

- [Putin - Czar of the New Russian Expansionist Empire](#)
- [Obama the Empty Gong](#)
- [Irish American Election - the role of beer](#)
- [Peruvian Lady Godiva](#)
- [Issue 181's Comment to Cyberspace](#)
- [Quotes for Issue 181](#)

Putin - Czar of the New Russian Expansionist Empire

“That which we call an empire by any other name would smell as foul.”

(to bastardise Shakespeare and Juliet for the second time in six months)

Even as Russia deplores the internationally endorsed breakaway of Kosovo province from Serbia, Russia’s military invasion aimed at breaking two provinces away from the sovereign democratic country of Georgia, should really come as no surprise. One might have thought that a breakaway province was either good or bad. But Russia and its leadership have, over the centuries, never been able to resist the drug of imperialism, and it still intoxicates today, more headily than vodka. Thus

- if provinces can be detached from an ex-Soviet state now successfully implementing Western democratic freedoms (Georgia) it’s “good”,
- but to break away from within Russia’s sphere of influence and friendship (Slavic, Orthodox Serbia) is “bad”.

Russia, like that other Security Council big power China, has never allowed any piffling interference such as “international law” to stand in the way of what it wants to do. That is something for countries like America and Britain to worry about and be eternally castigated over.

In the long years of the cold war, there was only one kind of imperialism that the world heard about – Western imperialism, or its constituents such as American imperialism, British imperialism, French imperialism.

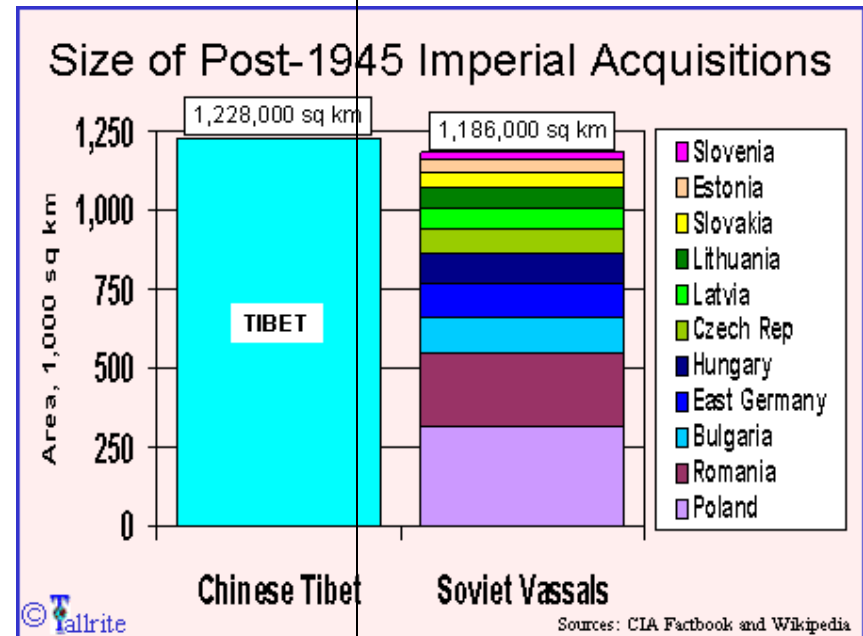
And who were the commonest utterers of these curious, pejorative phrases – none other than the two most dedicated totalitarian imperialist powers of the age, the Soviet Union and China, aided and abetted by countless “useful idiots” (to misquote Lenin) in the West and elsewhere.

The Soviet Union was comprised of what is now known as Russia, plus an array of neighbouring countries that it managed to acquire in the rubble of the Second World war. Thus were the Baltic states and eastern Poland subsumed, against their will, into becoming an integral part of a foreign “country”, whilst swathes of Eastern Europe, without the consent of their populations, ended up as de-facto vassal states of that country. The

Romans would recognize the Soviet Union for what it was – an old-fashioned empire, run by the emperor (Stalin and his successors) in the Kremlin, for the sole benefit and satisfaction of him and his cronies.

China was and is, in essence, no different. It has been an empire since time immemorial comprising territory and

peoples with alien languages and cultures, acquired through mainly military means. Yet notwithstanding the formal end of imperial rule in 1912 under Emperor Puyi of the Qing dynasty, it has remained an empire in all but name, for it has released none of its acquired territories. Moreover, after the Communists came to power in 1949 its imperialist expansion resumed under the all-powerful de-facto Emperor, Mao Tse-Tung, when the following year he



conquered and occupied Tibet, a massive piece of real estate bigger than all eleven

countries gobbled up by the Soviet Union in 1945 combined.

By contrast, America has never been a recognisable empire, while Britain, France and other European nations spent the early post-war decades divesting themselves of their imperial acquisitions in a massive liberation movement that swept across Africa and Asia.

That is the irony of imperialistic Soviet and Chinese leaders propagandising about so-called Western imperialism.

The Soviet Empire collapsed in 1990 following economic impoverishment brought on by gross administrative incompetence and by trying to match America's arms build-up of the 1980s, coupled with a string of peoples' revolts starting in Poland. The vassal states broke free, as did several constituent Soviet states: the nations in the Baltic and in the Caucasus, as well as Ukraine and the Stans in central Asia.

What was left was today's Russian Federation. However it too is the result of imperial conquest back in Czarist days. Today it comprises 22 constituent republics, from Adyghaya to Udmurt, each with its own flag, anthem, history,

traditions and often language, each supposedly a "voluntary" member, though the populations have never been asked. And each is headed by a chief executive or governor appointed by ... the Kremlin.

Most are members of the "federation" because they were swallowed up by Russia in its ever-expanding and colonising empire of the 16th century (Czar Ivan the Terrible) and onwards, either through military conquest or focused marriages or both. Indeed, Russia was proud to call itself the Russian Empire until the Communists overthrew the Czar in 1917.

The Reds loved the concept but hated the name, so they called their inherited empire a "union" and in due course annexed or subjugated those eleven European nations. In recent years it has become clear that the latest Russian leadership also loves the empire concept but prefers the name "federation" as it sounds, well, friendlier. And indeed was friendlier to its own people and to the rest of the world in the Boris Yeltsin days when it tried to embrace, however clumsily, constitutional democracy and individual freedom for the first time in its history.

But that has changed dramatically under Vladimir Putin, truly an old-style Czar, whether he calls himself

president or prime minister. A one-time KGB boss, he was gifted the Russian presidency by a barely compos mentis Boris Yeltsin on the eve of the new millennium. No-one really knows why, but there are suggestions that in exchange Putin agreed not to pursue Yeltsin for financial shenanigans.

Mr Putin lost no time in flexing muscles, exerting authority and centralising power.

A dreadful, unsolved bombing of apartment blocks in Moscow provided him with a flimsy excuse to mercilessly flatten Grozny and much of Chechnya, with no regard for human rights, for daring to seek independence.

He pretty soon reversed many of Yeltsin's democratic reforms; in particular, powerful regional governors were no longer to be elected by the people they would serve, but appointed by himself.

Troublesome individuals were assassinated, whether journalists exposing Russian misbehaviour in Chechnya such as Anna Politkovskaya, or outspoken critics in exile like Alexander Litvinenko. Wealthy businessmen with political aspirations were ruined, notably the boss of Yukos, Russia's most professional and ethical oil company, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, now banished interminably to Siberia on manufactured charges of tax evasion and fraud.

As former components of the Soviet Empire such as Ukraine became more democratic and opted to cosy up to the West, Mr Putin showed his displeasure and power by cutting off gas supplies, a move that had repercussions throughout the Russian gas supply chain that stretches across Europe.

This was all in keeping with his appalling observation that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century" and his obvious desire to recreate that benighted empire. That's one reason he resurrected the Soviet Union's anthem extolling "Communism's deathless ideal", an admittedly stirring musical ditty which had supposedly been consigned to the dustbin after the collapse.

Russia's invasion of Georgia finally makes clear the objectives of Czar Putin. It is no less than to expand the ancient Russian Empire to once more engulf as many fragments of the Soviet Empire lost in 1991 as possible. The reasons are twofold.

- First and foremost to restore former Russian glory and pride.
- Secondly to acquire millions of additional Russian citizens to make up for the almost a million a year that are currently self-extinguishing through age, ill-health, vodka, net emigration, abortion and an abysmal,

population-destroying fertility rate of just 1.3 babies per woman.

The converse of this imperialism is of course Russia's terror at the thought of its own fragmentation, with Chechnya but the first in line of subject countries yearning to escape the Russian yoke. And it explains its horror that Kosovo has successfully broken free of friendly Serbia, setting a dangerous anti-Russian precedent, which its own 22 constituent "republics" have been watching carefully, many wondering when their own chance of independence might come.

Meanwhile, Georgia was just the



first step in Russia's new imperialistic march, conveniently facilitated by President Mikhail Saakashvili's intemperate decision to attack Georgia's South Ossetia enclave in a vain and violent attempt to reclaim it.

Already, Russia has recognized the "independence" of both South Ossetia and Georgia's other Russophile enclave Abkhazia. It is surely only a matter of time before they are both reabsorbed into the new Russian Empire.

Then look around Russia's borders and speculate who might be next on the Russian Empire's menu. For instance, Ukraine has eight million ethnic Russians plus a wonderful port in Sevastopol which houses Russia's fleet under a lease agreement expiring in 2017. Is it conceivable

- either that Ukraine, long oppressed under Russian hegemony, will extend this lease,
- or that Russia will allow its navy to be unceremoniously ejected in 2017?

Most of the former Soviet states have big Russian populations,

largely the result of forced colonisation to embed them better into the erstwhile Soviet Empire. Such territories, bordering on the current Russian empire, are therefore tempting targets for expansion. It is unreasonable to expect Czar Putin not to explore ways to reabsorb them, by fair means or foul.

Russian imperialism is undoubtedly the new realism the world has to get used to. There are only two responses to it:

1. either accept it as unstoppable short of nuclear war,
2. or pull every non-military non-nuclear lever available – diplomatic, financial, technological, sporting.

But has the West got the stomach for the second alternative?

What Rumsfeld derisively called "Old Europe" made a wobbly start, but "New Europe" further east, which knows from bitter experience exactly what being under a Russian imperial thumb is like, did not. The Czechs and the Poles rapidly signed up to America's anti-missile system, ostensibly aimed at Iran. The Baltic and Ukrainian leaderships rushed to express their support for Georgia and its territorial integrity. This seemed to stiffen the spines of "Old Europe" somewhat and threats followed of excluding Russia from bodies such as the G8 and WTO and other measures.

For the thought of constant expansion of Czar Putin's modern Russian Empire is just too awful to contemplate for the tens of millions of independent citizens that this would place under subjugation. Everyone has a moral duty to resist, object, cry "foul".

For foul indeed is this new imperial enterprise.

Obama the Empty Gong

The more I read about and watch Barack Obama, the more I am reminded of Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, 13:1:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am but an empty gong or a clashing cymbal."

With his soaring rhetoric, Mr Obama certainly speaks with "the tongues of men and of angels", but it is unfair to suggest he lacks love. He clearly loves his family and has many friends. And it is after all not he but his wife who has trouble with the concept of loving America.

But the talk of "an empty gong or a clashing cymbal" strikes a chord, so to speak, with me.

Even after more than a year of vigorous campaigning it is impossible to know what he would actually do were he to be elected. Not that he hasn't told us, he has told us plenty, but he keeps telling us different, contradictory stuff. So what are

people supposed to believe?
Does he even know himself what he believes?

- Is he for unconditional talks anywhere anytime with Iran or not?
- Does he want to pull out of Iraq regardless of what happens or does it depends on circumstances?
- Is he for NAFTA or against it?
- Does he love business or hate it?
- Is Jerusalem to be undivided or separated?
- Does he respect the white grandma who raised him or despise her as a racist?

Over the long campaigning months, his uplifting speeches and (rare) debates and interviews have at different times adopted both sides of these questions, and many others, in what almost amounts to Orwellian doublespeak. His big nomination speech last week didn't add much light, and for much the same reason. For example, how long will it be before he "*clarifies*" what he means by, say, his trumpeted tax cuts?

So let's see if what we can learn about him from other aspects of his life sheds any light. Views about people are often formed by what they have achieved in their lives.

But Mr Obama's career before this campaign has thrown up no accomplishments of note, other than two biographical books that are, admittedly, earning him millions of dollars, though more because of his rock-star status than their content.

- He began his working life as something called a "*community worker*", but no-one ever explains what that means, and if he had left a legacy you can be sure we would have been told about it.
- He then lectured on law at the University of Chicago Law School but published not a single piece of academic work, which is most unusual for someone termed a professor as he apparently was.
- He was elected a two-term senator in Illinois with another term in the federal Senate, but without sponsoring any legislation of significance. In the latter forum, his voting record last year placed him as the 100th most left wing senator out of a hundred.

So you certainly can't evaluate him by his achievements.

An "*empty gong*"?

So how about the people he mixes with? They say you can judge a man by the company he keeps. But some of Mr Obama's friends (that we know about) look decidedly odd.

- Racist, America-hating pastors Jeremiah Wright and Michael Pfleger.
- Unrepentant "*Weather Underground*" terrorists Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers - about whom the Obama campaign is trying to suppress
 - a Youtube video reminding us that Mr Ayers tried to blow up the Capitol, and
 - a fascinating 70-minute interview with Stanley Kurtz about the murky Obama/Ayers relationship.
- Rashid Khalidi, an Israel-hating supporter of Palestinian terror.
- Property developer, Obama fundraiser and convicted fraudster Tony Rezko.

These are the kinds of people he likes to hang out with, so what does that tell us about the future behaviour and sympathies of a President Obama? Anyone can make a mistake by choosing a friend who turns out to be a knave. But

six of them? Then, contrast this motley, awkward and embarrassing coterie of buddies with his intoxicating speeches.

A "*clashing cymbal*"?

Extraordinary oratory; flip-flopping policies; accomplishment-free; dodgy company. That to me is Mr Obama. A handsome but empty shell which makes a pleasing noise, along the lines described by St Paul.

But you be the judge. In fact here's a better idea. Let the American people be the judge this coming November.

Full Disclosure: I have no vote

Irish American Election - the role of beer

The Irish consider Ireland to be the 51st American state (though not while George W Bush is in charge, obviously) but are unable to understand either the election process or why the Irish aren't allowed to vote in it. In this context, the following e-mail has been doing the rounds in Ireland and parts of the US.

"We here in Ireland can't figure out why you people on the other side of the Atlantic are even bothering to hold an election in the United States.

"On one side, you had a pants-wearing female lawyer, married to another lawyer who can't seem to keep his pants on, who just lost a long and heated primary against a

lawyer, who goes to the wrong church, and makes friends with convicted fraudsters and unrepentant terrorists, who is married to yet another lawyer, who doesn't even like the country her husband wants to run!

"Yet on the other side ... you have a nice old war hero whose name starts with the appropriate 'Mc' terminology, married to a good looking younger woman, a blonde babe who owns a beer distributorship!!

"What on earth are ye lads thinkin' over there in the colonies!"

Hat tip: Ted M in Uganda

Peruvian Lady Godiva

In the interests solely of prurience and cheap publicity, let me share this photo with you.

It shows a Peruvian model, dancer and singer called Lacey Zamudio, also known as Leysi Suarez. She recently got into hot water, but not for her Lady Godiva impression ("Godiva was a lady who through Coventry did ride / To show the local gentry there colour of her hide"). After all, it's not as if she is unclothed: look at that cowboy hat.

No, her sin is that she is using Peru's sacred flag as her saddle, for which she was recently arrested and faces charges that, amazingly, could put her in jail for up to four years for offending patriotic symbols, as this is apparently a violation of Article 344 of the Peruvian Penal Code. Judicial hearings began in August, though she has already said she is sorry.

When not out riding horses, her main job is singing and dancing for the all-girl pop-group Alma Bella, or Beautiful Soul, which seems to specialise in a lot of wiggling female backsides.

When the horse photo was splashed on the cover of D'Farándula



magazine it caused a political uproar because it was just days before the 187th anniversary of Peru's independence from Spain, a deeply solemn day in Peru apparently.

Ms Suarez herself believes she was in fact expressing a patriotic gesture: "*I haven't committed a crime. I love Peru and show it with my body and soul*".

I'd be on Lady Godiva's side on this one.

Oh, and the rest of that verse? It's from the first stanza of "The Engineers' Song".

"And the only one to notice that Godiva rode a horse Was the local dipsomaniac an engineer of course".

Full disclosure: I am an engineer, though not from Coventry nor (quite yet) a dipsomaniac.

Issue 181's Comment to Cyberspace

Only one minor scribbling during the past few weeks when I have been out of action.

- Barack slips away as 'Obama fatigue' sets in
To: Sunday TimesOnline
Has anyone any

idea what "community worker" and "community service" actually mean? Apparently this is what Mr Obama did before he became a senator. To me it sounds like just hanging out.

Quotes for Issue 181

----- US ELECTION -----

Mr Obama plays race card

Quote: "*They're going to try to make you afraid of me. He's young and inexperienced and he's got a funny name. And did I mention he's black?*"

Barack Hussein Obama plays the race card.

His message is that those who oppose him, ie Republicans, do so solely because they are racists, for surely there can be no other explanation (such as his obvious incompetence).

I guess that makes me a racist too.

Mr Dean also plays the race card

Quote: "*We are an inclusive, accepting Party. If you look at folks of colour, and even women, they're more successful in the Democratic Party than they are in the White, uh, excuse me, in the [laughs] Republican Party.*"

Howard Dean, failed Democratic presidential nominee in 2004, plays the race card so beloved of Democrats,

by suggesting the Republicans are the “White Party”.

I guess he never heard of Colin Powell or Condoleeza Rice, George Bush’s notorious – in the sneering words of Harry Belafonte in 2002 – “house niggers”.

McCain smart remark

Quote: “As you may know, not long ago a couple of hundred thousand Berliners made a lot of noise for my opponent. I’ll take the roar of 50,000 Harleys any day.”

Republican US presidential hopeful Senator John McCain disparages Barack Obama’s huge rally of Germans in Berlin, at a McCain rally in South Dakota of all-American Harley-Davidson motorcycle fans

Quote: “You need to get your butts moving out of New Orleans.”

Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans prior to the arrival of Hurricane Gustav

----- R U S S I A N
I M P E R I A L I S M -----

Quote: “This is not 1968, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, where Russia can invade its neighbour, occupy a capital, overthrow a

government and get away with it. Things have changed.”

Condoleeza Rice on military clashes between Russia and Georgia.

Sadly, I don’t think she’s right. As argued above, Russia is attempting to revert to its Czarist norm of capturing and subjugating neighbouring countries.

Unless the West is prepared to vigorously resist this trend, such behaviour will become faits accomplis.

----- C H I N A -----

Quote: “I don’t think any other country in the world, apart from North Korea, could get such a quality of performance from its actors as we did.”

Zhang Yimou, a well-known filmmaker, in *Southern Weekend*, a Chinese newspaper, on the Olympics opening ceremony, which he directed.

Ah yes, the beauty of Communist totalitarianism. You can tell people what to do, and by God they do it. None of that uppity back-chat you get in a depraved democracy.

----- I R E L A N D -----

Quote: “A second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty will ‘ultimately’ be required.”

Dick Roche, Ireland’s Minister of State for European Affairs, expresses his profound contempt for the Irish electorate, the ultimate repository of Irish sovereignty, for its temerity in voting down the Lisbon Treaty against his advice.

Despairing of the inconvenience of democracy, this dilettantish Minister thinks the Irish should be forced to keep re-voting until they produce the “right” answer.

Quote: “There’s nothing big or clever about being stupid.”

Irish columnist Donald Clark bemoans the fact that people schooled in classics or arts will frequently brag that they know nothing about science or mathematics.

But scientists or mathematicians who confess ignorance of literature or the humanities are derided as ignorant nerds.