

**Russia:** On Nov. 14, 1999, the Russian Foreign Ministry filed a formal protest to Andrew Wood, Britain's Ambassador in Moscow, after two Russian television journalists were brutally beaten as they attempted to film a London conference, where bin Laden's International Islamic Front, Ansar as-Shariah, Al-Muhajiroon, and other Islamist groups called for a *jihād* against Russia, in retaliation for the Russian military actions in Chechnya.

One of the victims of the beating, ORT cameraman Alexandr Panov, told *Kommersant* daily that he was "very surprised at the indifference of the British government. Some of

the participants at the 'charity' event were people wanted by Interpol, but Scotland Yard, although evidently aware of their residence [in Britain], does not react."

On Nov. 10, 1999, the Russian government had already filed a formal diplomatic *démarche* via the Russian Embassy in London, protesting the attacks on the Russian journalists, and also the admissions by Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, the head of the "political wing" of the bin Laden organization, Al Muhajiroon, that the group was recruiting Muslims in England to go to Chechnya to fight the Russian Army. Bakri's organization operates freely from offices in the London sub-

## A century of British state-sponsored terror

In 1996, *EIR*'s coverage of the genocide in Africa, orchestrated and manipulated by the British Empire, with assistance from its modern-day pirates of raw materials cartels, included an excerpt from *Heart of Darkness*, the most famous work by Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) (see " 'Heart of Darkness': A Glimpse at Colonialism in Action," *EIR*, Jan. 3, 1997). Conrad's first-hand view of colonialism in Africa was based on his 1889 journey along the Congo River as master of the ship *Otago*, and is one of the most chilling indictments of colonialism that this author has ever read. It was this excerpt of *Heart of Darkness* that prompted me to look afresh at another of Conrad's books, *The Secret Agent* (New York: The Penguin Group, 1983 reprint), written in 1907 about terrorism, police agents, and imperial powers.

Conrad's powerfully written novel about political terrorism exposes the fact that *for more than 100 years*, the British have provided their territory as a haven for terrorists to plan attacks against other countries. As the accompanying dossier, delivered to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, indicates, in the past several years, the British Crown, the Parliament, and the government have shunned requests for cooperation from 11 countries where brutal terrorist actions and mass murder have proven to have been planned in London. International pressure on Britain has led to attempts to change the laws in the British Parliament, but these efforts have been shot down in long-winded aristocratic rhetoric about Britain's tradition of providing a haven for victims of human rights violations. In Conrad's book, the central incident revolves around an international conference where the British were refusing

to crack down against "political crimes." Such a conference did take place in 1898, in Milan.

*The Secret Agent* reminds us that terrorism is surrogate warfare, and a part of British imperial policy, which intelligence operatives call the "Great Game." Conrad focusses his plot, however, not so much on the British use of terrorism against other imperial powers, as on the attempt by the aristocratic "First Secretary" of another country's embassy to stage a spectacular terrorist act in order to give the British a taste of their own medicine, and shake them into signing an international convention against providing a haven for "political" criminals.

### The bombing of the Royal Observatory

Conrad's story, though a work of fiction, is rooted in a real incident, the bungled bombing of the Royal Observatory in Greenwich Park, London in 1894, according to Martin Seymour-Smith, who wrote an Introduction in 1984 to one Penguin edition of *The Secret Agent*. According to Seymour-Smith, the facts behind the real incident, known as the "Greenwich Bomb Outrage," were these:

"A young man called Martial Bourdin was found in Greenwich Park, on a hill near the Royal Observatory 'in a kneeling posture, terribly mutilated' on the evening of 15 February 1894. There had been an explosion; Bourdin had set it off, and in so doing had killed himself. He had blown off one of his hands, and his guts were spilling from his body; he died in hospital very soon afterwards. . . . Bourdin had a brother-in-law called H.B. Samuels, who edited an anarchist paper. Samuels was in fact, like Verloc [the main character in Conrad's book], a police agent and, again like Verloc, he accompanied his not very intelligent dupe to the park. Bourdin . . . in some way set off the explosive he was carrying, which was supplied by Samuels, acting as *agent provocateur*. . . . Anarchists were not responsible for the Greenwich Bomb incident; they were as frightened about it as they are in *The Secret Agent*."

urb of Lee Valley, where they occupy two rooms at a local computer center, and maintain their own Internet company. Bakri has admitted that “retired” British military officers are training new recruits in Lee Valley, before they are sent off to camps in Afghanistan or Pakistan, or are smuggled directly into Chechnya.

On Nov. 20, 1999, the *Daily Telegraph* admitted, following the release of the U.S. State Department’s updated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, that “Britain is now an international center for Islamic militancy on a huge scale . . . and the capital is the home to a bewildering variety of radical

Islamic fundamentalist movements, many of which make no secret of their commitment to violence and terrorism to achieve their goals.”

**India:** In December 1999, following the conclusion of the Indian Airlines hijacking, the Indian government protested the fact that British officials publicly stated that they would allow one of the freed Kashmiri terrorists, Ahmed Omar Sheikh, to return to London, because there “were no charges filed against him in Britain.” The British government, facing growing international pressure, apparently has backed down from this decision.

Conrad’s book captures the arrogant disdain that the oligarchy has, to this day, for the “common people.” In his story, the retarded brother-in-law of the oligarchy’s secret agent, Verloc, is killed in the bungled bomb incident. In grief, the victim’s sister apparently dies in a suicide, after killing her police-agent husband.

Conrad wrote in 1920 that he received much criticism for writing such a “gloomy” piece, and came under suspicion as an anarchist sympathizer. No doubt, the secrets revealed in the book, even under the guise of fiction, were troublesome for the British and other countries which were facilitating terrorist acts. The tumultuous times in which the book was written included the assassinations of leaders who supported national sovereignty and republican ideas, including U.S. President William McKinley, gunned down by one of the British network’s anarchists in 1901.

### Preparing for the 1898 Conference of Milan

In the following excerpt, at the opening, Verloc is meeting his controller, the mysterious Mr. Vladimir, who lectures him:

“You give yourself for an “agent provocateur.” The proper business of an “agent provocateur” is to provoke. As far as I can judge from your record kept here, you have done nothing to earn your money. . . .’

“Nothing!’ exclaimed Verloc, stirring not a limb. . . . ‘I have several times prevented what might have been—’

“ . . . Don’t be absurd. The evil is already here. We don’t want prevention—we want cure. . . . Isn’t your society capable of anything else but printing this prophetic bosh. . . ? Why don’t you do something? Look here. . . . You will have to earn your money. . . . No work, no pay. . . . When you cease to be useful you shall cease to be employed. Yes. Right off. Cut short. . . . You shall be chucked. . . .’

“ ‘What we want is to administer a tonic to the Conference in Milan,’ he [Vladimir] said airily. ‘Its deliberations upon international action for the suppression of political

crime don’t seem to get anywhere. England lags. This country is absurd with its sentimental regard for individual liberty. It’s intolerable to think that all your friends have got only to come over to—’

“ ‘In that way I have them all under my eye,’ Mr. Verloc interrupted, huskily.

“ ‘It would be much more to the point to have them all under lock and key. England must be brought into line. The imbecile bourgeoisie of this country make themselves the accomplices of the very people whose aim is to drive them out of their houses to starve in ditches. And they have the political power still, if they only had the sense to use it for their preservation. I suppose you agree that the middle classes are stupid? . . . What they want just now is a jolly good scare. This is the psychological moment to set your friends to work. I have had you called here to develop to you my idea.’

“And Mr. Vladimir developed his idea from on high, with scorn and condescension, displaying at the same time an amount of ignorance . . . which filled the silent Mr. Verloc with inward consternation. . . .’

“ ‘A series of outrages,’ Mr. Vladimir continued, calmly, ‘executed here in this country; not only *planned* here—that would not do—they would not mind. Your friends could set half the Continent on fire without influencing the public opinion here in favour of a universal repressive legislation. They will not look outside their backyard here.’ ”

The pathetic plot to entrap British public opinion is a miserable failure. The British Home Secretary covers up the entire affair; it seems that more than one of the members of Verloc’s anarchist cell are on the payroll of the British.

Seymour-Smith reports that in the real Conference of Milan in 1898, Britain refused to give up its role as “haven for the oppressed,” continuing to serve as the planning ground for terrorism for the next 102 years.

—Michele Steinberg