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## World News

# The photo shoots Hague would rather forget

Hope not hate | *Friday, 5 April 2013*

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### A *Hope not hate* Special by Monica Lowenberg

Not every day that one sees William Hague courting photo shoots with Hollywood “A lister” Angelina Jolie, who is also a rightly noted and well-respected human rights activist.

“Human rights”, it appears, is a top buzzword currently. When I got up and found a letter from Hague’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), in response to a letter of mine about British silence in the face of our EU partner Latvia’s honouring the Hitlerite Waffen SS with official support, it looked promising.

*That was, until I opened it and read it...*

In February, I had asked PM David Cameron to write a simple letter to the Latvian president Andris Berzins who has proclaimed publicly that Latvian SS veterans should be “bowed down to”.

I asked Cameron, an heir of Churchill, to ask for a halt to the glorification of SS veterans in a fellow EU and NATO country. This glorification includes annual state-approved marches in the centre of the capital city, Riga, that are riddled with pro-Nazi sentiment.

The SS veterans are seen by a growing number of latter-day Latvian nationalists as “freedom fighters” who fought against the Soviet Union. Of course we should all condemn Soviet evils separately, but that is not the point here.

The letter from the FCO told me: *“I understand that this is an emotive issue for all those involved. I am pleased to note that this year’s events passed off safely. The history of the Latvian Legion is complex*

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*and one which historians are best placed fully to understand. The UK believes that the abolition of Legionnaires Day is essentially a matter for the Latvian Government and I hope that you understand that this is not a matter in which the UK government has any locus to become involved'. [Letter dated 27th March 2013, signed by Dave Naylor, Northern and Central Europe Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.]*

Bearing in mind that Mr Naylor's boss had had rather close contact with the Latvian government since 2009, to the extent that he was prepared to support it to the hilt, it does seem strange that three years on when Latvia's ugly past rears its head they are unable to intervene.

What on earth is the British government afraid of? Or maybe getting into bed with SS-lovers is not an "emotive" or hot enough topic for senior Tories? Was standing up to Hitler and his cronies an abject waste of time by Britain and her allies?

Back on October 1st 2009 Hague said of then foreign secretary David Miliband: *"David Miliband's smears are disgraceful and represent a failure of his duty to promote Britain's interests as foreign secretary...He has just insulted the Latvian Government, most of whose member parties have attended the commemoration of Latvia's war dead."*

Hague virulently retorted when Miliband correctly characterised the British Conservatives alliance with Latvian MEP Robert Zile as *"not leadership but pandering, not judgement but dogma, not patriotic defence of national interest but the white flag of surrender to euro-extremists in his own party."*

Merkel, Sarkozy and even true blue Conservative Yorkshire MEP Edward Macmillan Scott, who was duly sacked for daring to state that *"Cameron was flirting with respectable fascism"*, were all equally incensed at Cameron's Latvian liaison.

But Tories like Hague, Martin Callanan, Daniel Hannan and Eric Pickles continue to state with almost religious fervour that the Latvian SS veterans *"were only following orders"*. We've all heard that one before.

A special kind of blindness had and does clearly afflict them, one that the Latvian PR crew, full of hack historians (from east and west alike!) paid to sanitise and distort Latvia's ugly past work day and



night at, have given them.

*“Let me reiterate,”* wrote Latvian Ambassador Stiprais to concerned conservative MP David Amess less than one month ago: *“Latvia has always condemned the crimes committed during World War II – the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism. Latvia is committed to the values of democratic and open society and we will endeavour to facilitate true consolidation of the people and countries who suffered under totalitarian regimes during World War II.”*

*Translation:* In other words we will revise history, we will not deny the Holocaust but we will dismiss it nevertheless and we will do so by making a false symmetry and equalisation between the crimes of Communism and Nazis. We will ensure that the world sees us as victims of two genocides, Nazism and Communism.”

Really Ambassador Stiprais, where was it written that Stalin intended to kill all Latvians? When did he try to do that? Different evils deserve different commemorations, not the glorification of fascism.

Latvia, like Lithuania and Estonia, has been among the staunchest supporters of the 2008 Prague Declaration that would write the Holocaust out of history with its far-right red-equals-brown demands.

Ambassador Stiprais and other Latvian apologists need to be reminded that the Allies consisted of American and British troops and, yes, Soviet troops who enabled the world to be set free of the greatest genocidal force ever known.

Waffen SS enthusiasts seem to have forgotten that if Hitler had been victorious it would have, ironically, been a disaster for Latvia since the Nazis had no intention or plan to grant Latvia independence. Historians know very well of the Nazis' plans to do away with the Latvian (and other regional) peoples after the planned-for victory.

There would have been no Latvia to become independent in 1991 or Monument of Freedom for Latvian apologists to lay wreaths down for Latvian SS veterans who collaborated with and fought for Hitler. On the Eastern front, it was only the Red Army fighting Hitler that enabled the Allies to free Europe.

Incidentally this year's march was not as peaceful

as the FCO would maintain: riot police were active: anti-fascists such as Joel Rubinfeld, co-president of the Jewish parliament in Brussels, were dragged away, four people were detained by police and, after giving an interview with a TV news network, Yaniz Kuzins, chairman of Latvian Alliance against Nazism and Riga city council member, was physically assaulted by a neo-nazi. Many others were roughed up and harassed.

The attendees, some as young as three, walked alongside neo-nazis such like Ričardas Čekutis from neighbouring Lithuania, laying flowers at the Monument of Freedom in central Riga and strewing flowers across a photo of notorious Latvian Nazi collaborator Robert Ancāns whilst wreaths to the victims of Nazism were once again desecrated by Latvian youth.

Whether Hague accepts this fact or not it is incumbent upon the international community, the UK government, the European Union and NATO to condemn *now* all Nazi events in clear terms if they sincerely wish to curb the re-emergence of neo-nazism and right-wing extremism in Europe.

As Mr Hague contemplates his joint campaign with Jolie for vitally needed international action against mass rape in conflicts, and the *"hope and dream that it's known that if you abuse the women, if you rape the women, you will be held accountable for your actions"*, Hague will hopefully become aware that Jolie's courageous endeavours are about taking real responsibility, about taking action and not saying that some resurgent evil should be left to historians to debate.

The banalisation of the Holocaust, its reduction to just another historical event is a huge danger and the fact that the British Conservatives, are linked to Latvians who glorify the Waffen SS not only makes a complete mockery of Jolie's excellent work fighting today's evils but also of the huge sacrifice millions of people across the world made to destroy Nazism.

I am certain that Jolie is absolutely clear on the following fact that one cannot be committed to human rights and adulate Hitler's forces at the same time. It is scandalous and shameful that Mr Hague is not.

As photo shoots are currently on the FCO's mind it

is perhaps appropriate to include an image. The photo above is of a group of naked Jewish women and girls walking to their place of execution on a beach near Liepaja, Latvia.

Their fate? A mass pit where they were piled up alive and then mown down by the fire of rifles or a machine gun salvo. They were victims of a regime that raped and pillaged before murdering all: those whom it raped and those who it did not.

Should that regime, and its local henchmen and fighters such as the Waffen SS today be glorified to the tune of "None of our business" from Mr Hague's Foreign Office?

The massacre in the picture was perpetrated by the Nazi *Einsatzgruppe A*, aided by Latvian antisemitic and pro-Nazi militias who willingly participated. The Nazis and their enthusiastic volunteer Latvian collaborators, many of whom later joined the 15th and 19th divisions of the Waffen SS, slaughtered around 95% of Latvian Jewry.

Freedom fighters for whom, then, Mr. Hague?

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