

*Preface*

A CASE FOR POLITICAL CONSCIENCE

This compilation of texts accompanies two films that I made that both look at the issue of migration, particularly to Europe and predominantly for the purpose of work. The scripts of both films take lines directly from three previously published texts that are reprinted here, in all cases news reports of different kinds. The film *Sin Papeles* (2005), paraphrases a report from the Irish Socialist publication *Workers Solidarity* and an anarchist e-mail bulletin from the group *A-Infos*. Both refer to a hunger strike protest conducted in a church in Barcelona in 2001 that resulted in eviction by the Spanish authorities yet led to securing papers to reside in the country for many of those not previously recognized. The later film *Atlantropa* (2009), re-contextualises a BBC news article that reports the occurrence of at least five deaths when the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on the North African coast was stormed by around 500 people from the Moroccan side hoping to gain entry to Europe.

Reprinting these text along side the films allows me to go further than to simply give a fuller acknowledgement to my sources. There was no mention that I could find of the hunger strike in Barcelona in 2001 in the English speaking main stream press and little in the Spanish press whilst researching *Sin Papeles*. I felt that crystallizing these texts in an alternative form to the media was important as was visualizing the separation barrier around Ceuta in making *Atlantropa*, which is made difficult by the policing that ef-

fectively functions as a form of censorship.

The three afore mentioned texts are accompanied by a further three that together, create a more informed context for the films and an insight into my influences and inspirations. Printing them alongside the films themselves also provides an opportunity to share a small part of the large body of research that has enthused me and informed the films in both pre- and post-production and provide further stimulation for any debate that I hope the films raise.

The briefest but in no way least influential of the further three texts printed here is a collection of excerpts from *The Fountains of Paradise* by Arthur C. Clarke. The excerpts from his book are the first literary mentions of the Gibraltar Bridge, which provided the setting for *Atlantropa*.

The protagonist of Clarke's novel is an architect named Morgan who shares many character traits with the real architect Herman Sörgel. Sörgel campaigned to damn the Straits of Gibraltar for nearly 30 years from the 1920's onwards, calling the project first Panropa then Atlantropa. An unpublished excerpt of the first English language biography of Herman Sörgel has been generously contributed by its author. I requested this section as it describes Sörgel's involvement with the Munich art scene out of which the Atlantropa project was dreamed and the beginning of Sörgel's relationship to Irene Villanyi who funded Sörgel's pursuit of the Atlantropa project with proceeds from her fine art dealership.

It has been suggested that the reason for Sörgel's inability

to persuade any government to realize his project was because his colonialist ideals had become unfashionable. In connecting Europe and Africa the objective of the Atlantropa project was to provide the former with resources by openly exploiting the latter, an idea that did not appeal to a post-war Europe that was giving up its African territories. I found this particularly interesting and somewhat ironic in respect of the contract to build a tunnel beneath the Straits of Gibraltar that was won by the Swiss firm Lombardi in 2006 and recent proposals to tap the Sahara for solar energy to provide Europe with electricity in the names of economic growth and environmentalism.

At the centre of this booklet is an essay by the film maker Stephen Connolly that came out of the depths of discussions we had about these two films in particular and film making in general. Connolly structures the essay using four essential motives for writing that are listed in a piece of writing by George Orwell titled *Why I Write*. I had quoted a few lines of this text in a prologue to the film *Sin Papeles*. This short passage fundamentally instructed me in the making of both films and has been used as the title for both Connolly's essay and this booklet.

Orwell's influence does not stop there as I have designed this booklet deliberately in the style of the many political pamphlets collected by Orwell that are now housed in the British Library. In the case of some of the content within this has not been difficult, as I have taken text from recent political publications that, although almost a century apart from those in the British Library, bear much the same aesthetic characteristic as their predecessors. This I have at-

tempted to retain in their appropriation.

In particular the cover layout of this print edition is taken from one pamphlet in the Orwell collection written by Aldous Huxley titled *WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? THE CASE FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE PEACE*. In the opening passage to this pamphlet Huxley describes three modes of ordinary human activity feeling, willing and thinking and explains:

“To be complete life must be lived simultaneously on all three planes. [...] In any important vital situation it is never enough to feel, never enough to will, never enough merely to think.  
We must do all at once.”

Huxley goes on to offer all those people that feel war is an “abomination” and will it to end, an intellectual justification to complement the other two modes of activity.

The organized violence of war continues today, which I believe to be as great an abomination still, but it is a different issue that my films address; the issue of involuntary migration is one that I feel has become as pertinent as ‘the case for a constructive peace’ was at the time Huxley wrote his pamphlet. It is not by coincidence that the people that writers such as Huxley and Orwell sought to represent were the greater majority or lower/working classes, often on the verge of poverty and not granted full status as citizens by being out-priced or out-lawed from many of the benefits of modern society as are many of the migrant labourers in this country today.

Migration is an issue we are numbed to by the repetition of media portrayal and migrants are stigmatised by their base and inhuman treatment in western states. In the UK concessions have only recently been considered on the imprisonment of families, including children, seeking refugee status despite the fact that this is routinely practised in contravention of the United Nations' conventions on Human Rights.

An audience's moral relation to a subject portrayed through a medium such as film is clearer when presented securely as a factual narrative or securely as a fictional one. We take the former for granted when receiving the news and trust that the reported information adheres to the unspoken ethical code of journalism. We are often reassured of the later while watching industrialised cinema by disclaimers reminding us that 'any similarity to actual events or persons living or dead is completely coincidental'. Reassured, as it is made clear 'where we stand', we are freed of the moral responsibility of considering 'our' position in relation to those subjects.

I have attempted to challenge these secure forms of representation by approaching the subject within these two film creatively. As an author there is a great weight of responsibility of what one does with factual accounts. I was very conscious of this weight throughout the making of both films, particularly in writing *Atlantropa* as a factual account of multiple fatalities is re-contextualised. In fictionalising fact I hoped not only to contribute to an existing debate about forms of representation as an author but also to insight reflection on one's position in relation to the

subject as audience.

In raising the issue of migration I am not calling for anything as drastic as a global open border policy as many activist groups are. Unlike the political pamphleteer I have not compiled these texts and produced these films with a distinct political ideal in mind. I do believe that in common with *THE CASE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PEACE* this compilation of films and texts constitutes thinking of Huxley's three modes of ordinary human activity and is a definite attempt to provide an intellectual compliment to feeling and willing. *Sin Papeles* asks specifically that we challenge denial and indifference and that we concede to the reality of sustained inequality that is exploited to maintain privilege so that we may will ourselves to action and progress from this 'vital and important situation'. *Atlantropa* is an attempt to throw into question the forms of rhetoric, such as that employed by the news, and charity organizations, that both informs us of this situation whilst relieving us of the moral obligation to act. If my case here is for a sustained and ideal situation, as a constructive peace was for Huxley, it is *A CASE FOR POLITICAL CONSCIENCE*, through art as in our feelings and determinations in life.

Samuel Stevens  
May 2010