language.” (Hubert Butler, “Ireland and Croatia” (1948, 1988) 217-26, p. 217.
- 58 Butler, “Author’s Proem”, *Balkan Essays*, p. 55.
- 59 Hubert Butler, “The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue”, *Balkan Essays*, pp. 227-247 (p. 228). On his visits to Yugoslavia in the years after the war Butler refused either to be horrified or seduced by Tito’s regime, although he viewed socialism as a temporary solution to Yugoslavia’s inter-ethnic conflicts. Regarding Yugoslav-Italian tensions in Istria he wrote in 1947 that “The makeshift comradeship of Communism provides a temporary appeasement. In Fiume and Trieste on May Day thousands of Italian workmen marched contentedly behind Slav banners and slogans in the Slovene and Croat tongues.” (Hubert Butler, “Maria Pasquinelli and the Dissolution of the Ego” (1947, 1979), *Balkan Essays*, pp. 373-380 (p. 379). He wrote in December 1951 that “Sean O’Faolain thinks incorrectly that I am a fanatical partisan about Yugoslavia. My impression is that friends are to-day more valuable to her than fanatics and that she does not want any love affairs with foreign nations. She has good reason for shrinking from their embraces.” (Hubert Butler, untitled notes, Butler Papers, 10304/607/33) His archive shows that he corresponded several times with the Yugoslav embassy in London, but he cannot be considered an apologist for the regime, although he suggested that minorities in Yugoslavia were more secure under communism than might otherwise have been the case, writing that “I have not seen enough of the Voivodina to be sure but my experiences among the Bulgarian, Albanian and Macedonian minorities confirm [that] for the first time a man is not penalised for his race.” (Butler Papers, 10304/607/33).
- 60 Butler, “The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue”, *Balkan Essays*, p. 228.
- 61 Hubert Butler, “Yugoslavia, Speech at Craigavad NSP [?IVSP]”, Butler Papers, 10304/334.
- 62 Hubert Butler, “A Visit to Lepoglava”, *Balkan Essays*, pp. 199-203 (p. 201).
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3.
- 64 Liberal outlets in Ireland remained uninterested in publishing Butler’s dissenting views, however – he recalls being told by editors to “Write where you’ll be understood, write in England, and write in some serious monthly

where people use their reason and not their primitive instincts." Hubert Butler, "Ireland and Croatia", *Balkan Essays*, pp. 217-226 (p. 218).

65 That dismissal of course gestures back to a long nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western perception of the Balkan countries as inherently barbarous, and also anticipates the shrugs of many in the West during the conflicts of the 1990s.

66 Hubert Butler, "On convincing the Americans about the persecution in Yugoslavia", *Butler Papers*, 10304/359, p. 3.

67 Butler, "The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue", *Balkan Essays*, p. 230.

68 "Affront to Nuncio", *The Kilkenny People*, 8 November 1952.

69 "The West's Awake!", *The Kilkenny People*, 8 November 1952.

70 "Council's Strong Resentment: Mr H. Butler asked to resign from Committee", *Kilkenny Journal*, 22 November 1952.

71 *Protestant Telegraph*, 16 November 1968, p. 6. Cuttings from this newspaper are collected in a scrapbook in Butler's archive (*Butler Papers*, 10304/834/28).

72 Hubert Butler, "Behind the Purple Velvet Curtain / This is 'The Age of not-knowing' or... / On Paisley's revelations of the Croatian massacres", *Butler Papers*, 10304/391, p. 3.

73 Butler, "Behind the Purple Velvet Curtain", *Butler Papers*, 10304/391, p. 4.

74 John Banville, "The European Irishman", review of Hubert Butler, *The Independent Spirit*, *New York Review of Books*, 12 June 1997, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/06/12/the-european-irishman/>. This approach may also be observed in the 1956 essay "Mr Pfeffer of Sarajevo", which addresses the 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by focusing on the Sarajevan Croatian and Catholic magistrate who presided at the trial of the assassins.

75 Hubert Butler, untitled notebook, *Butler Papers*, 10304/532, p. 9.

76 Butler, "Escape from the Anthill", *Balkan Essays*, p. 314.

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