

# Irish Foreign Affairs

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“Every nation, if it is to survive as a nation, must study its own history and have a foreign policy”  
—C.J. O’Donnell, *The Lordship of the World*, 1924, p.145

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## Editorial: ECJ Rules that Settlement Products be Labelled as Settlement Products

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On 12 November 2019, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that

“Foodstuffs originating in territories occupied by the State of Israel must bear the indication of their territory of origin, accompanied, where those foodstuffs come from a locality or a group of localities constituting an Israeli settlement within that territory, by the indication of that provenance.” [1]

In other words, foodstuffs from the Jewish-only settlements established contrary to international law in Israeli-occupied territory in the Golan Heights or the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) must be labelled as such and may not be marketed within the EU as products of Israel.

As long ago as November 2015, the EU Commission had issued an *Interpretative Notice* giving guidance to member states on the labelling of goods “from the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967”. This stated:

“Since the Golan Heights and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are not part of the Israeli territory according to international law, the indication ‘product from Israel’ is considered to be incorrect and misleading ...

“For products from the West Bank or the Golan Heights that originate from settlements, an indication limited to ‘product from the Golan Heights’ or ‘product from the West Bank’ would not be acceptable. Even if they would designate the wider area or territory from which the product originates, the omission of the additional geographical information that the product comes from Israeli settlements would mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product. In such cases the expression ‘Israeli settlement’ or equivalent needs to be added, in brackets, for example. Therefore, expressions such as ‘product from the Golan Heights (Israeli settlement) or ‘product from the West Bank (Israeli settlement)’ could be used.”

At that time, it was expected that all EU member states would require importers to implement these rules.

[For Palestinian goods from the West Bank or Gaza, the notice suggested ‘product from the West Bank (Palestinian product)’, ‘product from Gaza’ or ‘product from Palestine’, as appropriate.]

This ECJ ruling came about because of legal action taken by the Psagot winery, which is located in a settlement by the same name just north of Jerusalem and sources its grapes from five vineyards located near the settlements of Psagot, Kida, Har Bracha, Gush Ezion and Alon Moreh [2].

The French Government had followed the guidance given in the Interpretative Notice and required the winery to label its products as originating from an Israeli settlement in the West Bank rather than as ‘product from Israel’. In response, along with the Organisation Juive Européenne (OJE), the winery took legal action in an attempt to block this requirement. The French authorities referred the matter to the ECJ because it would inevitably turn on interpretation of EU law, which is the ECJ’s purview.

On 12 November 2019, however, the ECJ backed the French Government. The Court noted that, under Article 3 of EU Regulation No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, such information “must enable them to make informed choices, with regard not only to health, economic, environmental and social considerations, but also to ethical considerations and considerations relating to the observance of international law”. The Court declared that labelling foodstuffs from Israeli settlements to inform consumers of their correct origin was “mandatory”, in order to “prevent consumers from being misled as to the fact that the State of Israel is present in the territories concerned as an occupying power and not as a sovereign entity”.

As a result of the legal action by OJE and the Psagot winery, EU law now requires that goods from Israeli settlements be labelled so that EU consumers are accurately informed of their origin. The ECJ’s decision binds all EU member states, and cannot be appealed.

The Israeli Government opposed the legal action by the OJE and the Psagot winery from the outset and urged them to withdraw their complaint, fearing that the outcome would be an ECJ ruling making the proper labelling of settlement goods mandatory. Happily, the Israeli Government’s fear has been realised.

Prior to this legal action, to the best of my knowledge, France was the only EU state to introduce labelling regulations for settlement goods based on the guidance to member states in the 2015 EU Interpretative Notice – and France has subsequently withdrawn these regulations. Now, as a result of the legal action, EU law requires settlement goods imported into the EU to be labelled in accordance with the guidance in the Interpretative Notice and it’s likely that legal action can be taken against importers of settlement goods which aren’t labelled as required by EU law.

The Israeli government and its supporters expressed outrage at the ECJ ruling, declaring it to be discriminatory against Jews. In a letter to the *Irish Times* on 18 November, Alan Shatter, Jewish lawyer and formerly Minister of Justice, writes:

“The European Court of Justice has held that any fruit or vegetables grown by Jews or goods or services exported by Jews from the West Bank, East Jerusalem or the Golan Heights be labelled as exported by Jews. ... Of course, I will be told the court’s focus was ‘settlers’ not Jews. To so explicitly reference Jews would be egregious. It is merely a coincidence that ‘settlers’ and Jews happen to be the same people.”

Here, Alan Shatter infers that the ECJ is somehow discriminatory against Jews, because only Jewish-owned businesses are affected by its ruling. But the ECJ’s labelling requirement falls on a business not because it is owned by a Jew, but because it is located in a settlement in Israel-occupied territory. If the Psagot winery or any other business located in a settlement chooses one day to move its operations out of Israeli-occupied territory and into Israel, it will be able to label its products “Made in Israel”.

In his letter, Alan Shatter also writes:

“I have visited some of the Jewish people residing on the West Bank who are providing employment to thousands of Palestinians who would be otherwise unemployed or in low-paid jobs and talked to Palestinians there whose standard of living and job security has hugely improved.”

So Jewish-owned enterprises in the settlements in Area C in the West Bank employ some Palestinians. Reading that, one could be forgiven for thinking that the Israeli occupation and colonisation of the West Bank is of considerable economic benefit to Palestinians.

Anybody who has read the World Bank report *Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy* [3] published in October 2013 knows that this is the opposite of the truth. The reality is that Israel has strangled Palestinian economic development in the West Bank. I quote from the report:

“Area C constitutes about 61 per cent of the West Bank territory. ... [Palestinian] access to this area for most kinds of economic activity has been severely limited. Yet, the potential contribution of Area C to the Palestinian economy is large. Area C is richly endowed with natural resources and it is contiguous, whereas Areas A and B are smaller territorial islands. The manner in which Area C is currently administered virtually precludes Palestinian businesses from investing there.”

The report concluded that lifting these Israeli-imposed “restrictions on [Palestinian] access to, and activity and production in Area C is likely to amount to some USD 3.4 billion -- or 35 per cent of Palestinian GDP in 2011”. Israel maintains these restrictions today.

David Morrison

**References:**

[1] <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-11/cp190140en.pdf>

[2]<https://whoprofits.org/company/psagot-winery/>

[3] <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/137111468329419171/pdf/AUS29220REPLAC0EVISSION0January02014.pdf>

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Sadaka – The Ireland-Palestine Alliance

13 December 2019

The Occupied Territories Bill took a huge step forward yesterday when it passed the next stage! It has now progressed through eight out of ten stages in the Irish legislature. A great victory for Palestine. A great victory for human rights and international law. Brilliant work from Niall Collins of Fiana Fáil and Senator Frances Black, and an amazing team of supporters around the country.

“The Committee broadly welcomes the Bill and recommends that it proceed to Third (Committee) Stage for further review. The Committee believes it offers an important restatement of Ireland’s commitment to international law and human rights protections, and to ensuring that these provisions are clearly reflected in our trade policy.”

Oireachtas Joint committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence, November 2019 – Detailed Scrutiny Report on the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018.

(Continued from page 4).

[bermudez-esta-tarde/](#) for reports and comprehensive photographic coverage, with this last link also covering the Cuban President’s visit to Kilmainham Gaol, where he was photographed in the yard where the members of the 1916 Rising’s Provisional Government of the Irish Republic had been executed by British imperialism.

It should be noted that, despite an effort of a smile from Varadkar, the Taoiseach uttered not a single word for public consumption on the courtesy call made to him by Cuba’s President and Head of Government. What are we to make of the media silencing, not only of the visiting President of the Republic of Cuba, but of the President of Ireland himself? It would seem to be the case that, notwithstanding the fig leaf of Irish neutrality, a collective decision was taken by the Irish Government, RTÉ, and the Irish Times, et al, not to cause any offence to Uncle Sam with media coverage of this historic visit that we had every right to expect.

## Irish Media Blackout on the Historic State Visit by the Cuban President

by Manus O’Riordan

On Saturday, October 19, the Irish Times carried the following news item penned by Harry McGee:

“The first official visit by a serving president of Cuba to Ireland will begin tomorrow when Miguel Díaz-Canel arrives for a three-day stay. During the trip he will attend a reception hosted by President Michael D Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin. It follows Mr Higgins’s visit to Cuba in February 2017, the first by an Irish head of State to the Caribbean island. Mr Díaz-Canel has been president of the communist state since succeeding 86-year-old Raul Castro in April 2018. The 59-year-old has been a member of the politburo since 2003 and was the only candidate named to contest the position. He is also expected to succeed Mr Castro as general secretary of the Communist Party in Cuba as well as commander-in-chief of its armed forces within the next two years. Mr Díaz-Canel will be joined by a large Cuban delegation... He will be received by Mr Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin on Monday. It is also expected he will make a courtesy call to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in Government Buildings later on Monday.”

The online edition of the Irish Times carried additional snide comments by McGee:

“Neither Raul Castro, nor his late brother Fidel, ever visited Ireland in an official capacity. However, Fidel did stop off at Shannon Airport on at least one occasion during his long tenure. In 1982 he left a present at Shannon Airport for then Taoiseach Charles J Haughey, who subsequently wrote a thank-you letter to Mr Castro. President Higgins faced criticism in 2016 following the death of Fidel Castro when he described him as ‘a giant among global leaders whose view was not only one of freedom for his people but for all of the oppressed and excluded peoples on the planet’.”

It is remarkable, then, that despite the Irish Times itself acknowledging the historic character of the Cuban President’s State visit, this self-styled “paper of record” chose not to report a single word on the visit as it actually transpired, beyond featuring a tree-planting photo in the print edition on October 22. However, the text accompanying that photo had nothing to do with the Cuban President’s visit, but was instead an interview on the migrant crisis that Michael Jansen had conducted with President Higgins in Beirut during the previous week! Moreover, even the Cuban President’s tree-planting photo was scrapped in the online edition. Surely the address by the President of Ireland on October 21 was newsworthy, if only to afford the Irish Times the opportunity to have another “go” at the following remarks made by President Higgins:

“It is a particular pleasure, President, to welcome you here to Ireland in 2019, a year of anniversaries. This year Ireland celebrates 100 years since the first meeting of the Irish parliament, while of course Cuba marks 60 years since its revolution... On matters of trade and economy, Ireland is part of the multilateral system, of which international law is such an important pillar, and we have always considered the economic sanctions against Cuba to be contrary to international law. An awareness of history, of the circumstances and contexts which led our ancestors to cross paths along the trails of Empire and transatlantic networks in pursuit of independence, is, I believe, an essential compass as we apply ourselves to crafting our shared responses to the contemporary challenges we face, creating new futures together... Irish and Cuban people have in common a proud sense of their national identity, a passion for freedom and, in the past, both of our people have the shared experience of living in the shadow of a powerful

neighbour. We are two island nations that carry our marks of that proximity and we carry the legacy of colonisation. We both have had to wrestle freedom from the grip of empires in order to achieve independence. This shared history has led Irish and Cuban people to easily forge many bonds of empathy and imagination, and to exchange stories, dreams and aspirations of freedom...”

“Cuba was to the forefront in establishing the link between the ecological crisis and the international economic system. The speeches of Fidel Castro to international audiences throughout the decades were particularly unambiguous and prophetic in their connection between global poverty, ecological destruction and an unfair global economic system. The urgency of that position was expressed most powerfully in his speech at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, at which I was present. The prevailing neoliberal model which has in recent decades secured such a hegemony in so many senses, features markets without regulation, distorted trade, speculative investment, yawning inequality, unbridled consumption and destructive extraction of natural resources is, of course, unsustainable. We have moved to a point of crisis – political, social and ecological – that calls for the articulation of new models of co-existence, development and international co-operation. We must do this together as a global community...” See <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/speech-at-a-luncheon-in-honour-h.e-miguel-diaz-canel-bermudez-president-of-the-republic-of-cuba> for the full speech.

To the best of my knowledge, other than a Facebook post by myself, there has been no English language coverage of the reply to President Higgins by the Cuban President, which included the following remarks:

“I remember that an occasion similar to this was used as a pretext by famous Irish chronicler James O’Kelly (Fenian leader and later Home Rule MP - MO’R) to make one of the very few known interviews of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the Father of the Homeland (during Cuba’s first War of Independence, 1868-78 - MO’R)... During a lunch, which was modest, though ‘served with White House formality’, as described by O’Kelly, Céspedes, in his capacity as the first President of the Republic of Cuba in Arms, said to the journalist, ‘We want peace so that we can focus on re-building our homes and the well-being of our country. But above all we want our independence.’ Peace and independence have actually been the guiding principles of the Cuban revolutionary process since 1868. They are the same principles we uphold today in the face of the increasing aggression from the US. Those are the principles that unite us with Ireland, a friendly people who had to fight for their sovereignty like Cuba.” Both the Irish Independent and the Irish Examiner joined with the Irish Times in deciding NOT to publish a single word of a report on this visit. More ominously, the State’s own RTÉ Radio and TV News also decided not to provide a single word of coverage. So, if you want to check out coverage of the historic State visit to Ireland by the Cuban President, including his subsequent meeting with Taoiseach Varadkar and his visit to Kilmainham Gaol, you will have to depend on the Spanish language reports of the Cuban media. See [www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/20/diaz-canel-llega-a-irlanda-en-visita-oficial/](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/20/diaz-canel-llega-a-irlanda-en-visita-oficial/) and [www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/20/siga-la-visita-de-diaz-canel-por-sitios-importantes-de-irlanda/](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/20/siga-la-visita-de-diaz-canel-por-sitios-importantes-de-irlanda/) and [www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/21/presidente-de-irlanda-recibe-a-diaz-canel-en-su-residencia-al-norte-de-dublin/](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/21/presidente-de-irlanda-recibe-a-diaz-canel-en-su-residencia-al-norte-de-dublin/) and [www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/21/primer-ministro-leo-varadkar-recibe-al-presidente-cubano-miguel-diaz-canel-](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2019/10/21/primer-ministro-leo-varadkar-recibe-al-presidente-cubano-miguel-diaz-canel-) (Continues page 3)

# **‘Britain and its War Dead’**

## **Report of the launch of ‘Britain and its War Dead’**

by **Eamon Dyas**

Basically the pamphlet explores the way in which the British State used the bodies of its dead soldiers in the aftermath of the First World War to construct what Winston Churchill described as the “supreme memorial to the efforts and the glory of the British Army, and the sacrifices made in that great cause” (of winning the war).

In constructing that memorial Britain embarked on a project that was never previously attempted and which involved a departure from its traditional responsibility to its dead soldiers.

Traditional responsibility of the State to its War Dead

In the past the relationship of the British State to its dead soldiers had been an acknowledged part of taking the King’s shilling. As one commentator put it: “Once a man enlisted, his body – whether alive or dead – belonged to the King”. Nonetheless, this had always been understood as something that was restricted to the mere burial of the dead. Similarly, there had been an acceptance that, under battlefield conditions, such burial was dictated by practicality rather than ceremony.

So it was with the Army’s treatment of its dead from the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, to the Boer War of 1899-1902.

This responsibility of the State for the burial of the dead soldiers had up to then been exercised without any significant dissent from the families of the soldiers. In fact, in most cases, the families were grateful that the State had assumed that role as they were in no position to incur the cost of organising such burials or of repatriating the bodies from the far distances of Imperial conflicts.

All of this was to change during the First World War. For the first time the State extended its traditional remit over the dead and embarked on a policy of using the bodies as a memorial to the glory of the British Army and the Empire.

As a result of this the State found itself in conflict with many of the families of the dead.

The basis of this conflict was rooted in the traditional bonds of family and community – something the State had previously exploited in order to construct its army in an era of emerging democratic sensibilities.

### **Family, community and the individual**

A series of education acts in the 1880s and 90s meant that by the time of the First World War, British Army recruits were more literate than ever before.

With such a literate pool of young men to recruit from, the army, reliant as it was on volunteers, was required to accommodate the needs of its literate new recruits. Consequently, in 1913, the Royal Engineers (Postal Section) was established as part of Britain’s war preparations.

In establishing its Postal Section the army ensured that communications between the soldier and his family now existed on a scale never before facilitated. The effect of this was to reinforce the ongoing emotional link between the soldier at the front and his family at home – something that in turn ensured that the treatment of the dead soldier by the State was

now subject to the sensibilities of family concern for the first time.

Another acknowledgement of the bonds of family and community was evidenced in the Army’s encouragement of the “Pals” battalions in the early stages of the War.

The Pals recruitment strategy was successful because it exploited the strong feelings of local communities in the industrial areas of Britain. Within days of the declaration of war men from such areas flocked to the colours and within a month more than fifty towns had supplied a Pals battalion to the army.

The attraction of the Pals battalions was that those enlisting from the same area would train and serve together. In many instances they would also continue to reside at home while undertaking their basic training – something that in turn reinforced the purpose of that training inside the domestic environment.

It wasn’t just Pte. Tommy Atkins who was serving the country but the friends and families sitting at the kitchen tables in the terrace houses of Bradford, Leeds, and Sheffield etc., as they gathered around to see him off to fight the evil Hun. And while abroad fighting the evil Hun Pte. Tommy Atkins would continue to have access to family and community through the parcels he received and the letters he in turn would reply to.

### **Changed social and political circumstances**

The improved communications between the soldier and his family and the way in which the Pals battalions were recruited represented modifications on the part of the army that acknowledged the changed social and political circumstances that had occurred in Britain by the time of the First World War.

However, the bond between the soldier and the Army created by these modifications was reliant on the relationship between them being based on consent – in other words the relationship between the recruit and a volunteer army.

### **Conscription, democracy and death**

But, by mid-1915 the belief that the war would be over within a year was discredited and the army realised that the numbers of soldiers required to maintain the anticipated war of attrition could not be maintained through volunteering.

In July 1915, as a prelude to conscription, the National Registration Act was passed which required the registration of all men of potential military worth. Conscription was subsequently introduced with the Military Services Act of January 1916.

Everything changed with the Military Service Act as the army no longer held the same relationship with the wider society now supplying its manpower. The working populace and the disenfranchised now needed to be bound closer to the State in the context of conscription. By mid-1916 the first moves were being made towards preparing for an extension of the franchise.

Asquith established the Speaker’s Conference on Electoral Reform which first sat in October of that year and it presented its report in January 1917. A Bill based on this report was

subsequently approved by Parliament in June. This became the Representation of the People Act of February 1918.

But conscription had a more immediate impact within the military as it created a potential note of dissonance among the soldiers. Those who had originally joined the army from a sense of duty now found themselves serving with men who had been compelled to become their comrades by the force of law. The wearing of the uniform now embraced the virtuous volunteer and those who found themselves part of the ranks through compulsion. All of which held the potential to corrode military morale.

The challenge the authorities faced was to find a means of relegating that potential to a position where it ceased to have any relevance. It was in this context that the idea of death began to assume a higher importance. With the advent of conscription there was no longer any need for the propaganda to emphasise the sense of patriotic duty. Instead, the emphasis began to be laid on the concept of the noble death. The sacrifice was no longer the civilian life conceded to the military one at the point of enlisting but rather the military life conceded on the battlefield at the point of death.

Death was elevated by the military from the tragic position it occupied in the family of the deceased to a position of noble sacrifice above and beyond its family context. It was the sacrifice that outdid all sacrifice and whether of a conscripted soldier or a volunteer every death was of equal worth in sustaining the war effort.

By becoming the point of emphasis this idea of the equality of death helped to erode the moral separation between the volunteer and conscripted soldier – all were now united in their willingness to sacrifice their life.

Alongside this there emerged an emphasis on the idea that the death of a soldier or an officer was of equal worth. Equality in death became the watchword and all who served and died on the battlefield, whether volunteer or conscript, private or officer, were subsumed into this army of the dead.

### **The State's imposition of Equality on the dead**

Although the process was initiated earlier, the State formally began its policy of imposing Equality on the dead with the founding of the Prince of Wales's Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves in March 1916.

Then, in September of that year the War Office issued a statement prohibiting the exhumation of bodies or the erection of private memorials on soldiers' graves for the duration of the war.

In March the following year, the Prince of Wales's Committee decided that the future arrangements on soldiers' graves should be submitted to the forthcoming Imperial War Conference.

The Imperial War Conference duly met in London and approved the Prince of Wales's proposal for the formation of the Imperial War Graves Commission under Royal Charter – something that placed the policy of the new commission beyond parliamentary scrutiny.

At its first meeting in November 1917 the Commission passed a resolution “that no distinction between officers and men should be made in the nature of the memorials”, thus formalising for the first time the concept of the Equality of the Dead on memorials. What remained unstated however, was the fact that the concept of “Memorials” now embraced the graves of the dead soldiers.

As far as the general populace was concerned the full implication of the Commission's policy towards the war dead only emerged at the end of hostilities.

### **The repatriation of the bodies.**

Almost as soon as the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918 the question of the British war graves on mainland Europe began to occupy the attention of increasing numbers of relatives. For the first time the prospect of the repatriation of their dead relatives for local reburial became a reality.

The War Graves Commission was therefore compelled to issue a policy statement on the repatriation of the war dead. That statement was reported in *The Times* of 29 November 1918 under the heading: “Comradeship In Death. Soldiers' Bodies Not To Be Brought Home”. In adopting this policy the British State became the only State among the participants of the First World War to prohibit the return of its war dead to their homeland.

The United States had offered to repatriate the bodies of its soldiers if the relatives requested it. Subsequently, the bodies of around 30,000 of the 150,000 Americans who died in the War were repatriated at the expense of the U.S. Department of Defence.

Undoubtedly, the majority of the families of the British dead would have accepted the burial of their relatives in the military graves of France and Belgium. But there was still a significant number who, given the choice would have preferred to have had them brought home.

Unfortunately, that was an option denied them by the British War Office and the War Graves Commission.

The War Office continually stressed that its policy was conditioned by the principle of Equality. The rigid implementation of that policy was something that was necessary in order to prevent those families with the financial resources from taking the bodies home and arranging their burial in ways that offended the principle of Equality.

But what the War Graves Commission policy refused to take into account was that many families of limited resources might also wish the return of the bodies of their relatives not for ostentatious display but for a modest burial in local cemeteries so they were closer to home and their graves could be tended by family members.

The immediate outcry against the Commission's policy may have been expressed through the voices of the upper-classes but this did not mean that there was no working class opposition.

That this opposition did not have a coherent voice was because the trade unions and the Labour Party had already committed to the government's depiction of the issue as one that did not go beyond the principle of Equality. Working class families who wished to have the bodies of their loved ones returned home were reduced to writing to Conservative politicians as no labour representative was able, or willing, to act as their champion.

However, the refusal of the War Graves Commission to permit the repatriation of the dead was only the start of the problems for many families.

### **The imposition of the headstone**

Aside from those families who wished to have their dead relatives brought home there was also a large number of families who agreed to the bodies being buried in the military cemeteries of France and Belgium but nonetheless wished to have some say in the design of the headstones.

The War Graves Commission regulation headstones stood 2ft. 8in. high and 1ft. 3ins wide and 3in thick. No variation was permitted to size or shape even if a family agreed to a general observance of the dimensions required. So it was that those families who wished to mark their relationship with the dead soldier through a modest variation of the regulation

headstone were denied that simple manifestation of their unique relationship with the dead soldier.

In the summer of 1919 a petition signed by 262 Members of Parliament and 146 peers was presented to Winston Churchill, the Minister of War, requesting that relatives of the dead soldiers should be given the option of individually modifying the Commission's headstone design. That effort alongside several others failed not least because the TUC Parliamentary Committee refused to countenance any departure from the Commission's Equality theme and once again those working class families who wished to dissent from the Commission's policy were left without a voice.

### **The imposition of the inscription**

But the State's commandeering of the dead was to go further. It extended to the permitted inscription on the standard Graves Commission headstone. What was permitted on the headstone was restricted to a reproduction of the soldier's regimental badge, his name and rank and date of death. A simple cross or other appropriate religious emblem (Star of David for instance) was also etched into the headstone.

Reference to the individual's place or date of birth was excluded and no direct reference to parents or wife was permitted. The only input permitted from the family was a short quotation from a prayer or an uplifting poem or general text consisting of no more than three lines.

### **Divesting the civilian from the military**

All of this standardisation was demanded by the State's concept of Equality in Death – a concept that could not translate with any veracity from the military life to the civilian life that the soldier had occupied as an individual.

The individual who became the soldier had a family and a community which formed him and the inequality in the world around him had shaped his experience of life outside the military one.

Because the Equality that the State now reserved for the dead was out of kilter with what the soldier had experienced when living, it required the State to separate the individual who actually lived from the soldier who had died.

However, in the early twentieth century it was no longer possible to completely separate the soldier from the family and community from which he emerged. Family and community continued to have a real presence in the soldier and the soldier continued to have a real presence in the family and his community even after he went to war.

So, when the State adopted a policy for the war dead that went beyond its traditional burial role it could expect a reaction from the families in ways that did not exist previously.

By establishing the Imperial War Graves Commission through the process of Royal Charter, the State ensured that its actions were placed beyond the scrutiny of Parliament and thereby made it more difficult for its policy to be changed through the normal political channels - something the Bishop of Exeter had claimed to be unconstitutional in June 1919.

### **A stifled Parliament**

Despite this obstacle there were a number of MPs who took up the cause of the families and used every opportunity to raise the matter in Parliament. These opportunities usually occurred when the Business of the House permitted discussion of departmental accounts and budgets.

The original funding of the War Graves Commission was supposed to come from the combined contributions of Britain and the Dominions. However, the required monies failed to

materialise in a timely fashion and the British War Office ended up funding the Commission by concealing the costs within its own budget.

It was only at the end of the war when the military budget was reduced that the monies to pay for the continued operation of the War Graves Commission became visible to Parliament. This then had to be authorised by Parliament and thereby presented the first, and what turned out to be the only, opportunity for any discussion of its policy by the House of Commons. That happened on 4 May 1920.

The discussion on that day provided a useful record for posterity as it generated those moral arguments opposed to the policy of the War Graves Commission that continue to resonate today.

One such argument was put by Viscount Wolmer when he said:

“By all means have memorials. Make them out of Government stone if you like. Make them uniform. But you have no right to employ, in making those memorials, the bodies of other people's relatives. It is not decent, it is not reasonable, it is not right. A memorial is something to be seen. There will be two classes of people who will visit these graveyards: there will be the idle tourists in the first place, and secondly there will be the bereaved relatives. Are you going to consider the feelings of the bereaved relatives or the artistic susceptibilities of the casual tourist. These graveyards are not and cannot be war memorials. Have your war memorials in England or in France or wherever you like and according to what pattern and design you like, so that all can go and admire them or not admire them, as the case may be, but you have no right to take the precious remains of bereaved widows, parents and orphans and build them into a monument which is distasteful and hateful to those relatives, as in many cases it is. There is a terrible confusion of thought - terrible because it is causing so much anguish to the country - which underlies the whole conception of the Imperial War Graves Commission, the idea that you are entitled to take the bodies of heroes from the care of their relatives and build them into a national State memorial.

In reference to those who insisted on describing the project as a Memorial to Freedom he went on to say:

“What freedom is it if you will not even allow the dead bodies of the people's relatives to be cared for and looked after in the way they like? It is a memorial, not to freedom, but to rigid militarism; not in intention, but in effect.” (Hansard, 4 May 1920).

Whether it was, as Viscount Wolmer believed, an unintended outcome, or not, the way the Government discarded the soldier's relationship with his family and community was the result of a militarist perspective. And the way in which the War Office left the soldier as the sole evidence of the existence of the dead individual was the result of a militarist mentality. Hiding it all behind the principle of Equality was merely the abstraction that facilitated the denial of the real world that the individual occupied as the person that was not the soldier.

The person that was not the soldier has been exorcised from the theatre of it all. Today, the purpose of this theatre is to bear witness to the idea of Military Sacrifice. The impact it generates is due to the way in which half a million buried dead underpins this idea of Sacrifice. The effect is designed to ensure that the cause to which that Sacrifice contributed remains concealed in a way that continues to encourage similar sacrifices in future military adventures.

Eamon Dyas, Pearse House, Dublin, 8 November 2019

# Leopold Kerney - Ireland's Revolutionary Diplomat

By Manus O'Riordan

(This review of *'Ireland's Revolutionary Diplomat'*, a biography of Leopold Kerney by Barry Whelan, was first published in *'History Ireland'*, September-October 2019)

I approached this review with a certain degree of apprehension. I had previously commented on Leopold H. Kerney for *'History Ireland'* on three occasions - my Spring 2003 review of Fearghal McGarry's biography of Frank Ryan; my March-April 2007 review of the Leopold H. Kerney website edited by his son Éamon, who was also a godson of de Valera and who passed away in July 2018; and my participation in the February 2012 *'History Ireland'* Hedge School on Frank Ryan. I had rejected Fearghal McGarry's Nazi 'collaborator' charge against Frank Ryan and disputed Prof. Eunan O'Halpin's contention, in his 1999 book *'Defending Ireland'*, that Kerney had been 'a monumental fool' in meeting with the notorious Nazi Edmund Veessenmayer in Madrid in 1942. My arguments depended on the then available documentary evidence, and I had been particularly indebted to Seán Cronin's 1980 biography, *'Frank Ryan - the search for the Republic'*, for publishing the wartime Ryan-Kerney correspondence 28 years before any Kerney reports on Ryan began appearing in the *'Documents on Irish Foreign Policy'* series, with Michael Kennedy as Executive Editor and Eunan O'Halpin as a co-editor. I had been similarly indebted to Éamon Kerney for publishing, in full and six years before its appearance in the *'Documents'* series, the report that his father had forwarded to Joseph Walshe, Department of External Affairs secretary, on the very day of his 1942 meeting with Veessenmayer.

My apprehension centred on the cover of Whelan's biography - showing Kerney about to present his diplomatic credentials to Franco in April 1939 and surrounded by regime officials with arms raised in the fascist salute. Although applauding the tireless zeal with which he had sought to save the life and secure the release of Ryan, I had never presumed Kerney himself to have been an ideological anti-fascist. As Irish minister to the Spanish Republic, his April and May 1936 reports to Walshe, which Kennedy was to reproduce in the *'Documents'* series in 2004, had anticipated the outbreak of civil war in July 1936, and there was a 'plague on both their houses' suggestion in his remarks that 'the spirit of civil war is very manifest and is due to the fact that the extreme left believes in the policy of completely crushing the extreme right, and vice versa'. In the *'Dictionary of Irish Biography'*, Kennedy wrote that for the duration of the civil war 'Kerney remained accredited to the Madrid [*sic*] government'. (The Republican government had actually moved to Valencia in November 1936.) Kennedy, however, next proceeded to charge that Kerney 'did not attempt to hide his preferences for Franco and the nationalists', and that 'in March 1937 he unsuccessfully suggested to de Valera that Dublin recognise Franco before the collapse of the republican forces'. How true was this? I myself had failed to find any such interpretation in what had been published of Kerney's March 1937 reports in *'Documents'*. Yet, on the other hand, how convincing should one consider Whelan's caption to his cover photo that readers should 'note that Kerney himself did not give an upright fascist salute'? Was this just special pleading?

All the more reason to read Whelan's biography from cover to cover, not least because of this publication's inadequate index. Whelan was particularly fortunate in being given complete access to Kerney's private papers, but the reader further benefits from the fact that he accessed the Spanish

Foreign Ministry Archives that paralleled Kerney's own reports on relations between Franco's Spain and de Valera's Ireland, and which function as a commentary on the same. The author also went on to highlight key wartime reports from Kerney to Walshe that the editors of *'Documents'* had not seen fit to publish. Whelan tells the life story of a talented man, first picked out by Arthur Griffith to serve as Dáil Éireann's trade representative to France, then victimised by the Cosgrave government for failure to swear loyalty to the Free State, but later reinstated to the diplomatic service after de Valera, his closest of political and family friends, had ousted Cosgrave in 1932. In this era of concerns about the trade implications of Brexit, it is indeed refreshing to learn how Kerney had been a visionary in seeking out export markets beyond Britain. Kerney further advocated direct shipping routes that would bypass Britain, and put his own money where his mouth was in an admittedly short-lived Cork to Brest shipping venture almost two decades before Irish Shipping would see the light of day.

Kerney's journey towards constitutional republicanism represented a break with his family background. His father, Philip, had converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism on marriage, was sub-editor of the *'Daily Express'* in Ireland for over 40 years, and also became editor of the West British *'Weekly Irish Times'*. Leopold's older brother, Henry, was a thoroughgoing empire loyalist who served as a British civil servant on the Reparations Commission in Berlin after the First World War, who denounced the Irish War of Independence as a case of a mere 'wolfhound' taking on the gigantic 'elephant' of the Empire and who was a frequent anti-republican contributor to the *'Irish Times'*. Leopold himself, however, broke with a family tradition that he characterised as an 'anglicised atmosphere of contented provincialism'. The decisive historical event in Kerney's development was the December 1918 general election, and he was to recall with pride how Arthur Griffith had 'handed me my credentials as trade representative to France from the elected government of the Irish Republic'.

There is indeed a villain in the narrative - Joseph Walshe, who resented having been a subordinate to Kerney as Dáil Éireann's trade representative in Paris, who loathed Kerney's reinstatement by Dev to the 1930s diplomatic service and who set out, as Kerney's boss, to exact his revenge in ways both repetitively petty and scandalously foul. Prof. Desmond Williams had come to University College Dublin from wartime British intelligence and his 1953 libellous articles, which led to a successful lawsuit on Kerney's part, had not emerged from a vacuum. Whelan reveals how, for the purpose of his libel, Williams had been briefed against Kerney by both Walshe and the very over-rated Colonel Dan Bryan of G2 military intelligence. Whelan takes particular issue with how both Kennedy and O'Halpin have treated the Kerney v. Williams libel action, and he provides chapter and verse to demonstrate how Kerney and de Valera had been perfectly *ad idem* as to Irish foreign policy in respect of both Nazi Germany and Fascist Spain.

As regards Nazi Germany, Whelan is particularly scathing that, for all their denunciations of Kerney for meeting with Veessenmayer, 'at no stage did O'Halpin quote the Kerney report', and Kennedy also failed to take a single quote from any section of Kerney's 24 August 1942 report. Yet Kerney had won his libel action, with Williams unreservedly conceding defeat. For Kerney had bluntly put it to Veessenmayer: 'I told him that the public declarations of the Taoiseach proved



clearly that Ireland would resist the violation of our neutrality by Americans, English or Germans, that if Germany were to be the aggressor, England would, in her own interest, come to Ireland's assistance. There could be no question of us abandoning neutrality in exchange for concessions of any kind.'

Whelan breaks completely new ground in being particularly revealing as to Kerney's views on Franco fascism. Without a shadow of a doubt, he has indeed forced me to agree that one should never judge a book by its cover! Whelan records how, in a letter to his brother Maurice as late as August 1938, Kerney wrote that, if there was any question of recognising Franco, 'this is NOT the moment to do so, and I hope wiser counsels will prevail'. Only after Franco had finally conquered Barcelona in January 1939 did Kerney advise Dublin on the practicality of now beginning the process of recognising his victory. Accredited to Madrid two months later as Irish minister to Fascist Spain, we are left in no doubt as to how he himself felt about the dominant atmosphere. Whelan points out how Kerney abstained from ever making an 'out-stretched arm' fascist salute at official occasions, notwithstanding other members of the diplomatic corps falling into line with that practice, while telling Maurice how he wished he could have shown his regard for the defeated Spanish Republic 'by saluting with a clenched fist'.

Secretary Walshe enthusiastically adhered to the contrary viewpoint, and firmly instructed Kerney to personally hand Franco a telegram from the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland with its 'congratulations on his glorious victory in Spain'. In his 'Dictionary of Irish Biography' entry, Kennedy maintained that Kerney's 'wartime reports contained much rumour and gossip about events in Madrid ... lacking in analysis when compared to those of his contemporaries in the Irish diplomatic service'. Whelan begs to differ. Kerney furnished Walshe with report after report that detailed evidence of ongoing executions, in what historian Sir Paul Preston would sum up in the title of his 2011 *magnum opus* as 'The Spanish Holocaust: inquisition and extermination in twentieth-century Spain'. Kerney began reporting back on such mass executions in July 1939. There were three separate reports that November, with a doctor's eyewitness report of 50 executions in one night and Kerney himself regularly hearing such executions through the night. A similar report was sent in March 1940. Four separate reports were sent in 1943, headed either 'Death Sentences' or 'Executions'. Six years after the Spanish Civil War had been declared officially over, Kerney reported on yet more mass executions in January 1945, and again in June 1945. Whelan is astonished 'that Walshe remained silent on these reports and took no action beyond filing them away'.

On one occasion Whelan relies too exclusively on what Kerney had chosen to report to Walshe. This was on the July 1940 transfer of Frank Ryan from his Spanish prison into the custody of the German Abwehr and how Kerney had paid the Spanish lawyer's expenses to accompany the convoy to the Franco-Spanish border, so as to ensure that Ryan would not be shot in the back while 'escaping'. The reality was even more dramatic than that, for Kerney himself had also secretly followed the convoy at a discreet distance and Ryan had raised his hand in the slightest of farewell waves, as revealed in Cronin's 1980 biography, which also reproduced the 1963 letter from Kerney's widow confirming his eyewitness role. But that is a minor quibble regarding Whelan's biography of Kerney, where his meticulous research successfully upends what has hitherto prevailed as academia's received 'wisdom'.

(See also [http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/irishforeignaffairs/ifa\\_1.pdf](http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/irishforeignaffairs/ifa_1.pdf) - the very first issue of 'Irish Foreign Affairs', April-June 2008, for 'Leopold Kerney, ambassador and patriot'.)

## Britain and its War Dead

### Eamon Dyas

Almost as soon as the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, the question of the British war graves on mainland Europe began to occupy the attention of increasing numbers of relatives of the fallen soldiers. For the first time, those with the means of doing so could consider the prospect of visiting the graves of their dead relatives or to bring their bodies home for a local reburial. At the time of the Armistice, the graves of the British and Imperial war dead were located in around 4,000 cemeteries in France and Belgium as well as in temporary graveyards of various sizes and indeed individually in remote battlefield areas. The decision to construct the enormous centralised British war graves involved the disinterment of over 150,000 buried soldiers and moving them to these centralised sites. The Imperial War Graves Commission justified the construction of these enormous industrial scale cemeteries on two grounds — one practical - because the land on which many of those who had been temporarily buried was being gradually returned to its former use. But more importantly because the dead were to be transformed from people into memorials for British Imperial power and the relatives morally pressured into acquiescing in this transformation. Here was to be a display of imperial power that went beyond military or economic might. Other nations might have aspired to challenge that might but here, along miles and miles of uniform graves lay the physical evidence that Britain and its Empire was capable of generating a level of unquestioning patriotic sacrifice that no other nation could hope to emulate. This manifestation of 'Our Glorious Dead' was just as tangible a manifestation of power as any military or economic strength. The cemeteries were to be a memorial to this mighty power but also to provide a pride in military sacrifice that would act as an inspiration for the generations to come.

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# European Parliament's Atrocious Resolution of 19 September 2019

## **European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe (2019/2819(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

– having regard to the universal principles of human rights and the fundamental principles of the European Union as a community based on common values,

– having regard to the statement issued on 22 August 2019 by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová ahead of the Europe-Wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes,

– having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948,

– having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2005 on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945<sup>(1)</sup>,

– having regard to Resolution 1481 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 26 January 2006 on the need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes,

– having regard to Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law<sup>(2)</sup>,

– having regard to the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism adopted on 3 June 2008,

– having regard to its declaration on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism adopted on 23 September 2008<sup>(3)</sup>,

– having regard to its resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism<sup>(4)</sup>,

– having regard to the Commission report of 22 December 2010 on the memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe (**COM(2010)0783**),

– having regard to the Council Conclusions of 9-10 June 2011 on the memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe,

– having regard to the Warsaw Declaration of 23 August 2011 on the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes,

– having regard to the joint statement of 23 August 2018 of the government representatives of the EU Member States to commemorate the victims of communism,

– having regard to its historic resolution on the situation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, adopted on 13 January 1983 in reaction to the 'Baltic Appeal' of 45 nationals from these countries,

– having regard to the resolutions and declarations on the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes adopted by a number of national parliaments,

– having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas this year marks the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, which led to unprecedented levels of human suffering and the occupation of countries in Europe for many decades to come;

B. whereas 80 years ago on 23 August 1939, the communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a Treaty of Non-Aggression, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, dividing Europe and the territories of independent states between the two totalitarian regimes and grouping them into spheres of interest, which paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War;

C. whereas, as a direct consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, followed by the Nazi-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September 1939, the Polish Republic was invaded first by Hitler and two weeks later by Stalin – which stripped the country of its independence and was an unprecedented tragedy for the Polish people – the communist Soviet Union started an aggressive war against Finland on 30 November 1939, and in June 1940 it occupied and annexed parts of Romania – territories that were never returned – and annexed the independent republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia;

D. whereas after the defeat of the Nazi regime and the end of the Second World War, some European countries were able to rebuild and embark on a process of reconciliation, while other European countries remained under dictatorships – some under direct Soviet occupation or influence – for half a century and continued to be deprived of freedom, sovereignty, dignity, human rights and socio-economic development;

E. whereas although the crimes of the Nazi regime were evaluated and punished by means of the Nuremberg trials, there is still an urgent need to raise awareness, carry out moral assessments and conduct legal inquiries into the crimes of Stalinism and other dictatorships;

F. whereas in some Member States, communist and Nazi ideologies are prohibited by law;

G. whereas European integration has, from the start, been a response to the suffering inflicted by two world wars and by the Nazi tyranny that led to the Holocaust, and to the expansion of totalitarian and undemocratic communist regimes in central and eastern Europe, and a way to overcome deep divisions and hostility in Europe by cooperation and integration and to end war and secure democracy in Europe; whereas for the European countries that suffered under Soviet occupation and communist dictatorships, the enlargement of the EU, beginning in 2004, signifies their return to the European family to which they belong;

H. whereas the memories of Europe's tragic past must be kept alive, in order to honour the victims, condemn the perpetrators and lay the ground for a reconciliation based on truth and remembrance;

I. whereas remembering the victims of totalitarian regimes and recognising and raising awareness of the shared European legacy of crimes committed by communist, Nazi and other dictatorships is of vital importance for the unity of Europe and its people and for building European resilience to modern external threats;

J. whereas 30 years ago, on 23 August 1989, the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was marked and the victims of totalitarian regimes remembered during the Baltic Way, an unprecedented demonstration by two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who joined hands to form a living chain spanning from Vilnius to Tallinn through Riga;

K. whereas despite the fact that on 24 December 1989 the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR condemned the

signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in addition to other agreements made with Nazi Germany, the Russian authorities denied responsibility for this agreement and its consequences in August 2019 and are currently promoting the view that Poland, the Baltic States and the West are the true instigators of WWII;

L. whereas remembering the victims of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and recognising and raising awareness of the shared European legacy of crimes committed by Stalinist, Nazi and other dictatorships is of vital importance for the unity of Europe and its people and for building European resilience to modern external threats;

M. whereas openly radical, racist and xenophobic groups and political parties have been inciting hatred and violence in society, for example through the online dissemination of hate speech, which often leads to a rise in violence, xenophobia and intolerance;

1. Recalls that, as enshrined in Article 2 of the TEU, the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities; recalls that these values are common to all Member States;

2. Stresses that the Second World War, the most devastating war in Europe's history, was started as an immediate result of the notorious Nazi-Soviet Treaty on Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, whereby two totalitarian regimes that shared the goal of world conquest divided Europe into two zones of influence;

3. Recalls that the Nazi and communist regimes carried out mass murders, genocide and deportations and caused a loss of life and freedom in the 20th century on a scale unseen in human history, and recalls the horrific crime of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime; condemns in the strongest terms the acts of aggression, crimes against humanity and mass human rights violations perpetrated by the Nazi, communist and other totalitarian regimes;

4. Expresses its deep respect for each victim of these totalitarian regimes and calls on all EU institutions and actors to do their utmost to ensure that horrific totalitarian crimes against humanity and systemic gross human rights violations are remembered and brought before courts of law, and to guarantee that such crimes will never be repeated; stresses the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there can be no reconciliation without remembrance, and reiterates its united stand against all totalitarian rule from whatever ideological background;

5. Calls on all Member States of the EU to make a clear and principled assessment of the crimes and acts of aggression perpetrated by the totalitarian communist regimes and the Nazi regime;

6. Condemns all manifestations and propagation of totalitarian ideologies, such as Nazism and Stalinism, in the EU;

7. Condemns historical revisionism and the glorification of Nazi collaborators in some EU Member States; is deeply concerned about the increasing acceptance of radical ideologies and the reversion to fascism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in the European Union, and is troubled by reports in some Member States of collusion between political leaders, political parties and law enforcement bodies and the radical, racist and xenophobic movements of different political denominations; calls on the Member States to condemn such acts in the strongest way possible as they undermine the EU values, of peace, freedom and democracy;

8. Calls on all Member States to commemorate 23 August as the European Day of Remembrance for the victims of totalitarian regimes at both EU and national level, and to raise the younger generation's awareness of these issues by including the history and analysis of the consequences of totalitarian regimes in the curricula and textbooks of all schools in the EU; calls on the Member States to support the documentation of Europe's troubled past, for example through the translation of the proceedings of the Nuremberg trials into all EU languages;

9. Calls on the Member States to condemn and counteract all forms of Holocaust denial, including the trivialisation and minimisation of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators, and to prevent trivialisation in political and media discourse;

10. Calls for a common culture of remembrance that rejects the crimes of fascist, Stalinist, and other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the past as a way of fostering resilience against modern threats to democracy, particularly among the younger generation; encourages the Member States to promote education through mainstream culture on the diversity of our society and on our common history, including education on the atrocities of World War II, such as the Holocaust, and the systematic dehumanisation of its victims over a number of years;

11. Calls, furthermore, for 25 May (the anniversary of the execution of the Auschwitz hero Rotamaster Witold Pilecki) to be established as International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism, which will be an expression of respect and a tribute to all those who, by fighting tyranny, demonstrated their heroism and true love for humankind, and will also provide future generations with a clear example of the correct attitude to take in the face of the threat of totalitarian enslavement;

12. Calls on the Commission to provide effective support for projects of historic memory and remembrance in the Member States and for the activities of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, and to allocate adequate financial resources under the 'Europe for Citizens' programme to support commemoration and remembrance of the victims of totalitarianism, as set out in Parliament's position on the 2021-2027 Rights and Values Programme;

13. Declares that European integration as a model of peace and reconciliation has been a free choice by the peoples of Europe to commit to a shared future, and that the European Union has a particular responsibility to promote and safeguard democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, not only within but also outside the European Union;

14. Points out that in the light of their accession to the EU and NATO, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe have not only returned to the European family of free democratic countries, but also demonstrated success, with the EU's assistance, in reforms and socio-economic development; stresses, however, that this option should remain open to other European countries as stipulated in Article 49 TEU;

15. Maintains that Russia remains the greatest victim of communist totalitarianism and that its development into a democratic state will be impeded as long as the government, the political elite and political propaganda continue to whitewash communist crimes and glorify the Soviet totalitarian regime; calls, therefore, on Russian society to come to terms with its tragic past;

16. Is deeply concerned about the efforts of the current Russian leadership to distort historical facts and whitewash crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime and considers them a dangerous component of the information war waged against democratic Europe that aims to divide Europe,

and therefore calls on the Commission to decisively counteract these efforts;

17. Expresses concern at the continued use of symbols of totalitarian regimes in the public sphere and for commercial purposes, and recalls that a number of European countries have banned the use of both Nazi and communist symbols;

18. Notes that the continued existence in public spaces in some Member States of monuments and memorials (parks, squares, streets etc.) glorifying totalitarian regimes, which paves the way for the distortion of historical facts about the consequences of the Second World War and for the propagation of the totalitarian political system;

19. Condemns the fact that extremist and xenophobic political forces in Europe are increasingly resorting to distortion of historical facts, and employ symbolism and rhetoric that

echoes aspects of totalitarian propaganda, including racism, anti-Semitism and hatred towards sexual and other minorities;

20. Urges the Member States to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Council Framework Decision, so as to counter organisations that spread hate speech and violence in public spaces and online, and to effectively ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and any other foundation or association that exalts and glorifies Nazism and fascism or any other form of totalitarianism, while respecting domestic legal order and jurisdiction;

21. Stresses that Europe's tragic past should continue to serve as a moral and political inspiration to face the challenges of today's world, including the fight for a fairer world, creating open and tolerant societies and communities embracing ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, and making European values work for everyone;

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## **The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: The Myth of Soviet Aggression**

### **Russian Government Condemns European Parliament's Blaming Stalin as Having Started WWII**

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**Submitted by Tom Stanford**

Over the past few weeks, the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War has repeatedly been seized by European politicians and opinion leaders as an opportunity to promote one of the West's favourite historical myths: the "evil dictators" Hitler and Stalin, after making a deal to carve up Eastern Europe among themselves (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939), supposedly invaded Poland from opposite sides, thus starting World War II.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, at the commemoration events in Poland on September 1st, put it this way: "As Poles defended their country against the Nazi onslaught, Soviet forces attacked them from the east, trapping Poland between the hammer of fascism and the anvil of Communism".

More recently, on September 18th, the European Parliament passed a resolution equating Stalinism and Nazism. More specifically, it equally blames the USSR and Nazi Germany for starting the war: "[T]he Second World War [...] was started as an immediate result of the notorious Nazi-Soviet Treaty [...] known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [...], whereby two totalitarian regimes that shared the goal of world conquest divided Europe into two zones of influence."

The myth is a fundamental component of the common Western narrative of the Second World War, portrayed basically as a conflict opposing good liberal democratic countries such as Britain and the US, to Hitler's barbaric totalitarian regime. Bad totalitarian states, namely Nazi Germany, Japan and, of course, Communist Russia, supposedly started the war, while only the intervention of the good, democratic USA brought the war to an end, crushing two of the world's three totalitarian monsters. The fact that over three quarters of Hitler's forces were defeated by the Soviet Union is an inconvenient fact rarely mentioned.

### **The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: evidence of Soviet guilt?**

The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 23, 1939 is usually cited as evidence of Soviet guilt. Formally named Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union, the pact committed both sides to resolve disputes peacefully and not to provide assistance of any kind to any third party involved in a war with the other party.

In addition to the main part of the Treaty, a secret protocol (secret clauses were common in international treaties at that time) drew a line dividing Eastern Europe into the so-called "spheres of interest" of each of the two signatories, a kind of red line that should not be overstepped by either side. Territories to the East of the line had all belonged to the Russian Empire until the First World War broke out in 1914. This line would ensure that any conflicts or territorial changes involving other central or eastern European countries would not lead to a direct clash between Germany and the USSR, thus enabling the workability – and credibility – of the Non-Aggression Treaty and providing a guideline for resolving disputes which may arise between the two parties.

Unlike what Western commentators would have us believe, the Secret Protocol did not allocate any territories to Germany or the Soviet Union. There was no agreement for a Partition of Poland. Nevertheless, following this agreement to draw a line between "spheres of interest", Germany invaded Poland, which caused Britain and France to declare war on Germany, and Soviet troops did soon move into the East of the country to take control of the regions corresponding to the so-called Soviet "sphere of interest". But is this proof that World War II was the product of both German and Soviet aggression?

### **A matter of life or death for the USSR**

By quoting events out of context, historical facts can be used to fabricate any narrative that suits one's political agenda. History did not begin in August 1939. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact can only be understood when seen in the light of the geopolitical and ideological background of the 1930s.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, the Soviet Union had good reasons to fear for its long-term survival. The Nazi government soon put an end to the rather extensive economic cooperation with the Soviet Union which had prevailed over the previous ten years. Not only had Hitler always declared the destruction of Soviet Communism (or "Jewish Bolshevism", as he normally described it) as a fundamental goal, he had also claimed in his pamphlet "Mein Kampf" that the German people needed their own "living space" (Lebensraum) in the East, as a necessary source of food and raw materials. Russia was to be an ultimate target of the German Nazis, regardless of the political system which prevailed there.

Amid continual anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, anti-Russian rhetoric, Germany engaged in intensive rearmament starting

in 1935, when he remilitarised the Rhineland in full breach of the restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. The Soviet Union alone called for action against Germany's move, while France was persuaded by Britain not to react.

### **The threat of Germany and Japan joining forces to destroy the USSR**

The threat posed by Germany to the Soviet Union was rapidly growing; it culminated with the signing of the Anti-Comintern Treaty (the Comintern, with its headquarters in Moscow, was the international union of Communist parties) between Germany and militaristic Japan in 1936. This treaty identified the Soviet Union as the main enemy of both Germany and Japan and required cooperation between these two countries in their fight against Communism. The Anti-Comintern Pact was joined the following year by Mussolini's Fascist Italy and in 1939 by Hungary and Spain.

Now the USSR was at serious risk of being attacked from its Eastern and Western borders at the same time by two formidable enemies who would not stop short of total victory. Japan had already gained control of Manchuria and had imperial ambitions over Siberia. Soviet leaders were fully aware that the country could not sustain a simultaneous, coordinated, full-scale attack by two of the world's greatest military powers on two fronts separated by thousands of miles. And of course, they knew no help would come from the staunchly anti-communist Western powers. They were faced with the realistic prospect of the destruction not only of the communist Soviet Union, but of Russia itself as a state and a significant nation, signalling the end of one thousand years of national and civilizational history.

### **Early Soviet attempts to build anti-Fascist alliance**

To counter the German threat, the USSR signed treaties with both France and Czechoslovakia as early as 1935. Until 1939 it relentlessly pursued diplomatic efforts to build a solid anti-German alliance with the Western powers. Soviet fears increased in early 1937, when Japan engaged in a full-scale invasion of China, capturing the cities of Shanghai and Nanking, thus making China the first major battlefield of the second world war. The USSR immediately signed a treaty of cooperation with China, providing the Asian country with substantial assistance in its resistance against Japan. The Soviet leadership hoped to deter a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union by helping the Chinese bog down Japanese forces in China.

Diplomatic efforts to reach out to Western powers intensified but encountered British reluctance to strike a deal with the USSR. British elites generally still viewed Soviet Communism as a much greater threat than German fascism.

### **UK reluctance: "Let the Soviets and Germans fight it out!"**

As late as May 1939, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, responding to the Soviet proposal for a tripartite alliance (Britain-France-USSR), told his colleagues that he "would rather resign than accept an alliance with the Soviet Union". In 1936, Chamberlain's predecessor Stanley Baldwin had already shed some light on the goals of UK foreign policy in the 1930s: "We all know the German desire [...] to move East, and if [Hitler] moves East, I shall not break my heart [...]. [Moving] West would be a very difficult programme for him [...]. If there is any fighting in Europe to be done, I should like to see the Bolsheviks and Nazis doing it."

When in June 1941 Hitler finally did launch his attack on the Soviet Union, the future US President, Senator Harry Truman, then Head of the Senate's War Committee, made a statement

to the press which in its own way mirrored Baldwin's and Chamberlain's pre-war thoughts, but lacked the British sense of diplomacy: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible [...]".

Soviet fears that Britain and some of its allies were encouraging Germany to attack the USSR were thus far from unfounded and cannot be pinned down to Stalin's supposed paranoia.

### **The possibility of a German-Polish alliance against the USSR**

Furthermore, an alliance against the Soviet Union bringing together Nazi Germany and fascist-leaning, fiercely anti-communist and historically anti-Russian Poland remained a real possibility at least until early 1939. Germany had made many attempts to draw its eastern neighbour into the Anti-Comintern Pact. Germany also long believed it would be able to resolve its territorial claim on the Danzig Corridor in a peaceful manner. (The Corridor had separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany since the end of WW1.)

A non-aggression treaty with Poland had been signed in 1934 and the two countries had engaged in friendly cooperation in many areas ever since. In its attempts to obtain a voluntary, negotiated surrender of the Corridor by Poland, Germany went as far as to promise to compensate Poland for the loss of the Corridor by giving the Slavic country a substantial part of Ukraine – to be conquered in a joint attack on the USSR. But Poland at the time had reservations about getting involved in another war against Russia, which had strongly increased its military potential since the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921. Wisely, Poland also pondered whether there would be any room for a powerful, independent Poland in a Europe dominated by Germany.

### **Munich, 1938: French and British betrayal of Czechoslovakia**

However, the main turning point for Soviet decision-makers came in Autumn 1938 with the signing of the Munich Agreement by Germany, Britain, France and Fascist Italy. Hitler was given the green light to invade and annex all predominantly German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia. In addition, this pact allowed for Polish and Hungarian territorial claims on Czechoslovakia to be settled during so-called negotiations supervised by... Germany and its Italian ally. As a result, Czechoslovakia was torn up by its neighbours and the rump state, deprived of its most prosperous industrial regions, lost its economic – and political – viability.

For the Soviet Union, this was a stab in the back by the Western powers, still viewed as potential partners in an anti-Fascist alliance. Both France and the USSR had Treaties of Mutual Assistance with Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union signalled its readiness to intervene militarily in support of the central European country. But Czechoslovakia was prepared to resist only with the support of both France and the Soviet Union, not the Soviet Union alone, so faced with France's betrayal, the country turned down the Soviet offer and basically surrendered to its enemies.

### **Munich outcome: Hitler strengthened, USSR weakened and isolated**

According to Italy's Fascist leader Mussolini, Munich signalled "the end of Bolshevism in Europe, the end of communism in Europe, the end of any political influence of Russia in Europe". The Fascist and near-Fascist regimes of

Germany, Italy, Poland, Hungary had come to a fundamental agreement with Britain and France, keeping the Soviet Union out of the equation and thus leading to its isolation on the international stage – a major victory for the Anti-Comintern alliance.

By March 1939, Germany had annexed the entire Czech part of Czechoslovakia and installed a puppet government to rule over what remained of Slovakia. Soviet leaders, not without reason, feared that Germany had now gained an important foothold for a prospective invasion of the USSR, and that such an invasion would take place with the full blessing of Britain, France and the US, whose ruling elites would relish the prospect of “freeing the world from the threat of Communism” while sparing their own populations the horrors of another war: ideally, Germany would carry out a proxy war for the elites of the entire Western world.

British and French “appeasement” policy until 1939 had clearly less to do with alleged pacifist goals of preventing war altogether than with keeping war – should it arise – at a safe distance from the Western powers’ borders.

### **Soviet hopes of anti-Fascist alliance begin to fade**

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union continued negotiations with France and Britain with the hope to form a tripartite defensive alliance against any future German aggression. After the Munich betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the country’s Western allies, the Soviets would now accept nothing short of solid, unambiguous guarantees from those very same Western states, not just some vague promise of mutual assistance. Wisely, Stalin wanted to know with certainty that should Germany attack the Soviet Union, France and the UK would immediately declare war on Germany and conduct a serious offensive on Germany’s Western front, with reciprocal assurances from the Soviet Union. For only the fear of full-scale and simultaneous war on both Germany’s Eastern and Western fronts was likely to deter Hitler from aggression.

However, even after reluctantly agreeing to engage in negotiations with the USSR in May 1939 (as mentioned above), Chamberlain and the Foreign Office were quite unwilling to provide the Communist state with the guarantees it required. Any remaining hopes for an agreement floundered when Poland unequivocally refused to allow Soviet troops onto its territory in case of an attack by Germany. (Of course, the inescapable realities of European geography would have made it impossible for the Soviet Union to militarily defeat Germany without ever entering Polish territory!)

### **Final Soviet attempt to strike deal in fear of imminent attack by Germany and Japan**

In early July 1939, Japan launched a major attack on Soviet forces in an undeclared war, which had started with minor military skirmishes along the Soviet border over the previous two years. This led to the highly significant Battle of Khalkhin-Gol, involving over 60,000 Soviet troops, of which about 10,000 were killed.

In August, the Soviet Union was in the middle of its counteroffensive against Japanese forces. Now the prospect of a coordinated attack on the USSR by the joint forces of the Anti-Comintern alliance, better known today as the Axis Powers, was beginning to materialise. Hitler was quickly moving East: after annexing Austria in March 1938, then German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia in October 1938, then subjugating the rest of the country in March 1939, he was now, in Summer 1939, stepping up his anti-Poland rhetoric due to the country’s refusal to hand over the Danzig corridor.

On August 15th, two weeks before Hitler attacked Poland, the USSR made a final attempt to persuade France and Britain to form an anti-Nazi alliance: the Soviet Union proposed to put up to 120 infantry divisions (about two million soldiers!) as well as about 10,000 tanks and 5,000 fighter aircrafts on the Polish-German border in the event of a war between Germany and its Western neighbours. But Britain showed little interest in the offer. When the British delegation announced that the UK had only 16 combat-ready divisions, the Soviets understood that Britain had no serious intention of fighting Nazi Germany. The USSR could not count on the Western powers and was now desperate for an alternative solution to counter the Fascist threat to its survival. Ironically, the opportunity was presented by Nazi Germany itself.

Soviet leaders already knew that if an alliance was not possible between the USSR and the Western powers, then some agreement might have to be reached with Germany, even on a temporary basis. The country’s survival was at stake, and gaining even a few years of peace may allow the Soviet Union to significantly build up its ability to defend itself. The first exploratory contacts with Germany had begun when Molotov took control of Soviet Foreign Affairs in May 1939.

### **Hitler’s calculation**

In Summer 1939, Hitler was losing patience with Polish inflexibility on the Danzig issue. He knew that British leaders were rather sympathetic to German claims on Danzig. Britain kept urging Poland to find a peaceful solution through negotiations with Germany. And yet, in March 1939 the UK had given Poland a guarantee of military assistance in case of an attack by Germany. This did not mean that Britain was expecting to go to war. The promise to Poland was mainly aimed at strengthening Poland’s bargaining position in negotiations with its Western neighbour and at deterring Hitler from taking military action. The UK was wary of letting Germany become too powerful in Europe and did not want to see Poland go the same way as Czechoslovakia, but clearly did not wish to go to war over Danzig.

But Hitler, who was preparing to act against Poland, feared that Britain may yet intervene on Poland’s side. He wanted to avoid a war with the UK at all costs. Above all, Germany needed to avoid the risk of a war on two fronts. However, Hitler believed Britain would not declare war unless it expected Russia to be drawn in as well, as in this case Soviet forces would do most of the fighting on the ground. Hitler understood that Britain had no desire for a big war with Germany and that would much prefer to see the Nazis fight the USSR. It is also true that, even without a formal alliance between the USSR and the Western powers, a German attack on Poland could easily have led to a self-protective Soviet intervention against Germany, especially if Britain and France were already attacking Germany from the West. If Soviet neutrality could somehow be guaranteed, “England” would not – so Hitler believed – dare to start a war with Germany. Therefore, Hitler was prepared to make huge concessions to Stalin in exchange for a promise of Soviet neutrality. He sent his Foreign Minister Ribbentrop to Moscow to meet his Soviet counterpart Molotov with instructions to come back with a deal, whatever the price. The outcome was the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 23rd, 1939.

### **The Pact: a red line on German aggression to protect the Soviet people**

Neither Stalin, nor Hitler believed the deal would be long-lasting. But, at least temporarily, it set an Eastern limit to German expansion, a red line that Hitler was not to cross. To the Soviet leadership, the pact with Germany provided a unique

opportunity to escape a deadly attack on the USSR by the Axis Powers.

As it was already clear to Soviet leaders that Hitler was about to attack Poland, the Secret Protocol ensured that the Nazis would not enter areas considered vital to the security of the USSR, which largely corresponded to the territories within Russia's pre-WW1 borders. Until 1939, Stalin had never laid any claims on these territories or entertained any plans for occupation or annexation. Western claims that the USSR, like Germany, engaged in a war of conquest against its neighbours is not based on a single piece of documented evidence. It is the product of pure fantasy.

The pact provided invaluable benefits to the Soviet Union.

First, it prevented Germany from moving its troops to the then Eastern border of Poland and thus gaining a strong foothold for a future invasion of the Soviet Union. Had there been no deal between Germany and the USSR, a German invasion of Poland would have meant that Nazi forces could be stationed as near as 100 miles from Kiev and 25 miles from Minsk, two of the USSR's most significant cities. A Blitzkrieg could have led to the immediate capture of these two cities, after which German forces could have quickly reached the proximity of Moscow and Leningrad.

Second, the pact ensured that Germany would not be allowed to build up a foothold in Finland, Estonia and Latvia, which enjoyed friendly relations with the Nazi state, and use these countries' territories as additional launching pads for an attack on the Soviet Union.

Third, it provided the USSR with the time and necessary breathing space to intensify its military industrialisation and be in a much better position to defend itself against potential aggression in the future. Economic cooperation with Germany was a component of the deal and allowed the Soviet Union to acquire valuable technology from the Germans.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, it seriously damaged the alliance between Germany and Japan. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was in clear breach of the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact. Japan viewed it as a betrayal by Hitler and, as a result, would no longer fully trust the German leader. Consequently, Japan immediately reduced its war efforts against the Soviet Union, leading to, only three weeks after the German-Soviet pact was signed, a quick Soviet-Mongolian victory against Japanese forces and the end of the undeclared war in the Soviet Far East. This "betrayal" also largely explains why, when Hitler finally attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, Japan refused to support Germany by launching its own attack from the East.

Hence, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact most likely saved the Soviet Union from being torn apart by the two main Axis Powers, whether in 1939 or later.

### **There was no Soviet invasion: the Polish state had already collapsed**

Soviet leaders did not sign the pact as a means of conquering foreign territories, but as an absolute necessity in terms of security for the USSR. When Hitler invaded Poland on September 1st, 1939, France and Britain formally declared war on Germany – Hitler had indeed miscalculated the effect of the Pact on the UK. However, the two Western powers did not carry out any real offensive against German forces, allowing Hitler to conduct a highly successful Blitzkrieg against the well-armed and well-trained Polish Army. By September 8th, Germany had already reached the outskirts of Warsaw.

On September 17th, the Polish government fled the country into neighbouring Romania. Only then did the Soviet government announce that as the Polish state had collapsed, it would move its troops into the predominantly Ukrainian and

Belorussian parts of Poland, East of the demarcation line, to fill the power vacuum and protect the local population. The German government had previously sent a message to the Soviet Union, warning that should Soviet forces not quickly move into Eastern Poland, German forces would be forced to enter and occupy the entire Polish territory.

At the time, nobody considered that Poland had been "attacked by the Soviet Union", not even the Polish government, who called upon its allies for support against Germany, but not against the USSR. Polish forces in the East of the country were instructed not to fight the incoming Soviet troops, while resistance against the German invaders was to continue until total defeat on October 2nd. The UK and France perceived the Soviet move as a natural consequence of the German invasion, not as an attack planned in advance. Winston Churchill, then a member of the British War Cabinet, strongly welcomed this development, as it limited the extent of German expansion. At the time, Churchill even predicted that the UK and the Soviet Union would "soon be fighting together against Hitler".

### **The Phoney War: UK and France no**

For eight months following their September declaration of war, Britain and France refrained from launching attacks on German Territory – this period is famously referred to as the Phoney War in the UK, or Sitzkrieg, meaning "sitting war", by the Germans. This gave Hitler plenty of time, not only to finish the job in Poland, but to invade Norway and perfect preparations for his Blitzkrieg in France in May-June 1940, which ended in French surrender after only five weeks of fighting. British and French preparations during the Phoney War were purely defensive. Chamberlain's government still hoped that peace could be reached with Germany and continued negotiations with the Germans throughout autumn 1939.

From the Soviet perspective, the Phoney War was strong confirmation that the previous attempts to strike an alliance with France and Britain would have led nowhere. First, these countries had betrayed their liberal democratic friend Czechoslovakia and handed it over to Hitler as a sacrificial lamb. Now, when Poland was attacked, they failed to do anything to support this ally, apart from a verbal declaration of war. So, even if the demonized, Communist Soviet Union had somehow been able to make an alliance with the UK and France, and had subsequently been attacked by Hitler, then not just a "sitting war", but a "sleeping war" would have been too much to expect on Germany's Western front!

### **Re-writing of history**

After the Second World War came the Cold War. The needs of Western propaganda then called for a certain re-writing of history aimed at countering the perception of the Soviet Union as the main liberator of Europe. But the distortion of historical facts has reached Orwellian proportions in recent years, largely due to the currently fashionable demonization of Russia and of its Soviet past.

Today, such seemingly respectable institutions as the European Parliament, the governments of Western democracies, supported by the unbiased, truth-loving, European quality media, keep parroting a blatant lie as historical fact: that Nazi Germany and the USSR supposedly became natural allies as the "twin brothers of totalitarian Fascism and totalitarian Communism", the natural enemies of every freedom-loving nation, and consequently started the Second World War after making a Devil's pact for world conquest.

## Western powers more responsible than USSR for WW2 tragedy

In reality, while the Western powers had made a decisive deal with Hitler (Munich, 1938), allowing him to tear up Czechoslovakia and Poland and Hungary to take their shares of the booty, the USSR remained firm in its refusal to give in to Germany's bullying and showed its readiness to defend Czechoslovak sovereignty, alongside its Western partners, in the face of German aggression.

The UK and France engaged only half-heartedly in negotiations with the Soviet Union. Unlike the Soviet Union, they did not live under the threat that their countries may be turned into sources of raw materials for Germany and their people enslaved to the Master Aryan Race, if not exterminated. They were given clear opportunities to stop Hitler in his tracks, but did not wish to confront Germany directly, for they were not prepared to treat Communist Russia as a full and equal ally, probably hoping that the two deadly ideological enemies, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, would simply wreak destruction on each other in a massive war, with little or no direct participation of Western nations.

## The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: a blessing for the world

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was not the cause of the Second World War. Hitler was determined to move East, and as we have seen, the Western powers were unlikely to prevent him from eventually doing so. The Pact, anyway, had been due to a miscalculation on Hitler's part – Germany gained little, or nothing, while the Soviet Union benefited immensely. Had Stalin refused Hitler's offer of a deal, Hitler may have attacked Poland anyway, and reached the then Eastern borders of Poland, on the doorstep of Minsk. He would have had little trouble moving his troops through the Baltic States, possibly even with the agreement of the Latvian and Estonian governments. Finland and Romania may have helped as well. Hungary was already a clear ally.

The Phoney War shows that Hitler would not have had too much to fear from his Western neighbours. As soon as he had attacked the Soviet Union, France and Britain would most likely not have budged. Japan would have supported Germany by attacking the USSR from the East. The Soviet Union would have fought hard, but almost certainly been defeated by the double assault. After gaining control of Soviet territory, having exterminated and starved to death much of its population, Hitler

may have later moved South-East, and confronted Britain in South Asia, possibly dividing up South and East Asia between Germany and Japan.

The latest scenario particularly worried Winston Churchill, a strong believer in British Imperialism. He was convinced that Britain should prevent Hitler from building its own Empire on European and Russian territory, for by turning into an imperial world power Germany would sooner or later challenge the British Empire in a fight for world domination.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and subsequent Soviet control over most territories in its "sphere of interest", by giving the Soviet Union the means of defending itself and consolidating its military strength, as well as containing Hitler's expansion, led to its final victory over Nazi Germany. The alternative may have been a world enslaved under the rule of the barbaric Nazi regime. In this light, the Pact may even – given the historical circumstances – be considered as a blessing for the entire world.

## Chillingly Orwellian

Particularly disturbing is that historical truth is now being established by political institutions such as the European Parliament, rather than emerging from an open discussion between historical experts. In the September 18th resolution quoted initially, the European Parliament accuses those who, like the Russian government, challenge these supposed truths of making "efforts [...] to distort historical facts" and even "calls on the [European] Commission to decisively counteract these efforts". This sounds chillingly Orwellian. But what makes it all the more Orwellian is that this is supposed to be a resolution against totalitarianism!

(See also "*Concerning a European Parliament resolution – and a world war with only bad Communist oppressors and Jewish unmentionables - EU Parliament Rewrites World War Two*" by Manus O' Riordan, *Labour Affairs*, November 2019)

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(Continued from p. 24)

that the Americans themselves are not interested in a breakup of relations. In addition, Beijing sees that the United States is really losing ground in the world, and that it is the Americans, not the Chinese, who need to hurry.

Time works in favour of the East. And if the West wants to agree on "rules of engagement" and "laws of conflict," it needs to be prepared to talk honestly, to give up arguments in the style of "supporting freedom activists in Hong Kong" and "supplying weapons to Taiwan". This is the kind of dialogue that Kissinger proposes. It is not, however, the Chinese who need convincing, but the Americans.



## Britain versus Russia: Battle for the Caucasus 1918-20 (Part Three)

by Pat Walsh

British policy with regard to Russia and the Caucasus was formed in the Imperial War Cabinet. This was founded in 1916 after Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister. Its function was to concentrate power in the hands of the few (rather than the 22 of the normal Cabinet) so that the War could be directed to a conclusion with greater cohesion by 5 or 7 chosen men. The War Cabinet outlived the Great War it was established to win and was maintained for a year after the Armistices of 1918.

The Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, headed by Lord Curzon, dealt with policy in relation to the Russian periphery. The Eastern Committee, following Curzon's policy, assumed that a corridor of buffer states would be constructed between the Russian centre and the British Empire. But what happened in the Russian heartland was to have a great bearing on what happened in the periphery.

British policy on Russia and the Bolsheviks was fought over by 3 men – the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, the Minister for War, Winston Churchill and the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, who succeeded Arthur Balfour in mid-1919.

### Lloyd George and the Democracy

Lloyd George wrote in his Memoirs:

*"I would have dealt with the Soviets as the de facto Government of Russia. So would President Wilson. But we both agreed that we could not carry to that extent our colleagues at the Congress, nor the public opinion of our own countries which was frightened by Bolshevik violence and feared its spread."* (David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, p.331)

While that was only part of the story it was certainly the case that the new democracy was a big part of the reason for poor policy with regard to Russia, particularly in Britain.

A very important development that had great effect on Britain's policy toward Russia, the Bolsheviks and the Caucasus, occurred in February 1918, when the UK electorate was nearly tripled at a stroke by the Fourth Reform Act (from the 7.7 million at the time of the last election in 1910 to 21 million). The consequences of this only became apparent after the General Election in December 1918, when the Lloyd George Coalition won a landslide victory to dominate Parliament.

Before the Great War Britain was an oligarchic democracy in which the traditional elite held sway above a limited enfranchisement which had, in 1914, reached about a third of the populace. The British system before the War was one of government by the ruling class eliciting consent of the governed masses. But in 1918 the oligarchic, ruling class that planned and organised the Great War in Britain, behind the scenes, gave way to the democracy which the Great War brought forth. "*The whole State*" conceded to the masses.

The man who was Prime Minister of Britain in 1918, Lloyd George, had made himself very powerful. But he still had to live by his wits in the company of his social superiors, within a rapidly changing situation, brought about by the sudden introduction of mass democracy, in which he had built himself his singular and predominant power base. He had to be fluid and like quicksilver. He was a man who had shown he had principles but who had largely abandoned them to rise up the greasy pole and stay at the top of it. And he had assumed the character of a weather vane, blowing one way or another, as events affected him, to stay at the top.

It was the character and power of this man, and the unprecedented situation that pertained in Britain at the end of the Great War, that needs to be understood if we are to get to grips with what happened in relation to British policy on Russia and in relation to the Caucasus from 1918 to 1920.

Lloyd George was a Liberal Prime Minister heading a Coalition with a largely Conservative Cabinet. The chief Tories in the War Cabinet, Balfour and Bonar Law, were opposed to large scale Allied intervention in Russia because of fear of Bolshevism spreading to Britain.

A series of peace proposals were advanced by the Bolsheviks after the Armistices with Germany and the Ottomans. The British Foreign Office urged that nothing be done that would give the Bolsheviks recognition and, in consequence, "*moral strength*" since "*beset by internal dangers and struggles and surrounded by enemies*" the Soviet government "*might well crumble to ruin in the near future*" (FO 371/3346, 23.12.1918).

The Prime Minister too initially advocated that "*no fixed attitude*" should be taken to Bolshevik "*Central Russia*". He was "*definitely opposed to military intervention in any shape*" – meaning direct British force – noting that the British war on the French Revolution a century ago had enabled Danton to "*rally the French*" and "*create a great military machine imbued with a passionate hatred*" of Britain (CAB 23/42, 31.12.1918).

Lloyd George advocated a policy of "*non-interference in the internal affairs*" of the area under Bolshevik control, "*any assistance, financial or material... possible, excluding troops*" for those occupying the Russian periphery, like Denikin and assistance to states which had declared their independence from the Russian Empire i.e. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (CAB 29/28/1, 13.1.1919).

The Prime Minister was against any significantly increased level of British intervention in Russia beyond the forces already there because of fear of costs in both blood and treasure. He advanced the argument in Cabinet that civil wars were won ultimately by the side that is able to attract the greater popular support, and therefore is deserving of victory.

This line facilitated the policy of Britain giving the anti-Bolshevik forces as much support as they needed without actually making the Russian Civil War Britain's war. If the Whites succeeded in winning the support of the Russian people they would win, if they could not they would lose, and Britain could abandon them as quickly as she had supported them.

The Prime Minister's policy on Russia held primacy in the British Cabinet and was only really contested by the War Minister, Winston Churchill and to a lesser extent, the Foreign Secretary, from mid-1919, Lord Curzon.

At Christmas 1918 an old Bolshevik and Deputy Commissar, Maxim Litvinov, sent President Wilson a note requesting negotiations with the West with a view to settling accounts. After ascertaining the genuine nature of the offer President Wilson proposed a meeting at Paris where all the parties to the Russian Civil War could meet.

Lloyd George favoured inviting the Bolsheviks to negotiations, along with the other Russian factions, to Paris – or somewhere else, if that was unacceptable. He described his attitude as akin to the Fox Whigs with regard to the French Revolution (Lloyd George, *The Truth Behind the Peace Conference*, p.331). A meeting was proposed by the British Prime Minister to the Allied Supreme Council in early 1919

to take place on the Princes Islands (Prinkipo) near Istanbul to settle differences among the Russians. But this suggestion was shot down by the French government and the White Russians.

### **Churchill against Lloyd George**

One of the Prime Minister's social superiors was Winston Churchill, who was to provide the main, indeed only substantial, opposition, to Lloyd George's Russian policy.

By the time Winston Churchill had become Secretary of State for War and a member of the War Cabinet, British forces were already committed in various regions of the Russian Empire and engaged in battle with the Bolsheviks.

Churchill demanded a clear Russian policy from the British Cabinet. He argued that Britain should either pull out or take determined action in support of the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia. He was not in favour of the Prime Minister's Prinkipo policy and said: "*One might as well legalise sodomy as recognise the Bolsheviks.*" (24.1.1919, Anthony Read, *The World On Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism*, p.104)

At the Imperial War Cabinet on the last day of 1918 Churchill argued for collective intervention to destroy the Bolsheviks. He wanted to use military force to impose an election on Russia that he was sure the Bolsheviks would lose (CAB 23/42, 31.12.1918). Churchill put his proposal to the Allied Supreme Council in February 1919. He also sent two telegrams to the Prime Minister in Paris, outlining his plans for Russia.

Lloyd George replied to his War Minister, explaining the basis of his opposition to large-scale direct intervention in Russia, saying he was

*"very alarmed at your...planning war against the Bolsheviks. The Cabinet have never authorised such a proposal. They have never contemplated anything beyond supplying Armies in anti-Bolshevik areas...I beg you not to commit this country to what would be a purely mad enterprise out of hatred of Bolshevik principles. An expensive war of aggression against Russia is a way to strengthen Bolshevism in Russia and create it at home. We cannot afford the burden. Chamberlain (Chancellor of the Exchequer) tells me we can hardly make both ends meet on a peace basis even at the present rate of taxation and if we are committed to a war against a continent like Russia it is the direct road to bankruptcy and Bolshevism in these islands."* (Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I, pp. 371-2)

Churchill, in his demand for a "*Crusade against Bolshevism*", was supported by Marshal Foch who wished to raise an army of Polish and east Europeans to support the Whites in bringing down the Bolsheviks. However, both Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson opposed such a large intervention and the Allied Council rejected Churchill's and Foch's proposals.

### **A Second Brest-Litovsk?**

Determined to pursue the peace initiative President Wilson and Lloyd George took secret steps to advance it, through Colonel House.

In February 1919 there was an opportunity for a settlement to be made between the Allies and the Bolshevik government in Russia. The Bolsheviks, at this point, had made a number of attempts to make peace with those who were supporting armed insurrection on Russian territory.

If a peace settlement had been successfully concluded at this moment it would have changed the history of Russia, the Caucasus, and perhaps that of Europe as a whole. However, it was lost, primarily due to the subsequent evasion and inaction of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George.

In February 1919 William Bullitt, a US State Department Intelligence Officer, working with Colonel House in Paris, was sent on a secret "*fact finding*" mission to Moscow. It was more than a "*fact finding*" mission, though. Prior to his departure, Bullitt had been briefed by the British Cabinet Secretary, Sir

Maurice Hankey, and Sir Philip Kerr, a Round Table/Royal Institute of International Affairs man, who was part of the British delegation at Paris. These two influential figures, after conferring with the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, gave Bullitt the task of obtaining "*an exact statement of the terms on which*" the Bolsheviks "*were ready to stop fighting*" (*The Bullitt Mission to Russia: Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate*, pp. 34)

Kerr detailed the terms he ascertained from Lloyd George that would result in a peace settlement – if the Bolsheviks agreed to them. Generous financial assistance was promised to Moscow on the British/U.S. side. In return, after a ceasing of hostilities on all fronts the Soviets had to allow "*All de facto governments to remain in full control of the territories which they at present occupy.*" (ibid, p.37)

After meeting Chicherin, Litvinov and finally Lenin himself, in long conferences, Bullitt and his colleagues were presented with the terms Lenin would settle for in return for an end to the starvation blockade, trade embargo, military assistance to the Whites and Allied intervention in Russia.

Almost all of the British demands were conceded by Lenin. These included most importantly the Bolshevik concession that

*"All existing de facto governments on the territory of the former Russian Empire and Finland would remain in full control of the territories they occupied at the moment of the Armistice, the revision of frontiers to take place only by the self-determination of the inhabitants. Each government would agree not to use force against any of the others."* (ibid pp. 39-44)

Bullitt later commented:

*"Lenin's proposal meant, therefore, that the Soviet government offered to give up, at least temporarily, the whole of Siberia, the Urals, the Caucasus, the Archangel and Murmansk areas, Finland, the Baltic States, a portion of White Russia, and most of the Ukraine."* (William C. Bullitt, *The Tragedy of Versailles, Life*, Vol. XVI, No.13, March 1944, pp.98-118)

In effect, this was a second Brest-Litovsk, with Lenin and the Bolsheviks prepared to buy off Allied military and economic pressure through the concession of large swathes of territory which could not be conquered at the time. The Russian heartland would be retained by the Bolsheviks in the hope that a spread of the revolution might bring about a future resurrection.

Bolshevik Russia would pay off the Tsarist foreign debt. The financial assistance promised to the Bolsheviks was something of a double-edged sword for Lenin to consider.

After Bullitt received the Soviet terms on 14 March he communicated them to the British and wrote in his Memorandum to the President of the U.S. that he believed it to be:

*"an opportunity to make peace with the revolution on a just and reasonable basis – perhaps a unique opportunity...No real peace can be established in Europe or the world until peace is made with the revolution."* (Foreign Relations, 1919, Russia, pp.85-9)

Lenin insisted on a reply within a month, to safeguard against Allied advances before the peace deal.

Colonel House was ready to recommend a separate peace with Moscow on the basis of Lenin's acceptance of the terms outlined to him in the Bullitt Mission. (John M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Treaty*, p.236)

The Bullitt Mission was leaked to the British press and *The Daily Mail* produced a ferocious editorial against parleying with "*an evil thing known as Bolshevism*", penned by the newly appointed editor of *The Times*, Henry Wickham Steed. This, linking Bullitt's mission to the pre-War Liberal pacifism, the Prinkipo proposal, Jewish International Finance and the appeasement of Germany, shook Lloyd George, according

to Bullitt's testimony to the Senate Committee (*The Bullitt Mission to Russia: Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate*, p. 66).

By 10 April more than 200 Conservative MPs had signed a petition urging non-recognition of the Soviet government. In the British Parliament on 16 April, under questioning from Conservative MPs, the Prime Minister denied any knowledge of the Bullitt Mission, despite having received the US Intelligence Officer for breakfast in Paris, for a full report on his Mission, only a few days before. Lloyd George then used the occasion to make a major policy statement on Russia which ruled out recognition of the Bolsheviks and any peace moves entirely.

President Wilson also gave Bullitt the brush-off. Colonel House passed him off to hostile subordinates and all was lost as the April 10 deadline was allowed to pass without reply to the Soviet offer.

Frederic Howe, who was part of President Wilson's staff at Paris, and who gives wonderful descriptions of what happened at the Peace Conference between the British and Americans, later wrote about the Bullitt mission:

*"The Mission had been successful. The Russians had acceded to the allied memorandum; a rapprochement seemed established; Russia was to come back into the family of nations. Bullitt and Steffens were elated. A great advance had been made toward international amity. For some reason or other they could not see the President. Lloyd George received Bullitt and the report, but later denied that he knew of the mission or had given his consent to it. No explanation for his change of front was ever offered. That Lloyd George had approved of the mission was obvious to all. It could not have left France, could not have landed in England, could not have secured conveyance to Russia but for British aid and approval. Truth meant little at Paris... Some time after the return of the Russian mission William Bullitt resigned. He felt, he said, that he could not face himself longer in the world of duplicity in which America was being ensnared. Several other experts withdrew with him."* (The Confessions of a Reformer, pp.303-4)

### **George Kennan later commented:**

*"An... important cause of Bullitt's misfortune was no doubt the domestic-political situation in England, which did not permit Mr. Lloyd George to do what he thought would have been sensible about the Russian problem. Here you get into another of the characteristic disadvantages of democratic-diplomacy – the fact that a system of government under which the executive power is sensitively attuned to the waves of popular sentiment, and of parliamentary opinion, is one which finds it difficult to adjust rapidly and incisively to a complicated and fast-moving series of circumstances, especially when controversial domestic issues are involved... All this was doubly true of the representatives of democratic governments who struggled with the Russian problem..."* (*Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, p.135)

In short, the British democracy blew Lloyd George away from a peace policy toward the Bolsheviks and prevented a functional settlement being made with Russia in 1919, which condemned the Caucasus to its subsequent fate in the following year.

### **Churchill's War on Bolshevism**

Without a peace settlement that confined the Bolsheviks to the Russian heartland and gave time for states around the periphery of the old Russian Empire to bed in, what policy was possible?

At this point the Royal Navy was tightening a starvation blockade on Germany in order to secure its capitulation to the Treaty of Versailles. In Parliament, in early March, Churchill warned of the possible consequences of this policy if it was

pursued to a finish. He suggested it was now time to make peace with Germany before it was too late:

*"We have strong armies ready to advance at the shortest notice. Germany is very near starvation. There was an imminent danger of a collapse of the entire structure of German social and national life under the pressure of hunger and malnutrition. Now is therefore the time to settle. To delay indefinitely would be to run a grave risk... of having another great area of the world sunk with Bolshevik anarchy. That would be a very grave event."* (*The Times*, 4.3.1919)

Lloyd George, responding to this fear of the starvation blockade resulting in Bolshevism, began to relax the blockade (although it was not wound up for another 3 months).

Another speech by the Minister for War, Winston Churchill, made at the moment of decision for Lloyd George over the Bullitt/Lenin peace proposals, seems to have put considerable pressure on the Prime Minister.

At the Aldwych in London, on 11 April, Churchill told his audience:

*"Of all the tyrannies in history, the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, the most degrading... The atrocities by Lenin and Trotsky are incomparably more hideous... than any for which the Kaiser himself is responsible. There is also to be remembered – whatever crimes the Germans have committed... at any rate they stuck to their allies. They misled them, they exploited them, but... they did not desert or betray them. It may have been honour among thieves, but that is better than honour among murderers... Every British and French soldier lost last year was really done to death by Lenin and Trotsky... by the treacherous desertion of an ally without parallel in the history of the world... A way of atonement is open to Germany. By combating Bolshevism, by being the bulwark against it, Germany may take the first step toward ultimate reunion with the civilised world."* (*The Times* 12.4.1919)

Churchill's slogan was:

*"Feed Germany: Fight Bolshevism: Make Germany Fight Bolshevism!"* He held that there should be *"Peace with the German people, war with the Bolshevik tyranny"*. (Anthony Read, *The World on Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism*, p.166)

When the Prime Minister heard about Churchill's speech he is said to have exclaimed:

*"He has Bolshevism on the brain. Now he wants to make a treaty with the Germans to fight the Bolsheviks. He wants to employ German troops, and he is mad for operations in Russia."* (Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and after 1918-23*, p.50)

In 1919 Churchill tried to act in accordance with the world he had operated within before the War, on the presumptions that had existed before 1914. He wished to secure the position that had been hard won and defend the civilisation Britain had gained predominance within along with the duty to defend it. The War Britain had won had wrecked much of what was European civilisation and rendered others incapable of its defence against that which had been produced that threatened it.

All the British Government was anti-Bolshevik but Churchill was the most anti-Communist member of the War Cabinet and saw the defeat of *"the Bolshevik poison"* as the main issue in the world in 1919. In the *Aftermath* volume of his *World Crisis* Churchill made clear his hatred of Bolshevism and what he thought it had brought forth:

*"... not a wounded Russia only, but a poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia; a Russia of armed hordes... accompanied and preceded by swarms of typhus-bearing vermin which slew the bodies of men, and political*

*doctrines which destroyed the health and even the soul of nations.*" (*The World Crisis*, V, p.263)

Bolshevism had to be destroyed lest it infect civilisation everywhere. That is why Churchill proposed a British alliance with the Germany Britain had only just defeated, for a war on Bolshevism (instead of it being punished for War Guilt). The appearance of Bolshevism demanded a common civilisational defence and the hysterical moral propaganda of the Great War on Germany needed to be cast aside.

Churchill outlined his views in a *Memorandum* to the Prime Minister he wrote criticising policy on Russia:

*"Since the Armistice my policy would have been 'Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny'. Willingly or unavoidably, you have followed something very near the reverse... we are now face to face with the results. They are terrible. We may win maybe but we are within measurable distance of universal collapse and anarchy throughout Europe and Asia. Russia has gone into ruin. What is left of her is in the power of these deadly snakes."* (Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. V, p.257)

It was said that the War of 1914 was a "war for civilisation" on Britain's part – "*Civilisation and the Barbarian*" as it was put by Professor Tom Kettle in the Liberal press. Churchill knew that that was all propaganda. In 1919 there was a real war for civilisation taking place.

Churchill was later to lavish praise on both Mussolini and Hitler for defending Western Civilisation against the Bolshevik threat. In 1919 he identified the influence of the Bolshevik state acting upon the situation of flux caused by the Great War and its settlement at Versailles as threatening the foundations of civilisation in Europe. Fascism was needed as a bulwark against Bolshevism and Churchill supported it on this basis as an antidote to poison. He proposed that Germany could atone for its War Guilt by acting as a European bulwark against Bolshevism and Hitler subsequently took Churchill at his word.

Churchill saw a strong link between what happened in Russia and what happened in Germany. In a *Memorandum* written later in 1919 he described this:

*"Generally speaking, it may be said that there are two Russias and two Germanies, a Bolshevik and an anti-Bolshevik Russia, and a pro-Bolshevik and an anti-Bolshevik Germany. Both Germanies look to Russia as their only means of regaining world power. Either by the pro-Bolshevik or anti-Bolshevik road Germany is determined to get hold of Russia... the moment the Allies take steps which are fundamentally injurious to anti-Bolshevik Russia, and make it clear they do not care whether it is crushed or not, both the Russian hands will be stretched out alternatively for Germany to clasp, and either in one way or another these two mighty branches of the human race will come together in effective action."* (CAB 24/89, 16.9.1919 and Winston S. Churchill, *World Crisis: Aftermath*, pp.251-3)

Churchill evidently believed in the view, most famously advanced by Prof. Halford Mackinder, that the most vital necessity of British geopolitics was to prevent Germany and Russia joining forces and control the "*Heartland*" of what Mackinder called the "*World Island*" in his 1919 book, *Democratic Ideas and Reality*. This is primarily why a series of buffer states – or *cordon sanitaire* – was erected by the Allied Powers at Paris, between Germany and Russia.

We shall hear of Mackinder in relation to the Caucasus, later.

The bungled British War on Germany of 1939-40 led to Churchill having to enter alliance with the forces of "*anti-civilisation*" in order to defeat those who he had previously praised for defending civilisation. Such are the vagaries of the British Balance of Power that turned Churchill the Fascist into Churchill the anti-Fascist (see *Zionism versus Bolshevism: A*

*Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People*, *Sunday Herald*, 8.2.1920 and *Mr. Churchill on Fascism, Antidote to Soviet Poison*, *The Times*, 21.1.1927 for example.)

The Balance of Power – Britain's traditional policy of creating conflict and war in Europe – so that England could dominate the world, was everything to Churchill.

Churchill continued to argue that the procrastination of the British Government had worsened the situation in Russia. He saw the early months of 1919 as having been disastrous for the anti-Bolshevik cause, because of the lack of substantial intervention by the Allies. The Allied Supreme Command finally declared its official support for Admiral Kolchak in attempting to overthrow the Bolsheviks in June 1919 but Churchill felt this was too little too late.

Along with putting forward a vigorous anti-Bolshevik policy Churchill subsequently operated something of a private war against Lenin from the War Office, from mid-1919. Frustrated with the lack of a clear Cabinet policy on Russia and the obstructionist tactics of the Prime Minister, he began to pursue his own Russian policy independently of the War office.

Churchill's private war should be understood as a last aristocratic hurrah against a democracy that was making a mess of the world it had won in its Great War victory.

### **Lloyd George Blown Away**

On 16 April, under pressure from the backbenchers over the suspicion that he had had a hand in peace overtures to the Bolsheviks and Churchill's call for war on Russia Lloyd George made a major speech on his Russia policy. He said:

"I should like to say a few words about Russia. I have read, and I have heard of very simple remedies produced by both sides. Some say, "Use force!" Some say, "Make peace!" It is not easy; it is one of the most complex problems ever dealt with by any body of men. One difficulty is that there is no Russia. Siberia is broken off. There is the Don, one of the richest provinces of Russia, the Caucasus, and then there is some organisation controlling Central Russia; but there is no body that can say it is a de facto Government for the whole of Russia... To begin with, let me say at once, there is no question of recognition. It has never been discussed.—it was never put forward, and never discussed for the reasons I have given. I can give two or three more. There is no Government representing the whole of Russia. The Bolshevik Government has committed against Allied subjects great crimes which have made it impossible to recognise it, even if it were a civilised Government, and the third reason is that at this very moment they are attacking our friends in Russia. What is the alternative? Does anyone propose military intervention? I want to examine that carefully and candidly... I believe I may say every man in this House wholly disagrees fundamentally—with all the principles upon which the present Russian experiment is based. We deplore its horrible consequences—starvation, bloodshed, confusion, ruin, and horror. But that does not justify us in committing this country to a gigantic military enterprise in order to improve the conditions in Russia.

*"Let me speak in all solemnity, and with a great sense of responsibility. Russia is a country which it is very easy to invade, but very difficult to conquer. It has never been conquered by a foreign foe, although it has been successfully invaded many times. It is a country which it is easy to get into, but very difficult to get out of... If we conquered Russia—and we could conquer it—you would be surprised at the military advice which is given us as to the number of men who would be required, and I should like to know where they are to come from. But supposing you had them. Supposing you gathered together an overwhelming army, and you conquered Russia. What manner of government are you going to set up there?... Look at it in another way. We have an Army of Occupation (in*

Germany). *I know what it costs. You cannot immediately leave Russia until you have restored order. It will take a long time to restore order in Russia... I share the horror of all the Bolshevik teachings, but I would rather leave Russia Bolshevik until she sees her way out of it than see Britain bankrupt. And that is the surest road to Bolshevism in Britain... To attempt military intervention in Russia would be the greatest act of stupidity that any Government could possibly commit. But then I am asked if that be the case, why do you support Koltchak, Denikin, and Kharkow? I will tell the House with the same frankness as I put the other case. When the Brest-Litoff treaty was signed, there were large territories and populations in Russia that had neither hand nor part in that shameful pact, and they revolted against the Government which signed it.*

*“As long as they stand there, with the evident support of the populations... It is our business, since we asked them to take this step, since we promised support to them if they took this step, and since by taking this stand they contributed largely to the triumph of the Allies, it is our business to stand by our friends. Therefore, we are not sending troops, but we are supplying goods. Everyone who knows Russia knows that, if she is to be redeemed, she must be redeemed by her own sons. All that they ask is—seeing that the Bolsheviks secured the arsenals of Russia—that they should be supplied with the necessary arms to enable them to fight for their own protection and freedom in the land where the Bolsheviks are anti-pathetic to the feeling of the population. Therefore I do not in the least*

*regard it as a departure from the fundamental policy of Great Britain not to interfere in the internal affairs of any land that we should support General Denikin, Admiral Koltchak, and General Kharkoff.”* (Hansard cols. 2939-2945, 16.04.1919)

At the Supreme Allied Council a couple of months earlier, during the Prinkipo discussions, Lloyd George had repeated that the Bolsheviks were undoubtedly the dominant force in Russia and they had to be come to terms with. And he had attempted to come to terms with them through the Bullitt Mission. But he had changed his tune after the criticism made of the peace overtures and Churchill’s anti-Bolshevik speech.

Dr. Emile Joseph Dillon in his incomparable account of the Peace Conference at Paris makes the following comment about the failure of the Allied policy toward Bolshevism and Russia:

*“The Allies... might have solved the Bolshevik problem by making up their minds which of the two alternative politics — war against, or tolerance of, Bolshevism — they preferred, and by taking suitable action in good time. If they had handled the Russian tangle with skill and repaid a great sacrifice with a small one before it was yet too late, they might have hoped to harvest in abundant fruits in the fullness of time. But they belonged to the class of the undecided, whose members continually suffer from the absence of a middle word between yes and no, connoting what is neither positive nor negative. They let the opportunity slip.”* (E.J. Dillon, *The Inside Story of the Peace Conference*, p.399)

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## US Former General Edward Erickson on House of Representatives Decision to Recognize Armenian Genocide

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In the wake of a nearly unanimous House resolution on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, powerful voices are now calling for an accompanying Senate resolution and presidential action. The former, at least, is likely. Turkey bitterly opposes such action for obvious reasons and, to be honest, the reason that the resolution has gained traction at this moment has more to do with authoritarianism in Turkey and the invasion of Kurdish-held northeastern Syria than with history. Former U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power published a strident op-ed in the *New York Times* demanding that the United States acknowledge the “facts” and recognize the events of 1915 as a genocide.

As a matter of international convention the crime of genocide has a specific definition, the most important element of which is “the intent to destroy.” Another important element of such a charge is that it pertains to individuals rather than to entire countries or groups. You cannot hold a nation-state accountable for genocide (and, in this case, the Turkish Republic did not yet exist). Rather, you must charge individuals. Genocide is an accusation to be taken seriously and brought with the most stringent standards of evidence. Assertions of the need for ex post facto recognition of such a crime are inflammatory and dangerous, if for no other reason than that, in this case, the accused are long dead. Political recognition of a genocide in the House of Representatives or the halls of power in any other country do not endow the charge with factual legitimacy.

Examinations of the authentic historical evidence available today should be undertaken by historians. This might seem like an obvious claim, yet much of the literature on this topic tends to be dominated by non-historians. For example, Samantha Power is a lawyer, Taner Akcam is a sociologist by training, Fatma Müge Gökgçe is a sociologist, and Peter Balakian is a

literature professor. We should keep in mind that professionally trained historians are highly specialized academically and the military and civil history of the late Ottoman imperial period is a very narrow field. It is easy to lodge an accusation today, but it is far harder to provide authenticated evidentiary material that passes a high standard of veracity. In the case of what happened to the Ottoman-Armenians 100 years ago, historians are left with archival documents, the accounts of witnesses, and the accounts of secondary observers. Reconciling why things happened and even the truth of what actually happened, from these sources, is enormously difficult even for trained historians with the appropriate linguistic and research skills.

Further, what we commonly call “history” is not the truth. History is *always* an interpretation of a set of facts concerning events in the past and, sadly, often skewed by preexisting and partisan views. Regarding the massacres in eastern Anatolia in 1915, the fact that thousands of Armenians were deliberately killed is not in question. However, the facts about who the perpetrators were and the level at which decisions were made to kill Ottoman-Armenians *are* in question. Moreover, the larger question about whether there was or was not a centralized plan of extermination remains hotly contested in academia. Unlike the evidentiary trail historians have followed investigating the Holocaust, there is, in late 2019, no authentic documentary evidence available that conclusively answers these questions. Rather, there is a body of speculative conjecture based on the presumption that correlation equals causation — these are not truths, these are arguments by assertion.

In terms of the extant scholarship today, there are six major theses about why the mass killings of Ottoman-Armenians occurred in eastern Anatolia in 1915, which I reviewed in my book on the topic. All six embrace the same existing evidence

but weigh it and interpret it differently. These are, in no particular order:

1. The ethnic homogenization, or Turkification, of Anatolia
2. The intent to destroy, or premeditated genocide
3. Cumulative radicalization, or non-premeditated genocide
4. Retaliation and justification, or a response to the killing of Ottoman Muslims
5. State security and the existence of a large insurgency
6. Operational security and counter-insurgency by relocation

What can actually be proven? First, there were many, many well-documented episodes of localized massacres of Ottoman-Armenians. Second, many Ottoman officials actively helped to save large numbers of Ottoman-Armenians. Third, Armenian revolutionary committees actively conspired with the Russian empire to raise rebellion in the Ottoman army's rear areas in support of Russian offensives. Fourth, the Ottoman army used contemporary practices of relocation employed by the British in the Boer republics, the Americans in the Philippines, and the Spanish in Cuba as an operational counter-insurgency approach (which I review in detail in my latest book).

What *cannot* be proven at the present time? First, the number of Ottoman-Armenians who were killed or died as a result of relocation, and second, the motives of Ottoman officials at national, provincial, and local levels who participated in the relevant events.

There is a large amount of archival evidence that has been excluded from the Armenian version of the narrative. Much of this evidence is inconvenient for the Armenian diaspora because it provides counterpoints to the notion that an actual genocide occurred. The exclusion of inconvenient evidence has led to a mythology about World War I that presents the entire Ottoman-Armenian population solely as victims. British, French, Russian, and Turkish archives provide ample probative evidence on a number of facts that do not support the case that a genocide took place. I will briefly review some of them here. Please keep in mind that I am not providing the full story here, but rather reporting established facts that counter the narrative that recently took the U.S. House of Representatives by storm.

Ottoman authorities had reasons to be gravely concerned by the activities of Armenian revolutionaries and their external sponsors and supporters. In the late 1880s, the Ottoman-Armenians formed a number of secret cell-like terrorist revolutionary groups called committees. The well-armed Armenian Revolutionary Committees (the Dashnaks and Hunchaks in particular) actively rebelled against the Ottoman state in 1914 and 1915.

Both the Central Powers and the Allies actively tried to foment rebellions in the Middle East during World War I in order to weaken their enemies. And these Armenian Revolutionary Committees were encouraged to rebel and were supported by the Russians, British, and French. As the war dragged on, prominent Armenians (both Ottoman and Russian Armenian citizens) led Russian-based conventional Armenian military forces against the Ottomans. Famous Armenian leaders such as Andranik and Dro formed *Druzhiniy* (legions) which fought side-by-side with the Russian Army.

They had help from abroad from their diaspora activities. Like the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian communities before

them, the Armenian diaspora, such as it existed in 1914, actively conspired with the Allies to bring an independent Armenia into existence. This effort continued after the war through 1921.

Critically, while many Ottoman-Armenians supported the revolutionary committees, many also supported the government. In fact, many loyal Ottoman-Armenians fought for the Ottoman state throughout the war and, by 1918, some 350,000 Ottoman-Armenians remained safely in their homes in the western regions of the empire. It is worth considering that the western provinces, such as Istanbul, Edirne, Izmir, and Bursa, which were not in the war zone, were excluded from the relocation orders. In the post-war period, however, most of these would choose to emigrate from the new Turkish republic, leaving only around 50,000 to 70,000 Armenian-Turks there today.

What were Ottoman authorities to do when faced with these real threats to their empire's territorial integrity in the midst of a war that was like nothing the world had even seen? The removal of the Ottoman-Armenian population from the six eastern provinces effectively constituted a counter-insurgency campaign. And by turning to the relocation of populations, the Ottomans were using a method widely used by other empires both before and after World War I. This is not meant to defend these methods, but to accurately describe them and place them in historical context.

The Ottoman campaign contrasts with what Nazi Germany did to European Jewish victims of the Holocaust in some important ways. For example, Nazi Germany clearly sought to destroy all of European Jewry and, in an effort to do so, removed nearly complete Jewish populations to extermination camps in a way accurately characterized as systematic. In contrast, the removal and mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians in 1915 was localized and not systematic in eastern Anatolia. In some places such as Diyarbakir and Sivas, almost all Ottoman-Armenians were killed, while in other places, such as Adana and Aleppo, very few Ottoman-Armenians were killed.

As a matter of historical record, the Ottoman Empire — in comparison with Russia or Austria-Hungary — treated ethnic minorities with respect. As the news of civilian Armenian victimization reached Istanbul, the Ottoman state took active measures to halt and alleviate the localized mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians in the summer of 1915. The accused were often rogue provincial officials and sometimes Kurds or Circassians. In subsequent trials conducted by the Ottoman Ministry of Justice, hundreds of individuals were held accountable in 1916 for crimes against Ottoman-Armenians.

Now let's turn to these crimes and atrocities, of which there were many. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there was no single period of mass killings. There were three historically discrete periods of the mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians during and after World War I. The first was during the 1915 eastern Anatolian removal. The second was during the 1918 recovery of Erzincan and Erzurum by the Ottoman army. And the third was in 1921 during the Turkish nationalist recovery of Cilicia and Kars/Ardahan.

Further, there was no Ottoman premeditated plan of extermination against the empire's Christians. In fact, many Ottoman officials (like Cemal Pasha) directly protected and helped relocate Ottoman-Armenians in 1915, enabling thousands to survive.

It is commonly said that 1.5 million Ottoman-Armenians — a number that amounts to nearly 100 percent of the pre-war population — were killed. In reality, some 300,000 Ottoman-Armenians fled to Russia, became refugees there in 1914–1915, and survived the war. Combined with the known Ottoman-Armenians who were not relocated, it is clear that large numbers (we do not know exactly how many) survived the experience of war. And there were, of course, other victims. It is largely forgotten today that during periods of Armenian and Russian occupation of Ottoman territory hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Muslims were killed by the Armenians. While this never justified the reciprocal killing of Armenians, it inflamed the already tense and dangerous situations.

The Ottoman Teşkilatı Mahsusa (the Ottoman Special Organization) stands accused of genocidal acts and has been labeled as the model for the Nazi *Einsatzgruppen*. However, the Ottoman archival records tell another story that disassociates the organization from relocating Armenians. Like its British counterpart in Cairo, the Special Organization was not organized to kill civilians. Rather, it was a CIA-like intelligence organization that also attempted to raise Muslim rebellions in Allied territories.

Opinions among the professional historians specializing in the late Ottoman imperial period about the genocide question are mixed and most try to avoid the topic entirely. It can ruin a budding academic career when researchers are characterized

incorrectly as “genocide deniers.” The late American historian Donald Quataert, a specialist in Ottoman history, called it “the elephant in the room” for historians of the Ottoman Empire. Was there a genocide? This is an open question, and one that is more complicated than the recent House of Representatives resolution lets on. Much more research in the Turkish archives, which are open to historians, should be done to answer this important historical question conclusively. I do not need to convince you that history is often politicized to advance personal or collective aims — you know this already. In this case, let’s not forget the context: This House vote was paired with a vote on the PACT Act, which “imposes sanctions and various restrictions related to Turkey’s military invasion of northern Syria.” I am not writing to defend what Turkey is doing in Syria, but to point to a problem: The politicization of history in this particular case further damages Turkish-American relations at a time when neither country can afford it.

November 13, 2019

*Dr. Edward J. Erickson is a retired professor of military history from the Marine Corps University. He has published extensively on World War I in the Middle East. Some of his recent books include A Global History of Relocation in Counterinsurgency Warfare, Palestine, The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914-1918, Gallipoli, Command under Fire, and Ottomans and Armenians, A Study in Counterinsurgency. He is currently writing a book on the Turkish Army in the War of Independence (1919 to 1923).*

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## America is Afraid of the Consequences of a War with China, by Piotr Akopov.

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Piotr Akopov writes for an important online news channel called Vzgliad run by Konstantin Rykov. He is considered one of the editorial board. This article is taken from this channel (Translation M. Dunlop, C. Winch).

Here is the Wikipedia entry for Rykov:

Rykov was born in Moscow. Since 1998 he made his mark as one of the first professional Russian Internet producers. Rykov together with Egor Lavrov created websites and television programs such as the popular TV show *Star Factory*. Since 2002 he has been working as head of the Internet department of the First Channel of the state television, where he cooperated with art impresario Marat Gelman in a range of political websites.

Rykov’s latest media projects include the production of electronic newspapers Дни and Взгляд (=Vzgliad = Views [on the News]) (pronounced v-z-g-liad), publication and promotion of controversial bestselling novelists Sergey Minaev and Eduard Bagirov, and support of Vladimir Putin via several websites.

On 2 December 2007, Rykov was elected as a deputy of the Duma representing Nizhny Novgorod as a candidate of pro-Kremlin party United Russia.

Piotr Akopov is referring to Kissinger’s latest visit to Beijing when he attended the New Economy Forum (20-22 November 2019) organized by Bloomberg Media Group, a division of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News. Other guests included Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates and former U.S. Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson.

## America is afraid of the consequences of a war with America, by Piotr Akopov.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger spoke in favour of resolving the trade conflict between the United States and China. Moreover, he called for a big political discussion between the two countries. These statements were made by the patriarch of American foreign policy on the eve of his meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing. According to him, the conflict between the U.S. and China could have worse consequences than World War I.

Recently, 96-year-old Kissinger has been coming to China almost every year. His previous meeting with Xi Jinping took place last November [2018]. At that time, the trade war between the two countries was only gaining momentum. And now that the former secretary of state has arrived at the Innovation Economy Forum in Beijing 20-22 November 2019, there are signs that a trade agreement between the two countries may be concluded in the coming weeks.

But Kissinger, who has always advocated a strategic dialogue between the U.S. and China, has not ceased to sound the alarm, because the trade and economic contradictions are actually only part of the overall confrontation between the two powers. And it could end in disaster, Kissinger warned in his speech at the forum:

“So a discussion of our mutual purposes and an attempt to limit the impact of conflict seems to me essential,” he said. “If conflict is permitted to run unconstrained the outcome could be even worse than it was in Europe. World War 1 broke out because a relatively minor crisis could not be mastered.”

Kissinger is not being alarmist: theoretically, the conflict between the United States and China could indeed lead to a world war. Another thing is that now neither party is interested in even a limited, non-nuclear conflict, because even then its costs would be too high. Kissinger, of course, simplifies matters when he talks about the random nature of World War I. It was the result of the growing conflict between Great Britain and Germany, the essence of which was that the Germans were rapidly gaining strength, and Britain, then the world's strongest power, was looking for a way to stop the rising power of Germany. And it did everything it could to stir up fear of the German threat among its continental allies, France and Russia.

The fact that it was local Balkan conflicts between Russia and Austria-Hungary (ally of the Germans and, in fact, the second German state) that started the world war, can indeed be considered accidental.

But the war itself was practically inevitable due to the inexorable contradictions between the then master of the world - Great Britain - and Germany, who wanted to expand its living space (not in Europe, but in the world). Parallels with the situation today are obvious.

Except that the comparison is not encouraging for the Anglo-Saxons.

Instead of Great Britain we have the United States, its close ally, who after what can essentially be called the 30-year war (1914-1945) became the world's strongest power. And after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they claimed to be the world's hegemon. Instead of Germany we have China, gaining strength and no longer hiding its global ambitions.

At the same time, China, like Germany a hundred years ago, does not want to become a new hegemon. Like the Germans at the time, the Chinese are only saying that they want to restore justice, i.e. take their rightful place in the world. Germany objectively wanted to play first violin in continental Europe and to push Britain back a little in other continents (especially in Africa). That is to say, to get what it was deprived of due to its late unification into a single state.

After almost a century of decline, caused in large part by the expansionist policies of other powers, China wants to become again what it has always been - the world's strongest country. But in today's world, this is only possible if China abandons its previous model of relations with the world, when it was so self-sufficient that it did not need any foreign trade, which it essentially abandoned to "foreign barbarians" (this eventually destroyed China - when it became obvious that barbarians had weapons that the Celestial Empire did not have).

Now China wants to spread its influence around the world.

Not military and ideological, but commercial and economic. It wants to ensure that everyone needs it and will not risk attacking or trying to undermine it from within. This is exactly what Xi Jinping talked about at the meeting with the forum participants (he also met with Kissinger separately):

"China is not aiming to take the place of a great power, its objective is merely to restore the dignity and status it deserves. The humiliating history of China as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country will never be repeated."

The similarity of the situation of Great Britain - Germany and the United States - China is that the hegemon does not want to give up its position or share power with a growing force. But if the United Kingdom could stop Germany with sophisticated combinations and by spreading discord among Europeans, the United States cannot stop China. Not by its own military force (nuclear weapons rule out conflict between the two countries), nor by engineering an attack by its neighbours (none of which are comparable in power to China, and Russia has moved to

almost allied relations with Beijing). All the U.S. can do is contain China.

But that's only possible for a limited time. Soon the Celestial Empire will gain such power that it will become impossible to do. That's why smart American strategists (and Kissinger is undoubtedly the main one among them) consider it necessary to reach an agreement with China at all costs. In other words, without necessarily dividing the world into two spheres of influence (as suggested during the Obama-Biden period), we should work out the general rules of the game, rules of rivalry and laws by which to moderate the conflict. That is to say, to set the contradictions in a framework, to prevent an escalation of the conflict.

This is exactly what Kissinger means when he speaks of the need to undertake an "attempt to reduce the negative impact of the conflict". Not in order to remove and eliminate the conflict, which is of course impossible, but to make it more or less manageable; he said:

"That makes it, in my view, especially important that a period of relative tension be followed by an explicit effort to understand what the political causes are and a commitment by both sides to try to overcome those." "It is far from being too late for that, because we are still in the foothills of a cold war." "Everybody knows that trade negotiations, which I hope will succeed and whose success I support, can only be a small beginning to a political discussion that I hope will take place," he said.

It is important to note that Kissinger stresses that a trade war is only part (and not the most important) of the overall conflict. Because often everything is reduced to economic, commercial and financial contradictions between the two largest economies of the world. But from a geopolitical point of view, economics is only a weapon of conflict, based on deep civilizational contradictions. We are dealing with the conflict between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the West and East, Anglo-Saxon and Chinese civilizations. This conflict is global in nature and affects the entire world.

In this sense, it is not less serious than the conflict between the United States and the USSR. And Kissinger even believes that the Cold War between Washington and Beijing exceeds it, because China and the U.S. were countries of a magnitude exceeding that of the Soviet Union and America. According to him, the United States and China are the two largest economies in the world, locked in a protracted trade war.

However, it is wrong to think that Kissinger is opposed to Trump. Trump did not start a trade war with China as part of an overall strategy to contain China and preserve American hegemony. Trump wants to strengthen the U.S., not as a global hegemon, but as a nation-state, and this is a position which the Chinese can easily understand. They do not like the trade war, but it falls within their conception of the world. Two countries compete for world markets and defend their own - all within the framework of a struggle by the rules. What the Chinese (and the Russians) do not accept is something else: it is being surrounded by military bases, campaigns to set their neighbours against them, interference in their internal affairs and attempts to destabilise the internal situation.

That's exactly what they ask America to stop doing. And not only Xi Jinping, but essentially Kissinger. The former secretary of state wants for the second time in his life to reach an agreement with China. But the first time, in 1971, it was easier to do, despite the two decades of hostility between the two countries. At that time, Beijing was interested in playing with the Americans because it was afraid of a conflict with the USSR. China now has a strategic relationship with Russia, and its economic interdependence with the U.S. allows it to be sure

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