

UKRAINE



by **Ralph Berry**

How much longer will the Western leaders remain under the spell of Volodymyr Zelensky? He has been fawned upon by those powers ever since Boris Johnson went thrice to Kiev and and cried Ecce Homo while others were struggling to pronounce, and indeed spell his name correctly. In no time TV had honoured the Ukrainian leader with his own spelling ('Zelenskyy') while he was invited to address Parliament.

The US followed suit with an address to Congress on Zoom. Throughout, the policy on Ukraine remained unchanged and undebated in Britain.

There was no public discussion or challenge to the Establishment line.

Russia, like the Ottomans in Gladstone's words, 'must clear out, bag and baggage, from the provinces that they have desolated and profaned.' They did nothing of the kind, of course. Gladstone's high-octane indignation won a general election against Disraeli, and that was it.

Something very similar is happening now.

While warning lights are flashing in the US, the British narrative is unmoved. It is unwavering support for Ukraine, and the policy that every last Russian must be expelled from their soil. This towering ambition looks evermore like a wish-fulfilment dream. The front in Ukraine is paused in the still-coming offensive, nostalgically named 'the big push' with its memories of 1915-16. I expect a shell shortage soon, like the one which General Arthur French, commander of the British Expeditionary Force complained of in 1915. It had crippled his Loos offensive, he said. It will be today's NATO that is tardy in getting munitions in time to the front, when the combatants are already past the best time for the offensive. (The Kaiserschlacht opened on 21 March 1918.)

As luck would have it, I have just read:

'Ben Wallace, the Defence Secretary has just warned this week that the West was running short of capacity to supply artillery shells and other ammunition but Mr Zelensky still used the interview to push for more kit. "We would like to have certain things but we can't wait for months," the President said.'

We learn from history that we can always raid the past to excuse the failures of today. The shell shortage of 1915 saved General French's neck till the following year. If the Ukrainian counter-offensive should falter—of which there are early signs—Zelensky has General French's defence; it was the supply system that let him down.

In that case the war will resume the dreary slogging match

which the Russians reckon they will win. There are more of them, and they have some clever new devices. (See Telegraph 3 June.) But Charles Moore, who is just back from Kiev, is still convinced that Putin's 'defeat is essential to world peace.' There is something distasteful about those who, while perfectly safe themselves, urge others to battle for their own moral objectives.

In spite of this cheerless outlook, Moore, the voice of the Establishment, headlines his deepest convictions:

THE SPECTRE OF STALIN STILL HAUNTS EUROPE—UKRAINE IS FIGHTING TO EXORCISE IT.

Nonsense. A large and growing number have never heard of Stalin, any more than British schoolchildren have heard of Churchill (this is proven). Ukraine is fighting for its own life, not to save Europe as the precursor to saving the world. I hardly dare to mention it, but a voice of reason in the whole affair comes from Donald Trump. He refuses to take sides between Russia and Ukraine, and says that his only demand is for peace, which only the combatants can accept. This entails land for peace, as Henry Kissinger made clear. Meantime the war goes on.