

National Sovereignty



HUNGARY'S INDEPENDENCE is under attack. This is the fear that prominent sociologist, Frank Furedi, has expressed in a number of recent articles and speeches. His contention is that the right of Hungary to determine its own laws and practices with regard to social policy is being undermined by the European Union. In order to add an anti-imperialist flair to his argument he upbraids the Biden administration for interfering in Hungary's internal affairs. His current slogan appears to be "Neither Washington nor Brussels, but Budapest and the Nation!"

Frank's outlook is evidently based upon the concept of 'absolute sovereignty'. The problem with this view is that it implicitly rejects the limitations imposed upon national sovereignty by international law, notions of human rights, and the role of the United Nations in attempting to maintain the tension between

the sovereignty of nation states, and their responsibilities regarding universal rights.

Now emulating Gary Lineker's inappropriate comparisons, we can see that the race laws promulgated by Germany (1935) and Italy (1938) were the acts of sovereign states. Just as the treatment of Uyghurs by Beijing is an entirely internal Chinese affair. Tehran, also insists that it has the sovereign right to punish women and girls for allowing their headscarves to slip in public. Uganda too, has the freedom to uphold Ugandan traditions, colonial statutes, and cultural values, by imposing the death penalty on homosexuals, and then, in a liberal move, to reduce the penalty for same-sex acts, to merely life imprisonment.

Absolute sovereignty permitted the wholesale massacre of Huguenots by Roman Catholic mobs instigated by Catherine de Medici and Charles IX in Paris during the summer of 1572. The King in this case was as sovereign as his state, and his sovereignty was not violated by the interference of foreigners.

Since those olden days very few people, other than dictators and tyrants, have insisted upon their right to do anything they like to their own citizens within state frontiers. This is, of course, not always respected. Vladimir Putin insists on having it both ways. He rules against NGOs and international bodies seeking to defend the rights of homosexuals within the Russian Federation. Whilst Russian Gay rights campaigners, are engaged in an "illegal" and "unwarranted violation" of the rights of the Russian government and state. This doesn't stop Putin simultaneously waging wars of invasion and annexation in 'defence' of Russian-speakers in the sovereign states of Georgia and Ukraine.

However, the case of Hungary and prime minister, Viktor Mihály Orbán, is slightly different from Vladimir Putin's repression, because it focuses upon the democratic right of the government in Budapest to defend both, tradition, and the determination of

Hungarian parents to protect their kids. It is no doubt true that homosexual Pied Pipers are seeking to suborn Hungary's children and teenagers – leading them ineluctably away from time-honoured commitment to religion, family, state, and nation. Consequently, the struggle against queers and their foreign allies has become a key element in the defence of democracy and the state in Budapest. This is what Frank Furedi believes.



The authorities in Hungary have ordered children's booksellers to wrap books and media that depict homosexuality in "closed packaging". This is to ensure that bookstores conform to the new law forbidding displays of homosexual content to minors. Books which deal with homosexuality or transgender issues are banned in the vicinity of schools and churches because the government argues that sex education should be left to parents.

The age of sexual consent in Hungary is 14 (and 12 if the older person is 18 or younger) – despite these provisions the age of majority (adulthood) remains 18, below this age people are *minors*. This means that Hungarian adolescents and teenagers are deprived, by law, of any positive information or materials about homosexuality. It is akin to the UK law known as Section 28, which was on the books between 1988 and 2003. It had the effect of censoring much educational material, but under the

governments of John Major and Tony Blair it gradually became a 'dead letter'.

Frank is supporting Orbán's 'Clause 28' by fighting against the right of Hungarian teenagers to be well-informed about homosexuality. He argues:

Hungary is a sovereign nation with an elected Government, which is entitled to decide on educational policy for the children of its families. It is legitimate for individual countries to expect to raise their citizens according to their social and cultural norms.

It is, of course, entirely legitimate to criticise Hungary's law and to call into question its assumptions. But it is illegitimate to usurp the right of the Hungarian Government to implement laws that affect children's education. No outside body or institution has the competence or authority to question an elected Government's laws about teaching in childhood.

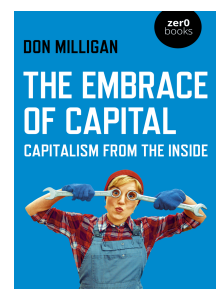
The most noteworthy thing about all this, is the way Frank insists that Viktor Orbán and his party, Fidesz, are democratic – it is almost as if he has failed to notice that Orbán has systematically destroyed opposition media in Hungary, and has been boldly developing what I would call an elective dictatorship, in the style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin. These 'democrats' ensure that they are re-elected by arresting opponents and hobbling the opposition – always assuming that earthquakes and military defeats do not intervene.

Secondly, Frank's commitment to the right of Hungary's government to implement anti-gay laws is astonishing from a man we all thought defended universal enlightenment values. His current position does mean that in principle he defends the blasphemy laws of Pakistan and the 'modest' clothing imposed on Iranian women by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I have no doubt that Frank will suggest that we have the right to criticise a democratic sovereign state, but not to “usurp” the right of its government to legislate on educational or cultural issues. The “usurping” in question here is a reference to the institutions of the European Union who are unhappy with Hungary’s anti-gay laws. But this is by-the-by. In every circumstance it is surely right to defend the equality, in law, of homosexual and heterosexual behaviour. It is even right to defend the ability of trans activists to argue for their absurd insistence that *subjective* ‘gender’ rivals *objective* ‘sex’, when it comes to deciding who is a man/male and who is a woman/female. Surely, free speech, *no ifs no buts*, means nothing less. Yet, Frank, a former comrade of mine, is endorsing Orbán’s suppression of opinion.

The sovereignty of states and insisting upon the absolute freedom of particular polities to describe and circumscribe the rights of their citizens according to the religious and cultural traditions of the realm in question, must surely give way to the notion of universal rights, the development of gay liberation, and freer sexual arrangements for everybody striving to be free of moral codes that support the values and interests of reactionary elites.

It may be true that homosexuals are traditionally as unpopular as Romani or Jews in Hungary. It may be that the masses in both town and country can’t stand the thought of their children being told about homosexuality, but this is no reason at all to side with reaction. We know full well that at the very least one in twenty people in the country are homosexuals – that is just under half a million people who need to have their rights and lives respected and defended by the state. So, let’s hope that Frank and his think-tank pals over at MCC Brussels begin to shape-up and start arguing in defence of gay rights in Hungary



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