

“Drang Nach Osten”: What Triggered World War II?

Fraction of British Elites Supported Third Reich's Eastern Expansionism

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World War II Was Unleashed by Adepts of Drang nach Osten

The information war over the history of World War II is at full swing, hence it makes sense to re-examine the covert schemes which the West and the shadowy organizations promoting the interests of its capital used to unleash it.

Quite obviously, expansion to the east and to the south has always been the key theme of Western geopolitics. The notorious Drang nach Osten was by no means Hitler's invention - it came into being much earlier, no later than in the epoch of Charles the Great (VIII century).

Searches for treasures in miraculous India and its colonization, the economically motivated conquest and extermination of oriental tribes and peoples were manifestations of the same eternal Drang nach Osten which used to be the legitimizing concept of the West's existence. Even America was discovered in the process of going east.

Quite logically, late XIX-early XX century geopolitical concepts and theories were also centered on the conquest of the territories stretching to the east.

Halford Mackinder, an Englishman, formulated the theory of global dominance as the theoretical foundation of Great Britain's colonial politics when he wrote: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland (Russia - L. Ivashov); Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island (Eurasia - L. Ivashov); Who rules the World Island commands the World.”

The intention to dominate Russia is an obvious element of the vision. US theorist A. Mahan, in his turn, developed the strategy of strangling the continuous continental mass of the Russian Empire.

The German geopolitical school (F. Ratzel, K. Haushofer, K. Schmidt) regarded a state as a living organism whose development is accompanied by a progressing need for space, all the way up to the planetary level.

Again, the theory envisioned eastward expansion, automatically assigning to Russia the role of the prime target.

The above concepts were not tributes to fleeting fashion but reflected many centuries of aggressive expansionist politics. Whereas Russians fought in Europe only in the name of self-defense or interests of other Western countries, the Great Britain-France-Germany triangle always (or at least throughout the last two centuries) harbored the strategic

aspiration to expand over Russia's immense territories or at least to provoke other players to wage war against Russia. Great Britain was a particularly successful player in the latter game.

The British connection is obvious in the cases of Napoleon's aggression against Russia and the 1904 Japanese attack on Russia's Far East as well as the in the provoking of World War I. The same applies to an even greater extent to Hitler's eastern drive.

No doubt, London and Paris were seriously concerned over Germany's growing might and feared that some day they would have to confront it on their own. As a result their politics oscillated between pursuing two objectives:

- To avoid facing the German aggression alone;
- To urge Hitler to attack the USSR.

Some factions of the British and French elites advocated collective efforts aimed at curbing Hitler's aggressiveness jointly with the USSR. Other factions (especially influential in Great Britain) sought to help Hitler implement his notorious Drang nach Osten plan. British conservatives never forgot the political testament of Lloyd George who said in the early XX century that the traditions and vital interests of Great Britain required destroying the Russian Empire in order to safeguard British dominance in India and to realize Great Britain's interests in Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

The switchings between the above two strategies eventually led to the politics of appeasing Hitler and to attempts to create favorable conditions for his attack east. In September, 1938 Great Britain and France signed the Munich Treaty with Hitler and ruthlessly fed Czechoslovakia to him as a reward for the deal. Being Europe's fourth largest economy, Czechoslovakia was a valuable acquisition for Germany.

Those who claim that World War II was somehow triggered by the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact should recall the circumstances of the above drama. The Soviet Union notified the Czechoslovakian government it was ready to comply fully with the May 16, 1935 Treaty the USSR had signed with the country. The statements aired on October 2 and 4, 1938 by TASS (the official Soviet media outlet) also condemned the annexation of the Sudetenland which belonged to Czechoslovakia and disproved rumors that the countries which signed the Munich Treaty had consulted the representatives of the USSR regarding the deal.

Upon returning to London from Munich Neville Chamberlain told his countrymen that he brought peace from his trip. The loud statement actually disguised the following two facts which were of great importance to London:

1. Hitler's military might was now turned to the east, towards the USSR.
2. A declaration was signed with Hitler expressing the wish of the British and German nations to never again fight each other.

On December 6, 1938 French foreign minister G. Bonnet and German foreign minister J. Ribbentrop signed a similar French-German declaration.

The Soviet leadership could not but be concerned over the developments which appeared to be a collusion victimizing not only Czechoslovakia but potentially the USSR as well. Moreover, Chamberlain said that Germany and Great Britain were the two pillars of European peace and anti-communism and thus had to peacefully overcome their disagreements. He said explicitly that it would be possible to find a solution in European politics acceptable for all parties except for Russia. Was it not an instigation of Hitler's aggression east at the expense of the security of the USSR?

The question arising naturally is: was it possible to prevent World War II? I am sure that the possibility existed and resurfaced a number of times. The first chance was blown at the time of Hitler's Anschluss of Austria. Even Mussolini objected to the audacious move, but Great Britain and France somehow remained unperturbed. Not surprisingly, Hitler saw the absence of reaction from their side as a sign of weakness and a green light to his politics.

The second chance evaporated when Europe was on the way to the Munich Treaty. Chamberlain's government even allowed Hitler to strengthen Germany by absorbing the resources of the Czechoslovakian industry and army just to reorient his expansionist intentions towards the east. Great Britain staunchly refused to influence Poland - its loyal ally - to convince Warsaw grant the Red Army the right to pass across Polish territory to rescue Czechoslovakia.

Even in August, 1939 it was still possible to prevent the outbreak of World War II. All that was needed was the consent of Great Britain and France (whose delegations were at the time negotiating in Moscow) to the creation of an anti-fascist coalition. The combined military potential of the three countries was almost twice that of Germany plus Italy. London, however, was guided by its own logic and separate political calculations.

The US also had a lot to do with the pre-war developments in Europe. US capital benefited massively from World War I doing business with the countries at war, and Washington acted on the eve of the new global disaster in line with the experience.

The US in parallel nourished Hitler, helped Great Britain, and assisted the USSR in creating its own industry. Besides, the coming war was obviously going to weaken the European rivals of the US. Overall, the US was looking forward to the new drama, hoping to gain control over Europe, Great Britain with its colonies, Japan, and the devastated USSR as its result. For the US, the World War opened opportunities to both benefit materially and to emerge as a new global empire.

In other words, another - and the last - chance to tame Hitler was lost in August, 1939.

In these settings, Stalin's choice was imposed by circumstances. It was imperative for him to find a way to postpone if not altogether preclude German aggression against the USSR.

Contrary to the view widely held among Western politicians and political scientists, the Non-Aggression Pact signed by Germany and the USSR on August 23, 1939 was not - nor could possibly be - the root cause of Hitler's attack on Poland and of World War II in general.

First, the USSR decided to sign the Pact only after the delegations of Great Britain and France rejected the option of signing an agreement on opposing Hitler jointly with the Soviet Union. Stalin had to take into account the fact that London and Paris signed military deals with Berlin, and the USSR could fall victim to an analog of the Munich Treaty.

Secondly, there was no direct connection between the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Hitler's decision to seize Poland. Hitler penned the plan for a war against Poland on April 3, 1939, and Germany scrapped its non-aggression and friendship pact with Poland on April 28, 1939. Consequently, Berlin decided to occupy Poland – and thus to gain a foothold for an attack against the Soviet Union – that is, months before the August 23 signing of the Pact with the USSR.

Thirdly, the USSR absolutely had to take measures to create a buffer zone by shifting its borders west as it was facing an imminent war. Already on March 1, 1936 Stalin said in reply to a question asked by US newspaperman Roy Harvard: "I do not know exactly what borders Germany can arrange in accord with its objectives, but I suspect that there are forces eager to 'lend' borders to it".

Signing the 1939 Non-Aggression Pact and its secret addenda, the Soviet government did not have in mind the objective of annexing the territories of any East European countries. Its goal was to delay the fascist attack and to prevent the emergence of an alliance of Western countries for an aggression against the USSR, as well as to curb Germany's expansion east.

These days, the Drang nach Osten still continues. Needing a universal interpretation of the events of World War II epoch that would suit all NATO and EU countries, Western politicians are upholding the concept of "two totalitarisms".

Its thrust is that Stalin and Hitler divided Europe via the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact but later got locked in a conflict.

Moreover, allegations are floated that Hitler barely made it to strike first as Stalin was planning an attack on Germany. The vision implies that all countries expect for the USSR and Germany were victims.

Since fascist Germany was defeated and ceased to exist while Russia as the successor to the USSR retained its place on the map of the world, it is the country that now must accept the responsibility for unleashing World War II.

The populations of Poland, the Baltic Republics, Czechoslovakia, and other countries are thus supposed to be victims, first of a collusion between Stalin and Hitler and then of the Soviet occupation. Even Ukraine is portrayed as a victim of the Soviet occupation that – jointly with fascist Germany – fought against a much more ominous enemy, which is, of course, Russia.

Born in the West, the concept of "two totalitarisms" follows the trajectory of Drang nach Osten – it propagates east.

Even Germany, long restrained by the guilt complex, finally grew active in this regard. In 2002, the Adenauer Prize was awarded to E. Nolte, described by the German media as the country's only philosophizing historian, for studies proving that the extermination of Jews by the Nazi regime was – believe it or not – a reaction to the elimination of the classes of landed gentry and peasantry in Russia. In his view, the German national-socialism mirrored the Russian Revolution, the genocide of peoples perpetrated by fascists – the elimination of classes in the USSR, and Auschwitz – the Gulag.

Such is "the historical truth" currently attempting to conquer the east.

Recently the “equal responsibility” concept was echoed by the notorious July 3, 2009 PACE Resolution. The question asked by Russia’s foes is: does Russia have the right to an opinion in international politics if – as they allege – its own origin is “illegitimate” and its status is owed to the odd role it played in World War II?

Our answer is: yes, it has the right to an opinion in international politics. This is what we reply resolutely to the ideologists and practitioners of Drang nach Osten on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II.

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