

Editorial

Obscuring the Causes of the Second World War

May 8, 2005 was the 60th anniversary of the surrender of Nazi Germany and the end of the Second World War in Europe. During the week leading up to this day, numerous celebrations and memorials were organized in Europe and the media has been full of stories “remembering” the war. However, what the media is suggesting that people remember often bears little resemblance to the truth. In particular, a constant propaganda barrage has been carried out suggesting that the war and subsequent division of Europe was the fault of the Soviet Union and Stalin. Repeated references are made to the “Hitler-Stalin Pact” without any explanation of what it was, in order to portray Poland and the Baltic states as the victims of Soviet aggression. Meanwhile, there is very little discussion of the role of Britain, France and the United States in

building up the Nazi military machine and egging on Hitler.

Despite the claims of the media and various documentaries on the Second World War, the August 23, 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact was simply that, an agreement that Germany and the Soviet Union would not attack one another. It was neither a military alliance aimed at a third country nor an agreement to divide up Eastern Europe between the two countries. (See the text of the agreement on page 2) Furthermore, it was the last of several non-aggression pacts signed with Germany. Poland had signed such an agreement with Nazi Germany in 1934, while Britain and France issued a joint declaration of non-aggression with Germany in 1938

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The Tragedy of Poland

On September 1, 1939 Nazi Germany launched a massive invasion of Poland involving almost two million troops, 3200 tanks and 2000 aircraft. Within a few weeks more than one million people had been killed, including thousands of Polish intellectuals, professionals and public figures. By the end of the war in 1945 Poland had lost approximately six million citizens, including two million children and youth. More than 70 percent of the population of Jewish origin and non-Polish Slavs were murdered. Poland suffered the highest number of casualties per capita of any country which fought Nazi Germany.

Despite the immensity of the tragedy inflicted on the Polish people by the German Nazis, the imperialist media and Polish reactionaries are demonstrating an eagerness to let the Nazis off the hook and blame Poland’s suffering on the Soviet

Union instead, or at least to present the Soviet Union as being equally guilty with Germany in the destruction of Poland. Not only do they blame the Red Army for Nazi crimes, such as the murder of thousands of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, but they also claim that the Soviet Union and Germany signed a “secret protocol” in conjunction with the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact, which divided Poland into German and Soviet zones of influence. This document first came to light during the post-war Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. It was introduced into evidence by the Nazi defendants in order to split the allies and mitigate their own guilt by suggesting that the Soviet Union was equally guilty of aggression against Poland and the Baltic states. At the time, Molotov’s supposed signature on this document was proved to

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in conjunction with the Munich Agreement which handed over Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Germany. In the past, Canadian school children were taught that the Munich Agreement and the betrayal by Britain and France of their ally Czechoslovakia was the direct cause of the Second World War. Now, however, almost nothing is said of the Munich Agreement and the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact is blamed for starting the war.

For several years prior to the start of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had been warning the countries of Europe that Nazi Germany was rearming and represented a serious threat to their national securities. It proposed a system of collective security in Europe which would prevent Germany from going to war with its neighbours. However, the Soviet proposal was rejected by Britain and France. Instead, they turned a blind eye to Germany's rearmament and, in fact financed it to the tune of billions of dollars. The United States also opposed the Soviet proposal for European collective security. The U.S. poured more than \$8 billion into the German munitions industries and continued to finance Germany's war effort until 1941 when the U.S. entered the war. Britain, France and the U.S. also

For Your Information

Full Text of the August 23, 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, guided by the desire to strengthen the cause of peace between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and taking as a basis the fundamental regulations of the Neutrality Agreement concluded in April, 1926, between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, have reached the following agreement:

Article 1. The two Contracting Parties bind themselves to refrain from any act of force, any aggressive action and any attack on one another, both singly and also jointly with other Powers.

Article 2. In the event of one of the Contracting Parties becoming the object of warlike action on the part of a third Power, the other Contracting Party shall in no manner support this third Power.

Article 3. The Governments of the two Contracting Parties shall in future remain continuously in touch with one another, by way of consultation, in order to inform one another on questions touching their joint interests.

turned a blind eye to Hitler's 1937 annexation of Austria and to the surrender of Sudetenland to Germany in September 1939 which left Czechoslovakia with no defensible borders. Throughout 1938 and 1939 Western newspapers encouraged Germany to send its armies to the east to seize Ukraine. In fact, even after Germany overran Poland in September 1939 and Britain and France were officially at war with Germany, both countries continued to negotiate a peace agreement which would see Germany turn its attention east towards the Soviet Union. It was no big secret that all of the Western governments wanted to see a Soviet-German war which would leave both countries weakened and easy prey to the British, French and American imperialists. However, Hitler shattered their dreams by heading west instead.

All of the propaganda of the imperialists surrounding the origins of the Second World War is designed to cover up their own role in building up the Nazis and unleashing a holocaust on the world's people. It is also designed to cover up the fact that they have the same aim of world domination that the Nazis had. Therefore, they are forced to turn truth on its head and blame those who stood for peace and collective security for their own crimes.

Article 4. Neither of the two Contracting Parties shall participate in any grouping of Powers which is directly or indirectly against the other Party.

Article 5. In the event of disputes or disagreements between the Contracting Parties on questions of this or that kind, both parties would clarify these disputes or disagreements exclusively by means of friendly exchange of opinion or, if necessary, by arbitration committees.

Article 6. The present Agreement shall be concluded for a period of ten years on the understanding that, insofar as one of the Contracting Parties does not give notice of termination one year before the end of this period, the period of validity of this Agreement shall automatically be regarded as prolonged for a further period of five years.

Article 7. The present Agreement shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Berlin. The Agreement takes effect immediately after it has been signed.

Cuba and Venezuela Begin Building Alternative to FTAA

During a visit by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to Venezuela at the end of April, the two countries further developed an alternative agreement to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), originally proposed under the Clinton administration in 1994.

The FTAA is a blueprint for an American hemisphere as one massive trading bloc, with the exception of Cuba, led and dominated by the U.S. The U.S. also planned to use the FTAA to further harm Cuba, with some reactionary Cuban Americans openly gloating that under the deal, the crippling American blockade could be extended to every country in the region.

Initially, despite the resistance of leaders from some of the smaller nations, particularly in the Caribbean, and the opposition of the majority of the peoples of the Americas, it appeared the U.S. would succeed in brokering a deal. This does not seem to be possible any longer, as Brazil and Venezuela have openly refused to sign the agreement without significant concessions from the U.S. regarding its demands for market access. Their initiative has led to other countries in the region, including Argentina, Uruguay and the Caribbean states renewing their own objections to the FTAA.

The Americans' response to this opposition has been to renew attempts to reach bilateral or multilateral trade agreements with as many countries in the region as possible, trying to suggest that any nation not involved in such an agreement will be devastated economically.

In response to some of the Americans' more blatant threats in this regard, Cuba and Venezuela proposed a different kind of agreement for the region – one based on principles of respect for sovereignty and mutual economic benefit. Entitled the Agreement for a Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), it would include reciprocal social, cultural and economic investments. In their recent meetings, Cuba and Venezuela developed a strategic plan for implementing ALBA. This plan includes:

- The inauguration in Venezuela before the end of the year of 600 Integral Diagnostic Centers; 600 Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy Departments and 35 High Technology Centers, using Cuban healthcare expertise to offer services free of charge to the Venezuelan population.
- The training by Cuba of 40,000 doctors and 5,000 health technology specialists in Venezuela.

- The training in Cuba of 10,000 Venezuelan high school graduates in the areas of medicine and nursing, who will be deployed throughout the country's polyclinics and hospitals and will stay in the homes of Cuban families.
- The provision in Cuba of surgical eye treatment for 100,000 Venezuelans with a variety of eye conditions.
- Continued material and human support by Cuba for Venezuela's literacy program, which aims to have Venezuela declared the second illiteracy-free territory in the Americas.
- The opening of an office in Havana of the Venezuelan national gas company, PDVSA, to provide assistance with the exploration and exploitation of oil in Cuba, including refining, transportation and storage of Cuban oil.
- The granting by Venezuela of preferential tariffs on 104 different Cuban export products, including manufactured goods, foods and medicines.
- Exemption by Cuba on payment of taxes or tonnage rights for Venezuelan vessels arriving in Cuban ports from abroad.
- Preferential tariffs on \$412 million worth of Venezuelan manufactured goods and materials exported to Cuba in 2005-06, including iron, steel and agricultural products.
- The creation of a joint strategic alliance with the goal of developing a number of economic initiatives such as nickel and cobalt mining projects, the repair and construction of sea vessels, and improving the railway infrastructure of both countries.

The two countries also agreed to the establishment of a number of joint research projects aimed at everything from improving agricultural practices to environmental technology to telecommunications.

In all, including government agreements, letters of intent, memorandums of understanding, contracts and framework agreements, 40 documents were signed.

In a joint declaration, the two countries state: "Only a broad Latin American vision, which acknowledges the impossibility of our countries' developing and being truly independent in an isolated manner, will be capable of achieving what ... (Cuban independence hero Jose) Marti conceived of as 'Our America' to differentiate it from the other America, the expansionist one with imperialist appetites."

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be a forgery and the document was rejected as fraudulent by all of the Allies. Only later during the Cold War when the U.S. imperialists had taken up the mantle of Hitler did they dust off this blatant forgery and present it as authentic.

Poland, which is most often presented as an innocent victim in all of this, also bears some responsibility for the tragedy that befell the Polish people. The Polish government at the time was a semi-fascist government which had its own imperialist ambitions to seize territory from its neighbours. Following the First World War, Poland declared war on the new Russian revolutionary government and seized large sections of Byelorussia, Ukraine and Lithuania. It also had ambitions to annex the Baltic states and the remainder of Ukraine, extending Polish territory from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In 1938 when Germany annexed the Sudetenland, Poland also took advantage of Czechoslovakia's weakness to seize its eastern territories. When it had become clear in the summer of 1939 that the Nazi armies were preparing to move east, the Soviet Union offered to protect Poland by stationing its own troops on Poland's western borders. However, the Polish government, still hoping that Germany would bypass Poland and attack the Soviet Union, refused to grant the Red Army permission to transport troops across Polish territory. Even after the Nazi attack began on September 1, 1939 the Polish government continued to maintain the bulk of its military forces on its eastern front. Meanwhile, the Polish government fled the country, leaving the Polish people to the mercy of the Nazis. From their safe haven in Britain members of the Polish government-in-exile continued their anti-communist propaganda against the Soviet Union even while the Polish people were being massacred by the Nazis. They went so far as to forbid the approximately two million Polish soldiers who found refuge in the Soviet Union from fighting against the Nazis on the Eastern Front. In other words, they forbade Polish soldiers from fighting to liberate their own homeland from Nazi occupation. Most of these

Polish troops saw no action until 1944 when they participated in the D-Day landings in Normandy.

In the days after the Polish government fled the country, the Soviet Red Army occupied so-called "Eastern Poland", that is the territories of Byelorussia, Lithuania and Ukraine seized by Poland in its war with Soviet Russia in 1920. This act prevented the Nazi army from moving further east and gave the people of the area an additional 22 months to prepare for the inevitable Nazi assault. In particular, thousands of Jewish residents were evacuated to safety in Siberia during that period. It also stretched the Nazi line of attack once the invasion of the Soviet Union began in 1941, thereby contributing to the eventual defeat of the German armies on the Eastern Front and the liberation of Poland from Nazi occupation.

The tragedy of Poland was a consequence of the imperialist politics of its government and the betrayal by its imperialist allies, Britain and France, and not of the real or imagined actions of the Soviet Union. In fact, the Soviet government was the only government that actually defended the interests of the Polish people during this entire period.

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