

LIVERPOOL TALK

CHARLEY'S WAR

A CHALLENGE TO THE REVISIONIST SPIN ON THE GREAT WAR

Charley is working class hero, an ordinary, not very bright kid who joins up – underage - because he believes in King and Country.

He appeared in a comic called Battle at the end of the 70s and into the 80s. The comic sold 140,000 copies a week. CW was the number one story which was astonishing. Boys – aged 8 – 14 – preferred a fiercely anti-war story to the other regular war stories.

CW pre-dated and covered similar ground and themes to

WAR HORSE.....

BIRD SONG

and the MONOCLED MUTINEER.

Today it's regarded by most professionals and by academics as the greatest ever British comic strip. It's certainly the story I'm most proud of writing

It owes much of this to Joe's art,, to his extraordinary passion and detail that draws the readers in and never lets them go.

It began on

THE SOMME

It also featured life on

THE HOME FRONT

VERDUN - his friend in the French army. Because it's vital to break down our anglo-centric view of the war.

YPRES

THE BRITISH INVASION OF RUSSIA.

We often hear about the German army's atrocities in Belgium at the beginning of the war Over 6, 000 civilians murdered., Forced labour. Looting. But we NEVER hear about tidentical British atrocities such as in Russia at the end of the war. This is what all States, all soldiers do when they invade and occupy other people's countries.

This myth that the British State is different and is a force for good is at the heart of the Revisionist Spin on the Great War. It's where the Spin begins.

We are told over and over agan that we are the good guys. It usually starts with comics , which was why CW had such a profound effect on its young readers.

And that's why I'm focussing on it.

These are contemporary and authenticated accounts of the british invasion of Russia:

"the British soldiers behaved like wild beasts, The Russian school girls were molested and maltreated by the gentlemen of honour – English officers. In one school 80 girls were pregnant at one time, many of them suffering at the same time from syphilis. When their diseased condition was discovered, they were deliberately shot in the interests of public safety.

When the British feared a White Russian company might mutiny, they shot one in ten without trial.

When Russian Laplanders complained at losing their houses to British soldiers the British "democracy savers, liberty lovers and small people protectors" executed five inoffensive Laplanders and left their bodies to rot in the swamps.

I went as far as I could in a children's comic, showing a village being burnt by the British in order to save it.

CHARLEY ON THE DOLE IN 1933 The saga concluded with an impoverished Charley on the dole. Still believing in King and Country.

But in the 80s there were lots of anti-war books around. WW1 was acknowledged – back then, back then – to be a truly evil war, with questionable origins, incompetent, callous British generals and pointless slaughter.

Back then there were books with on titles like British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One by John Laffin.

CW was almost stating the obvious.

I knew there was more – I knew Britain and France were trading arms with Germany during the war for example – but it was pre-internet and I couldn't find the details. So my series came to an end.

CW was reprinted this century in ten volumes to critical acclaim. It's also reprinted in France and Italy.

The art is currently a major exhibition at the Great War Museum in Meaux, the French equivalent of the Imperial War Museum. It's been optioned as a TV drama series – Company Pictures – altho I doubt it will end up on the screen.

CW inspired countless readers to become history teachers or history lecturers. Or museum curators – like the curator of the Tank Museum in Dorset.

But, to date, interestingly, not one historian. That I know of.

And my theory is they'd have trouble getting their books published now if they were influenced by CW.

Because it's against Revisionist Spin which in the 21st century occupies the centre ground in our perception of the war.

So who are the Revisionists? Many historians are ex-military and have close links to the State, like Professor Gary Sheffield and Professor Brian Bond. So Military men are shaping the public's minds today and telling them a huge military disaster was a great victory.

Other Revisionists are media pillars of the State – like Jeremy Paxman and Sir Max Hastings.

Does it matter?

(1) Of course. If WW1 is legitimised, it legitimises subsequent wars. It's Orwell's 1984 statement: Those who control the past control the future.

(2) It matters because we have a duty to our ancestors that the truth is widely known of how they were betrayed and murdered

It doesn't stop us honouring the Fallen. On the contrary. When we know the truth our hearts reach out to them even more.

How does the State Spin work? – because it is the State who are behind the Revisionists. One way is to have TV docudramas - like The Somme – From Defeat to Victory.

The other is not to show anything anti-war.

So to date in this anniversary , as far as I'm aware, State television hasn't shown:

Oh, what a Lovely War

Monocled Mutineer

Or even Black Adder.

(Not to mention films like Paths of Glory)

Instead, there's Passing Bells which is well meaning, has a nice message but is very, very safe and not a hint of controversy.

I believe The State is threatened by the examples I've given, so it's worth looking closer at them,

*OWALW

This directly inspired CW. Especially that final scene.

The Revisionists hate it not just because it's anti-war, but because it's anti-authority and anti-officer. They say it's the voice of the working class attacking their rulers. And they're right.

If you want to find the old battalion
I know where they are, I know where they are
They're hanging on the old barbed wire

A Sandhurst lecturer criticised CW because he said OWALW was produced by that notorious leftie Joan Littlewood.

What he neglected to say was that OWALW was inspired by that other notorious leftie Alan Clarke and his book the Donkeys: Clarke's name for the Generals.

The Sandhurst lecturer also criticised OWALW and CW as really being about Vietnam War and thus irrelevant to a modern audience.

I watched the new stage production in January and it was packed with an audience young and old, from all backgrounds.

The new version also included a new sequence with extensive details of the British government trading arms with the German government during the conflict.

The Revisionists have never responded to this most serious allegation. And they should. Because it's clearly a crime committed by the State.

* MONOCLED MUTINEER

The British army mutiny in 1917 was heavily featured in CW.

The TV drama was savagely criticised by Tory MPS for spreading sedition, even revolution.

The Revisionists claim the book is a work of fiction and the authors don't quote their sources. Yes. They do. The name and address of at least one primary source is quoted clearly in the text.

The Revisionists also claim that the red railway flags waved by the British mutineers were just co-incidence. So they mean nothing. They could have been green flags.

The BBC claim, according to the Times, that they didn't know they had the rights to show Monocled Mutineer. I gather they do now. But I doubt we'll ever see it again.

BLACK ADDER

*I suspect it's Black Adder that Jeremy Paxman is referring to when he says in the conclusion of his tv series on the Great War how unfair it is that we make jokes about Upper Class Twits.

The gentlemen of honour – **English officers.**

Or perhaps he meant Haig whose Upper Class Twit remarks include "We seem to be fighting against the laws of nature in trying to keep alive races who are obviously of an inferior kind."

I believe Pre=Revisionist historian Denis Winter had it right when he said " put bluntly, the nobility and the gentry used the old army as a dumping ground for their stupid children. "

A NEW CHARLEY'S WAR

As I became aware of Revisionism in the 21st century and its distortion of the truth for the anniversary years, I thought I have to write a NEW Charley's War-style story really because no one else seems to be challenging them.

I found an artist DAVID HITCHCOCK

We began with a warm up project on GENERAL HAIG

An adaption of DEAD MAN'S DUMP by the Bantam soldier ISAAC ROSENBERG. Answering Roseberg's agonised question – who is responsible for this horror>

The images tell us who.

The Revisionists like to suggest that it's the loony left who are against General Haig, so it's worth saying at this point that

It was Oxford University students who defaced a painting of General Haig with the words

“Murderer of one million men.”

But the State is desperate to reinstate him.

So you have an astonishing spate of 21st century revisionist books about Haig

Haig, architect of victory (2006) Haig - the Good Soldier. (2007) Haig – a Reappraisal (2009) The Chief (2011)

It's endless. So if you're an historian and you want to get into print – write a book about what a great man Haig was.

I've read two of them very carefully. They're not convincing.

But I believe the State has issued the order – the public must believe in General Haig.

So we can no longer have Haig telling Captain Blackadder to put underpants on his heads, pencils up his nose and go wibble wibble

I also put a proposal together BROTHERS IN ARMS This time a regular soldier who is in the Retreat From Mons. And feature his relationship with other soldiers

including a German and a Russian. And his younger brother a CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

As I researched it, I came across all kinds of new information not available in the 1980s . And was really disturbing.

I'll restrict myself to three examples which I intend to work into my new anti-war story

I'd featured the war time profiteers in CW. Like this scene "Feed the Guns, my boy!"

But now I had evidence of Extensive trading with the enemy which makes a mockery of the State's claim of a noble sacrifice. Binoculars and rubber. That's in Adam Goodchild's excellent To End All Wars.

2) The widespread supply of Cocaine to the troops : "Forced March" by a modern pharmaceutical company. Conny Braam describes how neutral Holland was supplying all the warring nations with cocaine.

3) But the most chilling information was that Germany was not responsible for the war. That it was Britain and Sir Edward Grey who was responsible.

Grey is at the heart of the Revisionist spin. We HAVE to believe he is a model of virtue. If we found out the truth, then it's all over.

That's why it's endlessly drummed into us with that lights going out remark that he was a tragic gentle P.G. Wodehouse Edwardian gentleman, who when he wasn't fishing or bird watching was a "lover of truth", with a sense of fair play, who burst into tears at the prospect of war according to Jeremy Paxman

In fact he was a deceitful British Machiavelli.

The proof can be found in ten minutes on the internet by reading the original pamphlets of that most distinguished Liverpoolian E. D. Morel, famous for his expose of the millions enslaved and killed in the Congo by Gallant Little Belgium

Morel was regarded as The greatest investigative journalist of his time.

During WW1, he expertly exposed the Secret Diplomacy that Grey used to create the conflict. Its unequivocal.

It's frighteningly similar to how Blair drew Britain into invading Iraq

Morel states, in a manner so relevant to our own times:

“The only consideration given to public opinion was how best to throw dust into its eyes. Lord Grey accomplished this task to perfection. When war was decided upon it was not decided upon by the house of Commons or the electorate but by the concurrence of Ministers and ex- Ministers”

It's hardly surprising that you won't find Morel, or Trading with the Enemy, or the issuing of cocaine to the soldiers in the works of the Revisionists.

But what's more disturbing is that you're unlikely to find these truths in their opponents books. The opponents – with a few exceptions – are the “Loyal Managed Opposition”. I've watched these notable historians in action. Everyone argues “passionately” but only within agreed safe terms of reference. It's not silo thinking. It's an act.

Any genuinely critical books of the conflict are simply not reviewed. For example, the brilliant Hidden History series by Docherty and McGregor which reveals how Britain and France in a secret military alliance with supposedly neutral Belgium. How the Dardanelles campaign was **designed to fail** to stop Russia getting Constantinople, and how British torpedos were supplied to German U boats to sink British shipping.

So that's why I have to get SUCH stories into my new series.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE REVISIONISTS.

So it looks like the Revisionists –the State - has won

But it's overlooked one important factor in its attempt to suppress the truth.

Ordinary people

We see it with The Great War TV BBC TV series – that was watched by 8 million people in the 1960s, and is unlikely to be shown again today.

Whatever its faults, it's an unrelenting grim portrayal of mass murder by the State.

The Revisionists don't like it. They believe that's when this whole anti WW1 war movement started. Blame it on the 60s. They lament that the audience only looked at the horrific images and ignored the commentary by early Revisionist John Terraine ably assisted by a young Max Hastings. Max Hastings who recently

claimed in a debate that Britain gained nothing from ww1 “except some worthless colonies”

Like oil-rich Iraq.

The Revisionists say “the series mainly served to **confirm** the **myths** which Terraine and some of his colleagues had **hoped** to demolish or modify”

8 million people made up their own minds, disagreed with Mr. Terraine, and thankfully saw the old lie. **Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori.**

Wilfred Owen whom the Daily Mail significantly on November 10 this year castigated as a coward, an opportunist and alleged he had an unhealthy liking for young boys.

So people get the message – this is the kind of deviant who challenges the State:

The Revisionists never give up. Even with the Last British Tommy – Harry Patch. Media tried to make it look like he stood for the the State.

Tony Blair has a photo opportunity with him.

But they cut out everything Harry said.

And he said

That Armistice Day was nothing but a show of military force.

His lewis gun team had a pact not kill unless for survival. That’s a court martial offence.

His advice to young men today? “Don’t join up.” That was whooshed.

And his view on the conflict?

“Organized mass murder. “

If Harry ,who was there, is right then it makes Haig, Grey, and the other leaders “War Criminals “and their paintings need not defacing but turning to the wall.

You wouldn’t expect to see paintings of Goebells and Goering on display in a German national gallery today.

I was signing CW at a Paris convention a couple of weeks ago and I watched a new generation of readers – boys and even some girls – picking the book up out of curiosity, starting to read it, getting into the story and then dragging their dads over to buy it for them. Just as they do in Britain.

And I hope that some of those new CW readers will grow up to continue to challenge the Revisionists Spin.

It's necessary because the Terrible Lies we're being told in these Anniversary Years that we're struggling to believe are festering in our National Subconscious. We sense instinctively none of it is true, none of it makes sense. So we're not at Peace.

Somewhere in the the back of our minds, we've always known We're Not The Good Guys.

The State has to acknowledge the war crimes it committed against its own people so we can have closure.

Alan Bennett said this in the History Boys

all the mourning's veiled the truth. It's not "lest we forget," it's "lest we remember."

I hope we do.

