

The Admiral who admired Hitler:

Sir Barry Domvile, Nazism and early Historical Revisionism

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In 1947 an autobiography was published entitled *From Admiral to Cabin Boy*. It had been penned by a former British Navy Admiral, Sir Barry Domvile, shortly after he was released from internment in 1943. However, it was not a conventional set of memoirs. The author not only reflected on his career but also set out a type of political manifesto, which included a very conspiratorial view of history and the role of what he called 'Judmas'.

He explained: 'Judmas is my copyright title for the Judaeo-Masonic combination, which has been the principal disturbing factor in world politics for many a long day'. He added: 'It is a tragedy that the British people have been so ill-informed on this matter...'

Domvile claimed that he had once known nothing of 'the Jewish question' and the 'hidden Power at work behind the Government', but then his eyes had been opened to the 'mystery' a few years previously: 'I suppose it was Hitler's attack on Judmas that really started me thinking, and my personal experience with the 'Link' that made me realise the strength of the forces arrayed against my humble efforts'.

The reference to the 'Link' was significant. The Link was a rather secretive and highly controversial pro-Nazi group operating in Britain during the late interwar period. When war broke out in 1939, Domvile had deemed it prudent to suspend its activities. However, it was an organisation which Domvile still hoped to revive after the Second World War.

Admiral Domvile (1878-1971) was the founder and most important figure in The Link, which was created in July, 1937, as a 'non-party organisation' to 'promote good relations between the British and German peoples', and to ensure the two nations

did not end up in armed conflict. It is estimated that The Link had up to 1,000 direct members at its height, possibly more.

Domvile had an interesting background and moved in prominent circles. He had been the Director of Naval Intelligence up to 1930, President of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, in 1932-1934, and Vice-Admiral Commanding the War College. He finally retired with the rank of Admiral in 1936. In the summer of 1935 he had visited Germany, toured Dachau concentration camp, and spent three days on a shooting expedition with Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS. It is evident that Domvile had been very impressed with the new Nazi state. Furthermore, in 1936, and again in 1937, apparently at Hitler's personal invitation, Domvile attended the Nazi Party rallies at Nuremberg. He also visited Fascist Italy.

Interestingly, Domvile - who lived at Robins Tree, a large house on the Roehampton Vale side of Kingston Hill in Surrey - was one of the Governors of the Star and Garter Home for Ex-Servicemen in Richmond during the interwar period. In fact, as a Governor, Domvile had been present at many receptions held at the Home, including for some laid on for royal visits.

Described by MI5, the domestic Security Service, as 'fanatically anti-Jewish', Domvile had run The Link as a seemingly innocuous Anglo-German friendship association, but had become increasingly outspoken in his sympathy and support for Hitler and Nazism. Indeed, on occasions, his pro-Hitler sentiments were on very public display, even after the outbreak of war. According to MI5 files, for example, he upset residents in the Star and Garter Home in Richmond in 1940 by openly predicting that Hitler was 'going to win the war' and would soon be in the country, but that there was 'no reason to worry about it' because he would bring the Duke of Windsor over as King and 'everything would be much better than it now is'.

In fact, there had been two faces to Domvile and The Link in the run-up to the war: its public profile, where the emphasis was on promoting friendship, good relations and the avoidance of war between Britain and Germany, and a more private and obsessive side, where Domvile and the key 'inner circle' of Link activists took a markedly pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic line, bound up with conspiracy theory (such as a belief in the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*) and notably strong admiration of the German 'new order'. On occasions, these two lines blurred into each other, with Domvile and others publicly alleging that 'Judeo-Masonic' forces

were secretly working behind the scenes to create major rows between Britain and Germany to push the two countries into a new war.

Early in 1939, the group gained some national news coverage when questions were asked about The Link in Parliament, and there were claims that the group was receiving German money and disseminating Nazi propaganda in return. Moreover, The Link made the news again in August, 1939, when both local and national press stories reported that one member of the organisation's Council, Mr. C.E. Carroll, was 'furious' with Sir Barry Domvile when the Admiral had posed for newspaper photographers at his house, Robins Tree, with a picture of Hitler and a statuette of a storm-trooper in the background. Although Domvile closed The Link down temporarily when war broke out, he remained notably active in fascist circles, promoting the idea of a negotiated peace with Hitler.

In July, 1940, Domvile, along with his wife, was arrested at Robins Tree and interned under Defence Regulation 18B, as the British government was fearful that Domvile and other fascists could be potential 'Quislings' or collaborators in the event of a Nazi invasion. He was not released until July, 1943.

In the post-war period, Domvile soon re-emerged as an activist in anti-Semitic circles, corresponding with other like-minded extreme racists such as Arnold Leese (1878-1956). He also showed open support again for the anti-Semitic forgery *The Protocols* and remained on very friendly terms with a number of leading racists and anti-Semites in post-1945 Britain. He contributed articles to the rightwing journal *The Patriot* and also produced pieces for *Free Britain*, the publication of 'The Britons Publishing Society', a notoriously anti-Semitic organisation which had been around since 1919-20.

In July, 1946, Domvile gave an address to a meeting of the Duke of Bedford's revived 'British Peoples Party', a pre-war party which was relaunched after the war and lured a variety of fascists and other rightwing activists back into post-1945 extremist politics. Although his subject was 'Imperial Defence', Domvile inserted into his talk some coded terms very familiar to anti-Semites, claiming that the war had been 'merely a punitive expedition against a nation which had rebelled against the financial system'.

In truth, as Britain settled into post-war peacetime life and began the long process of reconstruction, Domvile became a leading conspiracy theorist and early 'historical

revisionist'. While he took care not to directly challenge the facts of the Holocaust too boldly in public, he embarked on a gradual and stealthy wearing down and re-writing of the historical record, and sought to raise plenty of doubts in peoples' minds about how the leaders of the Third Reich had been treated by the Allies. Writing a letter on 'Nuremberg' to the rightwing journal *The Patriot* in November, 1946, for example, under the pseudonym 'Canute', Domvile claimed that Germany's 'principal offence was her effort to escape from the grip of international finance', and he asserted: 'The Nuremberg victims died bravely, and are more likely to survive in history as martyrs, than criminals'.

He appears to have grown in confidence as time passed. Again writing as 'Canute' on the aftermath of the Nuremberg Trials in *The Patriot*, in July, 1948, Domvile alleged: 'The unsavoury proceedings at Nuremberg which resulted in the prolonged execution by hanging of some of Adolf Hitler's leading associates have quickly passed into history: my principal impression of this travesty of justice was a deep regret that Britain should ever have lent countenance to such happenings'. In the same article, Domvile said he felt there was a 'sinister design' behind all this, and he recommended any doubters to study the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

Further stark evidence of Domvile's early contributions to the emergence of post-1945 historical revisionism by the far right was on display in his various articles written for *Free Britain*, the publication of The Britons between 1949-1958. This newsletter-style journal did not have particularly high circulation figures, and was clearly directed very much at those who The Britons called the 'Jew-wise', many of whom were already sincere believers. The journal urged readers to 'Make Britain British again!' and advocated a hard-line version of racism. Importantly, this may have given Domvile even more confidence to push his conspiratorial and revisionist ideas.

Thus, in October, 1950, for example, Domvile contributed a piece entitled 'Potential Treason', where he was critical of the two main political parties and referred to 'the alien blood-sucker' pursuing 'mischievous activities'. In the same month, Domvile complained to readers that British governments had in recent years 'mortgaged our independence to International Jewry' and now bleated 'Anti-Semitism' at 'any patriotic individual who endeavours to unmask their activities...'

Similarly, in May, 1951, Domvile's views were even more outspoken when it came to interpreting the recent past. He returned back to the topic of the Nuremberg Trials

and claimed: 'Today many people question the wisdom of these dubious proceedings; I hope sincerely that the time will come when all those who had any hand in this travesty of justice will be held in execration by their fellow-countrymen'.

Tellingly, Domvile's evolving historical revisionism also involved challenging the very basis of the previous war. In August, 1951, Domvile argued that the reason why Britain was in 'such a jam today' was 'because the years spent in destroying Germany and Japan were only successful from Stalin's viewpoint, in accordance with the One-World plan. By our insensate folly, the road was cleared both to East and West for the spread of International Communism, under the guidance of its Jewish masters'.

In April, 1954, in a piece penned for *Free Britain* on what Domvile called the progress of the 'One-World plot during the present century', he included a defence of Hitler, who had been 'in revolt against the One-World conception, and aimed at making his country independent of international finance and free to follow her own national bent'.

Domvile's role in helping to spread early historical revisionism in post-1945 Britain was especially on display in the December, 1954, edition of *Free Britain*. In a commentary entitled 'Revisionism', Domvile argued that 'Revisionists' were 'those courageous individuals in the United States who are trying to tell the historical truth about these stirring times'. In doing so, Domvile claimed, such individuals were 'endeavouring to counteract the effects on the public mind' of the versions of history published by the 'Court Historians'. He referred in particular to Harry Elmer Barnes (1889-1968), a historian who became one of America's leading early historical revisionists (and a Holocaust denier). Domvile ended his piece: 'So good luck to the revisionists, and may their views prevail in a world now being conditioned for further disaster...'

Given the crimes of the Nazis, and the subsequent public revulsion at the Holocaust, far right thinkers such as Domvile were naturally keen to downplay or eradicate the historical record; they were out to make history and its interpretation a kind of cultural battleground of ideas, where they could water down and 'revise' what the so-called 'Court historians' told the public, and push a far right version instead.

Unfortunately, although this revisionism remained on the margins for many years, Holocaust historians are witnessing something of a resurgence of such ideas.

Domvile's conspiratorial claims about history and the supposed 'secret forces' at work behind it have been 're-discovered' and are being espoused by activists on the far right again today.

Worryingly, some of his original pamphlets have recently been reprinted for sale to a new generation of rightwing extremists, individuals who are eager for a version of 'history' that reaffirms their current ideological zeal.

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