You can’t praise Hitler’s troops and champion human rights

IT’S NOT every day that one sees William Hague courting photo shoots with Hollywood starlet Angelina Jolie or a Premier League football club appoints a new manager who has complained about how Mussolini was misunderstood. A third far less reported, but no less relevant, incident also took place last month. It was a reply from Mr Hague’s Foreign Office to my letter asking if Britain would speak up about its EU and NATO partner Latvia continuing to promote events glorifying the country’s Waffen SS that served Hitler. Last year, the Latvian president said his country should “bow down” to the Waffen SS.

Like its Baltic neighbours, Lithuania and Estonia, Latvia honours local Nazi collaborators on the grounds they were “freedom fighters” against the Soviets. Less than a year ago, Lithuania reburied and glorified the country’s 1941 Holocaust-collaborating prime minister.

The letter from the Foreign Office, signed by Minister for Europe David Lidington, states: “I understand this is an emotive issue for all those involved. The history of these events is complex and one which historians are best placed fully to understand. When I have visited the Baltic states, ministers there have told me how their countries are still coming to terms with an appalling period of their history in which their countries were invaded and fought. The Baltic states, ministers there have told me how they have come to terms with the period of their history in which their countries were invaded and fought.”

I am pleased to note that this year’s events passed off safely. The history of the Latvian Legion is complex. The UK believes the future treatment of these marches is essentially a matter for the respective governments in Latvia and Lithuania. I hope Ms Lowenberg understands that this is not a matter in which the UK government has any locus to become involved.

This issue goes back to 2009 when David Cameron, then opposition leader, ditched his moderate conservative alliance in the European Parliament (where the Tories were aligned with centre-right parties), and linked up with East European sympathisers of Hitler’s collaborators. What goes around comes around. David Miliband, who resigned as a director of Sunderland FC last month, as foreign secretary had told Cameron in 2009 that this was “not leadership but pandering, not judgment but dogma, not patriotic defence of national interest but the white flag of surrender to... extremists.” Incidentally, this year’s march was not as “safe” as Lidington thinks. There were scuffles. Peaceful protesters, including Joel Rubinfeld, co-chair of the European Jewish Parliament, were harassed by police and fascists alike.

As Hague contemplates his joint campaign for our nation that Hague and Lidington do not.

“Politics is about taking responsibility, not saying evil should be left for historians to debate.”

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