

US Destroys Anti-fascist Forces, Stalin's Failed Efforts to Align with West

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Despite Franco-British declarations of war on Germany during 3 September 1939, the British and French governments hoped that their armies would not actually have to engage in combat against German forces. The writing was on the wall early on, as neither Britain or France did anything meaningful to come to the aid of their nominal ally, Poland.

This was not altogether surprising, for the year before the Western powers participated in the carving up of Czechoslovakia, described by British prime minister **Neville Chamberlain** as “a far away country” not worth fighting over. Chamberlain had similar feelings regarding Poland, which after all shared a southern frontier with Czechoslovakia.

Attempting once more to placate the insatiable Hitler, the Anglo-French governments did their best to squeeze concessions out of Poland, as they had previously done with the Czechs (1). Warsaw refused. Only then did Britain and France reluctantly declare their willingness to fight on 25 August 1939, which in any case was a ceremonial gesture, as Poland would soon discover. The outspoken Conservative **MP Robert Boothby** said in an interview, “We’d gone to war for the defence of Poland. In the event, we did nothing to help Poland at all. We never lifted a finger”. (2)

For historical reasons it may be important to recognise that the Soviet autocrat, **Joseph Stalin**, made firm overtures to Britain and France in the 18 months prior to the start of World War II. Less than a week after Hitler’s forcible annexation of Austria, which disturbed the Kremlin but had the acquiescence of the West, on 18 March 1938 Stalin proposed that Britain and France join the USSR in a conference to enforce collective security (3). This offer, a potential forerunner to a Franco-British-Russo alliance aimed at Hitler, was rejected. Chamberlain wanted to push on with his appeasement strategy, while France was lurching from one political crisis to another.

Six months later on 30 September 1938, the Russians were notably scorned when they received no invitation to attend the Munich Conference; through which the Anglo-French governments collaborated with the fascist dictatorships, of Germany and Italy, in betraying Czechoslovakia. The Czechs lost 11,000 square miles of territory, including the country’s well-fortified districts along its western boundaries. Nor had Czech diplomats been invited to the Munich Conference, as Hitler was granted everything that he wished.



From left to right: Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, Mussolini, and Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, as they prepare to sign the Munich Agreement (CC BY-SA 3.0 de)

A few weeks after the Wehrmacht's March 1939 occupation of all Czechoslovakia, and despite increasing doubts about Western intentions, Stalin again approached the Franco-British powers. On 16 April 1939, he submitted a formal proposition: a three-power military pact with the obvious goal of deterring Nazi aggression (4). Stalin's diplomatic proposal mirrored the agreement in place prior to the First World War, in which Britain, France and Russia were bound together in an alliance directed against the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. Had Stalin's approach been accepted, it can only have changed the course of history - as such a union would have ensured, right from the beginning in the event of conflict, that Hitler faced a nightmare war on two fronts.

This final Soviet offer of alliance with the West was snubbed, however, with the British in particular treating Moscow with disregard. Strong anti-Bolshevik feelings were widespread amongst the conservatives in the British government, and with Chamberlain himself. Three weeks before Stalin's proposition, Chamberlain wrote to his sister Ida on 26 March 1939, stating that:

"I must confess to the most profound distrust of Russia. I have no belief whatever in her ability to maintain an effective offensive, even if she wanted to. And I distrust her motives, which seem to me to have little connection with our ideas of liberty, and to be concerned only with getting everyone else by the ears". (5)

Russian suspicions looked to be confirmed - the western democracies would be glad to see the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany at war with each other. Chamberlain assented to dispatching a diplomatic mission to the Kremlin, on 27 May 1939, to negotiate a modest

mutual assistance treaty with Russia. Instead of having the British mission headed by a figure of authority, like **Lord Halifax or Anthony Eden**, Chamberlain chose an unknown Foreign Office official named **William Strang**. Strang was, moreover, a fervent anti-Bolshevik and a secret member of the pro-Nazi Anglo-German Fellowship.

The Soviets took Strang's arrival as a calculated insult, which was intended. The British did agree to enter into military conversations with Moscow on 20 July 1939, but it proved a light-hearted gesture that went nowhere. Rather than flying directly from London to the Russian capital, which would have taken a few hours, the British mission travelled on a slow cargo boat which eventually arrived after six days. (6)

The above evidence, which is indisputable and has previously been documented by historians, shows that Stalin preferred to align with Britain and France, rather than Nazi Germany. Having been brushed aside, he was compelled to turn decisively towards Hitler, and on 23 August 1939 the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact was concluded. Eighty years after the start of hostilities, the EU in September 2019 passed a resolution in the European Parliament - through which they placed all of the culpability on the Soviets and Nazis for having "paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War" and ironically refers to "distortion of historical facts" (7). There is not a mention in the EU resolution of Stalin's repeated attempts to form a new triple entente with the West, and which would have encircled Hitler.

The Western powers, in reality, should share substantial blame for the outbreak of war. In addition, the Nazi dictatorship could have been destroyed at any time by France and Britain between 1933 to 1938, when Hitler was vulnerable and his military forces meagre. As late as September 1938, the German General Staff bluntly told Hitler that the Wehrmacht was still not strong enough to fight a European war. **Yet the West did not particularly want to topple Hitler**, with Britain having deep-seated financial ties to the Nazi regime, as by the late 1930s the Third Reich was London's principal trading client. (8)

The British and French were largely responsible for the "Phoney War" that ensued from September 1939; during which the over-riding desire remained the same: that with Poland's defeat, Hitler's next move would again be to the east with an attack on the USSR, leaving western Europe untouched. Conservative MP Boothby recalled in the months after the German invasion of Poland, "We confined our war efforts to dropping leaflets on the German people, telling them that it was a bad idea to go to war and a pity that they'd done it. And perhaps that we might make peace".

In the Phoney War period US business executives like **James D. Mooney** - in charge of General Motors' overseas operations including in Nazi Germany - had attempted to persuade the British and Germans to resolve their conflict, in the hope of pushing Hitler towards invading Soviet Russia. Mooney, who had met senior Nazis in the past and received a decoration from Hitler, saw the dictator again in March 1940.

Mooney made a plea with him to preserve the peace in western Europe. He further informed Hitler that, "Americans had understanding for Germany's standpoint with respect to the question of living space" (9). It meant that Washington had no problem should Germany decide to expand to the east. **Joseph Kennedy**, the US Ambassador to Britain and father of John F. Kennedy, likewise tried hard to persuade Berlin and London to resolve their differences. These attempts failed, as the Germans attacked westwards in the early summer of 1940, securing a series of routine military victories.

As America entered the war in December 1941 in opposition to the Axis states, mixed feelings were prevalent in Washington (10). There was little indecision at fighting the hated Japanese, but there was discomfort in the US capital at their union with the USSR, an ideological foe. This unease grew as the war dragged on. The Allied leadership would also be disconcerted at the power gained across much of the world by the anti-fascist Resistance, which often contained labour friendly and radical democratic attitudes. US-led efforts to dismantle the Resistance and other leftist factions, while reinstating the capitalist business hierarchy, would become a global operation, picking up in intensity from the mid-1940s. It included employing notorious Nazis and fascist sympathisers.

Already in late 1942 – as the Allies captured their first chunk of territory from German control in north Africa – the **Franklin Roosevelt** administration, with Churchill’s backing, appointed a prominent fascist collaborator, **Admiral Francois Darlan**, to take over command of that expansive region (11). This decision enraged both the French Resistance and **General Charles de Gaulle**, who denounced Darlan by saying “You can buy traitors, but not the honour of France”.



The Big Three: Stalin, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the Tehran Conference, November 1943 (Public Domain)

From July 1943, with Allied forces landing in the far south of Italy, the US State Department and Secretary of War, **Henry Stimson**, sought to bring to power **Dino Grandi**, the far-right Italian politician. Grandi, a former high official in the Mussolini dictatorship, was described as a “moderate” by the State Department, someone who had been pushed towards fascism “by the excesses of the communists”. US support for the Italian fascists was taking up where it left off in the 1920s and 1930s, when Mussolini had enjoyed unbroken friendship,

only ending as the Duce allied himself with Hitler in 1940.

Churchill wrote to president Roosevelt on 31 July 1943 that the main consideration when liberating Italy was to prevent “chaos, Bolshevisation or civil war”. Churchill warned that nothing stood in the way “between the King and the patriots who have rallied around him” and that of “rampant Bolshevism”. The Allies supported the Italian king, who had collaborated fully with Mussolini during his rule (12). Washington and London installed the right-wing dictatorship of **Field Marshal Pietro Badoglio**, a fascist war hero. As US and British tensions with Moscow increased, the Churchill government saw Badoglio as a bulwark against the communist threat in Italy.

A major problem from the US-British standpoint was indeed the emergence of the anti-fascist Resistance, which had won legitimacy and influence with ordinary people. The Resistance was trying to address the problems of the working class, destitute and other victims of war. These policies were viewed with misgiving by the Anglo-Saxon governments, and the big business, anti-labour interests they so often represent.

As the Allied armies continued to slowly advance northwards through Italy in 1944, they set about dispersing the anti-fascist elements, and to undermine the popular forces on which they were based (13). The Allied leadership was appalled to discover that the Italian Resistance had formed a social system, whereby the workers themselves ran their own factories, with no bosses in the capitalist method overseeing them.

Italy’s partisans, who had also fought bravely against six German divisions, were unable to prevent the US from restoring the essential structure of Mussolini’s former regime. Fascists and collaborators were returned to power and prominence. The aim was to preserve the traditional conservative world order, now under American domination. It furthermore involved the subordination of the working-class and poor to business rule, ensuring they would bear the cost relating to reconstruction and recovery. In mainstream scholarship, these actions are usually regarded as US efforts to re-establish “democracy” and “freedom” in Europe and beyond.

The American Army’s counterinsurgency literature begins with an overview of the Wehrmacht’s experience in Europe; and was written with the co-operation of Nazi officers. Large parts of these manuals were taken from the German angle, regarding which strategies worked best versus the Resistance. With little alteration, the tactics employed by the Wehrmacht and SS were absorbed into US military counterinsurgency.

There was an operation involving the Vatican, the US State Department and British intelligence, which gathered together Nazi war criminals, such as **Klaus Barbie** and **Reinhard Gehlen**; along with past associates of **Adolf Eichmann**, a leading perpetrator in the Holocaust, and also many other former SS, Wehrmacht and Gestapo officers (14). After organising them into cohesive units, the Americans returned them to work against the Resistance, at first in Europe; and later in the US-backed police states of Latin America.

Barbie, an ex-Gestapo chief dubbed “the butcher of Lyon”, was especially a wanted man due to the severity of his crimes in Nazi-occupied France. When his American paymasters began to take criticism on having employed Barbie in 1947, they struggled to comprehend what the problem was. The US Army had taken over from the Germans, and they needed someone who was a specialist in attacking the anti-fascist forces. **Eugene Kolb**, a retired

colonel in the US Army's Counterintelligence Corps, said that Barbie's "skills were badly needed" because "His activities had been directed against the underground French Communist party and the Resistance". Kolb continued, "We did not have any great pangs of conscience". (15)

When Barbie could no longer be protected by his US employers, he was moved on to the Vatican ratlines in the early 1950s, where fascist priests assured him safe passage to Bolivia. An array of Nazis eluded capture to reach South America and elsewhere through the Vatican ratlines, such as psychopathic killers like Eichmann, Josef Mengele, Gustav Wagner and Walter Rauff. The latter figure, **SS Colonel Rauff**, created the first gas chambers used in the Holocaust.

Rauff at separate times worked for the intelligence service of West Germany (under US auspices) and, rather strangely, Israel's Mossad agency. He had been personally responsible for at least 97,000 deaths during the war. Rauff was assisted in his escape to South America by the US authorities. (16)

Other Nazis were granted refuge in fascist Spain, where Mussolini was close to securing refuge in, before he had been caught by Italian partisans at the eleventh hour. Mussolini's former saviour from 1943, SS commando **Otto Skorzeny**, ended up in Spain, having been allowed to "escape" captivity it seems by the Americans in 1948. Skorzeny, who unlike the above Nazis was not a sadist, would among other things be employed as a military adviser by governments in Egypt and Argentina; he also worked for the Mossad agency, despite his fascist beliefs. In a mysterious post-1945 existence Skorzeny - who had enjoyed a close relationship with Hitler - was seen in the most unlikely of places, from smoking casually in a Parisien cafe on the Champs-Élysées, to acquiring a farmhouse in rural Ireland where he tended his land.

In France from mid-1944, following the Vichy regime's fall, the public's hardship was exploited by US forces so as to harm French labour. Supported by Washington, the American Federation of Labour (AFL) dismantled dock strikes by sending over Italian scab labour funded by US corporate money. Badly needed food supplies were withheld from French civilians, in order to enforce obedience. Gangsters were organised to form goon squads and strike breakers, the results of which were later described with some pride in quasi-official US labour histories; which commend the AFL for its efforts in destabilising Europe's labour movement. (17)

Mainly from the AFL, US labour leaders persuaded workers to accept austerity measures while employers raked in profits. The US State Department compelled the AFL's leadership to direct some of their energies towards union-busting in Italy, which they did with gusto. The business classes, having fallen into disrepute among the public for having worked closely with the fascists, were reassured at the support bestowed to them by Washington.

With their confidence restored, business sectors pursued a rigorous class war, the final result being the reinstatement of the conservative power structure. While weakening Europe's labour movements, the AFL further safeguarded the shipment of weaponry to French Indochina, so as to ensure that region remained under imperial control; another chief aim of the US labour bureaucracy. The CIA reorganised the Mafia to assist with arms deals, in return for the heroin trade's recommencement. US government links to the drug industry continued for decades after. (18)

The Harry Truman administration's Marshall Plan – which consisted of large-scale efforts to reinforce capitalist business supremacy in Europe – was based strictly on the exclusion of communists and other leftists from power, including extensive segments of the anti-fascist Resistance and labour (19). Economic programs, like the Marshall Plan, assured Washington significant leverage in directing Europe's affairs. That was its intent from the outset, as the Marshall Plan furthermore served as important subsidies to US exporters of natural resources and manufactured products.

On 12 May 1947 **Jefferson Caffery**, the US Ambassador to France, informed **Secretary of State George Marshall** that there would be serious repercussions, should the communists win elections in France. Caffery felt in that scenario, "Soviet penetration of Western Europe, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East would be greatly facilitated". Also during May 1947, the Truman administration was applying pressure on political leaders in France and Italy to form coalition governments, in order to freeze out the communists (20). Secretary of State Marshall warned publicly that if communist politicians were voted into power, American aid would be terminated, a considerable threat under the circumstances.

Widespread US propaganda in Italy designated the Communist Party as "extremist" and "undemocratic", while the purported Soviet threat was carefully crafted to frighten Italians. The Christian Democratic Party of Italy, under US pressure, reneged on wartime promises pertaining to workplace democracy. The Italian police, sometimes under the control of ex-fascists, was encouraged to repress labour activities.

The Vatican, which had allied itself to Mussolini for two decades, announced that anyone who voted for the communists in the 1948 election would be denied sacraments. The Vatican was supporting the conservative Christian Democrats, under the title "Either with Christ or against Christ". The following year, 1949, **Pope Pius XII** excommunicated all Italian communists. CIA intervention through propaganda, violence and manipulation of aid effectively bought the critical 1948 Italian elections; in which the Christian Democratic Party, led by ex-Vatican librarian **Alcide de Gasperi**, won a sweeping victory as the communists were excluded from office. De Gasperi, a "founding father" of the EU, had defended the German church in 1937 by saying that it was right to favour Nazism over Bolshevism. (21)

The CIA effort to control Italy's elections was the intelligence agency's first major clandestine operation. CIA activities in Italy would continue through to the 1970s, as the country's democracy was heavily eroded. This information has been in the public domain since 1976, thanks to the leaking of the congressional Pike Report, which detailed CIA interference in Italian affairs.

In Greece, as the Wehrmacht finally pulled out in the autumn of 1944, British soldiers replaced them by simply invading the country, rather than daring to leave it to the Greek Resistance. With the Germans nowhere in sight, in December 1944 Churchill ordered his men to treat Athens as a "conquered city", and to put down the anti-fascist forces with "bloodshed" if needed (22). The British found a strong anti-fascist presence in Greece, consisting of peasants and workers led by communists.

Britain's forces were initially able to thwart the Greek Resistance by violence, while restoring royalist factions and Nazi collaborators to power. Renewed armed opposition then surfaced which London was unable to control. In early 1947, they handed the job of pacifying Greece over to the Americans, who pursued it with a degree of fanaticism. This was the basis for the Truman Doctrine, a core tenet of which was to wipe out the resistance

in Greece and elsewhere, on the pretext of containing the USSR. Another Western concern regarding Greece and Italy, which are Mediterranean states, was relating to the shipment of raw materials from the Middle East destined for the West.

US diplomat **Adlai Stevenson** explained later that Washington had to protect Greece from “the aggressors” who “had gained control of most of the country” (23). The aggressors comprising of those that stoically led the fight against Hitler’s troops.

The Americans were committed to state violence, torture and repression, which included the imprisonment without trial of tens of thousands of Greeks in concentration camps. London, to be fair, opposed some of these actions with a British official saying, very early on, that it was “unwise” in one incidence to round up 14,000 people, and intern them without trial in island concentration camps (24). The US **Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh** said that the Greek government “had to throw their net wide to catch the right people” whom he calculated at around “a dozen key men”.

Once imprisoned, the detainees were subjected to “reindoctrination” if they “were found to have affiliations which cast grave doubt upon their loyalty to the state”, in the words of the American Mission for Aid to Greece. Elsewhere, Allied “re-education camps” were established, where hundreds of thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war were detained from 1945 to 1948. They were exposed to propaganda, forced labour and severe maltreatment, including mass executions.

The US chargé d’affaires **Karl Rankin** stressed in May 1948 that there should be “no leniency toward the confirmed agents of an alien and subversive influence”. Rankin went on that executions were legitimate, because even though when arrested the political prisoners may not have been “hardened communists, it is unlikely that they have been able to resist the influence of communist indoctrination organisations existing within most prisons” (25). Much of this has been forgotten, receiving scant mention when Western institutions condemn Beijing’s policies in Xinjiang province which, one might add, is within China’s internationally recognised borders.

US backing for state terror in Greece continued for many years, culminating in their support for the 1967 fascist military coup in Athens. Later on, president **Bill Clinton** indirectly acknowledged US interference in Greek affairs, while at the same time claiming that Washington’s “obligation” was “to support democracy” throughout the Cold War (26). The far-right putsch was praised at the time for bringing ample opportunities for US business investment.

In Korea during the late 1940s, American forces dispersed the local popular government there and instituted a harsh suppression, making use of Japanese police and other collaborators. Prior to what is known as the Korean War, through 1948 and 1949 an estimated 100,000 people were killed in South Korea by security forces installed and backed by Washington (27). The struggle on the Korean peninsula was between an anti-colonial nationalist movement, and a conservative order tied to the status quo, the latter of which the US was supporting.

The Truman administration initiated a series of military coups in Thailand from the mid-1940s, a country which the Americans would pay particular attention to. US subversion in Thailand enabled the returning to power in early 1948 of **Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram**, a formerly pro-Japanese, far-right dictator who admired Hitler and Mussolini

and copied some of their policies, such as the fascist salute. Washington agreed to the isolation of **Pridi Banomyong**, leader of the Free Thai Movement who had co-operated with the Allies during the war. Pridi was the most prominent liberal democratic figure in Thailand, but his political beliefs were now eyed suspiciously in the West, and with the Japanese beaten he was no longer of any use.

The CIA's Thailand specialist **Frank Darling** noted that Field Marshal Songkhram was "the first pro-Axis dictator to gain power after the war". In 1954 the US National Security Council, under president **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, outlined that Thailand should be established as "the focal point of US covert and psychological operations in south-east Asia"; with the stated aim of "making more difficult the control by the Viet Minh of North Vietnam" (28). Eisenhower, an experienced general who had publicly criticised the waging of war, would not agree to outright military attacks; but, unlike Roosevelt, Eisenhower could not continue as president indefinitely and, after he left office in 1961, Thailand served as a central base of planning for the US invasions of Vietnam and later Cambodia and Laos.

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Notes

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