
Commentary: Alan Clayton



A Scottish activist visits America

I was only 16 years of age when I first visited the United States. At the time I was a young seaman and the experience of these weeks has stayed with me all my life. It was of course more years ago than I care to admit. This was just in the second decade after the war, when Europeans were still very much the poor cousins of Americans. We had just finished the disastrous years of war when all our energies were used in inventing and using ways of destroying each other and reducing the creative energy of centuries to degradation and rubble.

How prosperous and carefree so many Americans had looked then. Many had been involved in the war, of course, but the legacy of economic disaster did not seem so monstrous as it was on our side of the Atlantic. The huge cars, or automobiles as they always called them, seemed incredible. "Yank tanks," we called them, as much out of envy as of awe. The whole picture was one of bustle and industry, of commerce and confidence. At the docks at Newport News in Virginia, the dock workers were full of what we called "Yankee charm." Perhaps had they heard they might not have liked this particular term so bluntly expressed, but at that time, none of us really knew about the terminology surrounding the Civil War.

There were problems of course. The ugly head of racism was all around, but I never ever felt that it was as profoundly rooted and insidious as that which existed in the British colonies where the doctrine of "blacks don't have a soul" was always dominant—even though the degenerate Confederacy took hold of this evil doctrine and tried to institutionalize it in its Constitution.

So it was that during the Easter holidays this year I left for the U.S.A. on the invitation of some friends in the International Caucus of Labor Committees (ICLC) [the philosophical association founded by Lyndon LaRouche—ed.], to brief their activists on the political situation in Scotland and to assess how their philosophy and political insights could strengthen Scotland's struggle to free herself from bondage to the British state.

The first impression upon landing at Washington National Airport was very similar to the one I had with me from all those years ago. A member of the ICLC came to meet me at the airport, and as I was driven through Washington, everything seemed as comfortable and prosperous as I remembered

it. The roads were clean, the avenues broad, and the surrounding houses very prosperous indeed. There were very few "Yank tanks" on the road now I noticed, but I assumed this must be due to social rather than economic change.

Yet this image began to fade very quickly. The big houses in Northern Virginia that I remembered with youthful awe, were still there, but how dilapidated many had become! Courtesy suggested that I not make critical comments as a guest in someone else's country, but my driver issued an invitation to comment in the familiar American cadences—"Guess you must see some changes, huh?" Perhaps my reply was a little discourteous: "Can Americans no longer afford paint?" I asked. The driver seemed nonplussed. "You ain't seen nothing yet," he said.

The next day I was taken by some members of the ICLC to visit the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., an experience I enjoyed enormously, as the company consisted mainly of Australians. Scots and Australians never have much difficulty establishing a rapport. In the gallery, we discussed the works of Rembrandt and the Florentine painters of the Renaissance, whose idea of man as the living image of God (*imago viva Dei*), shines out of all their art. The concept is fundamental to the ICLC, as is the concept of the Christian humanist republic, particularly to Australians, Scots, Irish, and other peoples who, like them, have not yet freed themselves from the consequences of British colonial history.

I suppose it was on the day after that, that my youthful image of the United States began to really crack. I traveled from Washington to Philadelphia by Amtrak train, and the view from the window was not what I expected. Tumble-down suburbs, derelict steel works—had I fallen asleep on the train, or was this what I was really seeing? Sadly, it was the latter. So were all the things that the ICLC and its leading thinker, the jailed politician and academic Lyndon LaRouche, said really correct? Leveraged buyouts, junk bonds, asset stripping, the pursuit of profit unrelated to production. Could this have caused such a disaster? Does anyone in the United States actually produce anything any more, I wondered, or are they all driving each other around, selling each other ice cream, styling each other's hair, or drawing welfare checks, while the oligarchy gets richer and more powerful each day?

The last thing I would want to do is to sketch the ICLC's activists as subversives who hate their country and seek to destroy it. In fact, they have a patriotism which is infectious in its commitment and enthusiasm, and which made my own love of my beloved Scotland seem embarrassingly inadequate. I was taken to the historical shrines of the independence struggle and the battle for a republic which would shine as a beacon to all mankind. I saw the point where Washington crossed the Delaware on that wild Christmas of 1776 when everything seemed on the verge of being lost. I visited the British barracks at Trenton, captured by the patriots that night by the help of a great leader, the courage of ordinary Americans, and the grace of God. At Valley Forge, I visited the place where the weary and demoralized Continental Army camped the following Christmas when, again, the forces of colonial darkness seemed on the verge once again of triumphing. At Fort McHenry in Baltimore, I stood in the place where the forces of British imperialism attempted in 1814 to subject the young republic to its will and failed. Here it was that the flag flying over the fort unconquered after 24 hours of savage bombardment inspired an observer, Francis Key, to write of the "Star Spangled Banner" that flew over the fort that glorious morning, and which finally became the national anthem of the United States in 1931.

For myself, however, the most poignant moments were when I visited Independence Hall in Philadelphia and the nearby Liberty Bell. It was the day when our own general election results were coming across, and I felt utterly despondent at the failure of our Scottish National Party to make the massive electoral breakthrough that we expected. I remembered then that dark night at the Delaware crossing, the cruel and savage winter at Valley Forge, and took inspiration from that memory. I touched, as the public are permitted to do, the Liberty Bell. I'm a pretty big man, but I'm not ashamed to admit that I fought back the tears and said a "wee prayer" that God would give us the strength to overcome the forces of darkness here also and set our nation free.

Meantime, of course, all is not well in the United States either, and I wondered whether this generation of Americans had anything like the character of their magnificent forebears. The habits of British imperialism have infected your politics and your statecraft since U.S. involvement in the wicked Treaty of Versailles which punished Germany for daring to threaten British hegemony. The immoral invasion of Panama, the savage and wanton destruction of Iraq, the naked looting of people everywhere, including the poor in America herself, are a manifest betrayal of the principles for which the first citizens fought and died.

In American history, moments of darkness and crisis have produced great leaders. There were Washington, Lincoln, and Kennedy, who was not allowed to see his vision through, and since whose death the space projects have been replaced by projects for war and domination. I have become increasingly convinced that the leader capable of lifting

America back to being the moral beacon to the peoples of the world, is Lyndon LaRouche. He is of course in prison, denigrated as a criminal, a crank, a crook, a plain old-fashioned nut, but what is new in that? Read the history books, and find what some were saying about George Washington when they tried to remove him from command of the Continental Army. LaRouche is a paranoid, they say! Well, so was Washington when he insisted that his personal bodyguard at Valley Forge consist solely of Virginia landowners.

It was a memorable visit, and I hope more Scots, indeed many more Europeans, can travel to the United States—certainly, LaRouche's ideas have a power to motivate very ordinary people in a way that I have never, ever seen in the 30 years or so I have been active in politics. I trust the philosophy and ideas spread here, because they are taken from the greatest moments and the greatest people in all of human history, and made relevant to the needs of our time. They can lead to a true "Europe des nations" [Europe of the Fatherlands] as Charles de Gaulle saw it, and help Scotland find her place there. I for one, will be doing whatever I can to see that we in Scotland and in Europe, grasp the vision with all the will and determination of which we are capable.

The author is an activist in the Scottish nationalist movement. He was one of the first members of the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq.

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