

# How the British Put the Chess Pieces In Place for the First World War

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

*Helga Zepp-LaRouche gave a presentation in Berlin on Nov. 5 at a meeting of the Civil Rights Solidarity Movement (BüSo), of which she is the national chair. Under the title “We Need an Anti-War Movement,” she gave a broad-ranging strategic briefing on the current British-backed buildup toward war, the global financial breakdown crisis, and the efforts—especially by Russia, China, India, and Korea—to shift toward a track of economic development. We excerpt here her discussion of the buildup to World War I, in which the parallels to the present situation are highly instructive. It has been translated from German.*



EIRNS/Sergei Strid

*Helga Zepp-LaRouche addresses a BüSo party congress, January 2011. The British set up the chessboard piece by piece, she said on Nov. 5, for World War I, just as they are doing today.*

## Parallels to 1914

Let us take a look again at the question: How did World War I come about? There are real parallels to the current situation, and we have to visualize how the reasons for the First World War were actually the same—naturally with different predicates, a different historical situation. Basically, the buildup for the First World War occurred over the course of 30 years.

It is always said that the First World War was a conflict among nations. That is of course total hogwash, because the warring states were all *empires* [except the United States]. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, the German empire (Kaisertum), the British Empire, the Tsarist empire—they were all empires, not sovereign nation-states.

We could look quite far back and ask: Where did the buildup to World War I begin? One might perhaps start with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, in which Alsace-Lorraine effectively fell to Germany, and Bismarck united the various small principalities into a single nation-state. France found its treaty with him to be extremely humiliating and never really accepted it. This was already a little time-bomb ticking. Bismarck handled things relatively well, because he could have gone ahead with a war, but did not.

Bismarck overall is (although this is not our topic this evening) a very interesting figure, because he introduced the American System of economics in Germany.<sup>1</sup> He had previously been an advocate of the feudal system—

free enterprise, free trade—but then, through contact with the ideas of Henry C. Carey, became a supporter of protectionism, and made the German industrial revolution, which meant that Germany went, in a very short time, from being a feudal and agrarian country to an industrialized nation. That also played a role later.

In any case, this Bismarck was a very clever man; he was actually also a bit of a humanist, although he would not have wanted to admit that. But he was a person who

1. See Helga Zepp-LaRouche, “The American Roots of Germany’s Industrial Revolution,” *EIR*, Sept. 12, 2008, [http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2008/2008\\_30-39/2008-37/pdf/38-55\\_3536.pdf](http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2008/2008_30-39/2008-37/pdf/38-55_3536.pdf). Footnotes are supplied by *EIR*.

understood the business of diplomacy very well. He worked out a whole network of diplomatic treaties—with Austria, with Romania, with Italy, with Russia—simply to ensure that the various national conflicts would not lead to war.

The most important thing was that in 1887, he concluded the famous Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, which specified that in the event that France were to attack Germany again, Russia would remain neutral; in other words, that Russia would not ally with France against Germany. And that, because of the little timebomb of Alsace-Lorraine, was an absolutely essential point.

The treaty was originally planned for only three years, 1887 to 1890, and when it came up for renewal in the Spring of 1890, the Kaiser more or less threw Bismarck out, because the British had a great interest in getting rid of him. Because first of all, Bismarck understood the British manipulations better than anyone else, and he had made Germany into a strong industrial nation, which was a thorn in the British flesh.

The new German Chancellor, Gen. Leo von Caprivi, saw absolutely no reason to stick with this Reinsurance Treaty, and so it was allowed to expire, which had dramatic consequences.

Bismarck made all these treaties, and, above all, the alliance with Russia, as a kind of counterweight to the alliance among Germany, Austria, and Italy. And at the moment that the Reinsurance Treaty was terminated, secret negotiations began between Russia and France for a new military alliance. And then the military in all these countries started saying that a new war is coming, war is inevitable, and they all started to rearm.

It is my thesis that if people look at things this way—that war is inevitable, that they need to rearm—then you get the war. That is the logic of it. And if people say the



U.S. National Archives

*The carnage of World War I: Here, an American soldier surveys the ruins of a church on the captured height of Montfaucon, France, 1918. The usual reasons given for the outbreak of war are "hogwash," Zepp-LaRouche said.*

opposite: that we need a different policy, a war-avoidance policy, then war can be avoided. There is no force of nature, no automatic process, in either war or peace.

In any case, Alexander III—the son of Alexander II, who was a close ally of Abraham Lincoln—also saw no benefit in the Reinsurance Treaty; and the leading Russian military officials said that Germany simply cannot attack Russia, because at the moment that were to happen, France would attack Germany, and Germany cannot afford a two-front war; so we have nothing to worry about.

And this happened despite the fact that the German ambassador to Russia, Lothar von Schweinitz, warned that the negotiations had begun between Russia and France. Caprivi also said that Russia does not care about France, all they want is the Straits, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and they are not going to bother with France.

There is another aspect: All these monarchs, kings and emperors, were related to one another, they were all cousins, brothers-in-law, etc.—rampant incest—and at the same time, they increasingly could not stand each other. The Russian Tsar had developed an incredible



*Otto von Bismarck was ousted as Germany's Chancellor in 1890, on orders from the British: one of the time bombs that were ticking on the way toward World War I. This portrait by Franz von Lenbach is from 1894.*

dislike for Kaiser Wilhelm II, fueled by all sorts of court gossip and soap operas. And of course, with all the gossip and tittle-tattle they were fed, they all hated each other.

Vladimir Lambsdorf, the deputy to Russian Foreign Minister Nikolai Giers, reported that the Tsar had said he wanted to destroy Germany at the first opportunity. And he wrote in his diary: What these tsars and emperors do not consider, is that if such destruction occurs, then the Kaisertum would disappear, the Tsarist empire would disappear, and republican, socialist, social democratic, or other governments would appear to take their place.

So there were already people who saw it coming.

### **Count Witte's Alternative**

There was also definitely an alternative, however, namely that Gabriel Hanotaux was the French foreign minister starting in 1884, and collaborated with Sergei

Count Witte, who was the Russian finance minister in 1892-1903.

Count Witte is an extremely important figure. He had the vision that the Eurasian states should be brought together to create a peace bloc that would make war impossible. Count Witte was also a supporter of the ideas of Friedrich List, who had the idea of the national economy—that is, not free trade, but on the contrary, that the source of wealth is the development of the population, its education, the promotion of its creativity. Witte was previously Minister of Transport and founded the Siberian Railway Commission. During his term in office, 22,000 km of rail lines were built, of which the Trans-Siberian Railway alone was 8,000 km long, reaching from Moscow to Vladivostok.

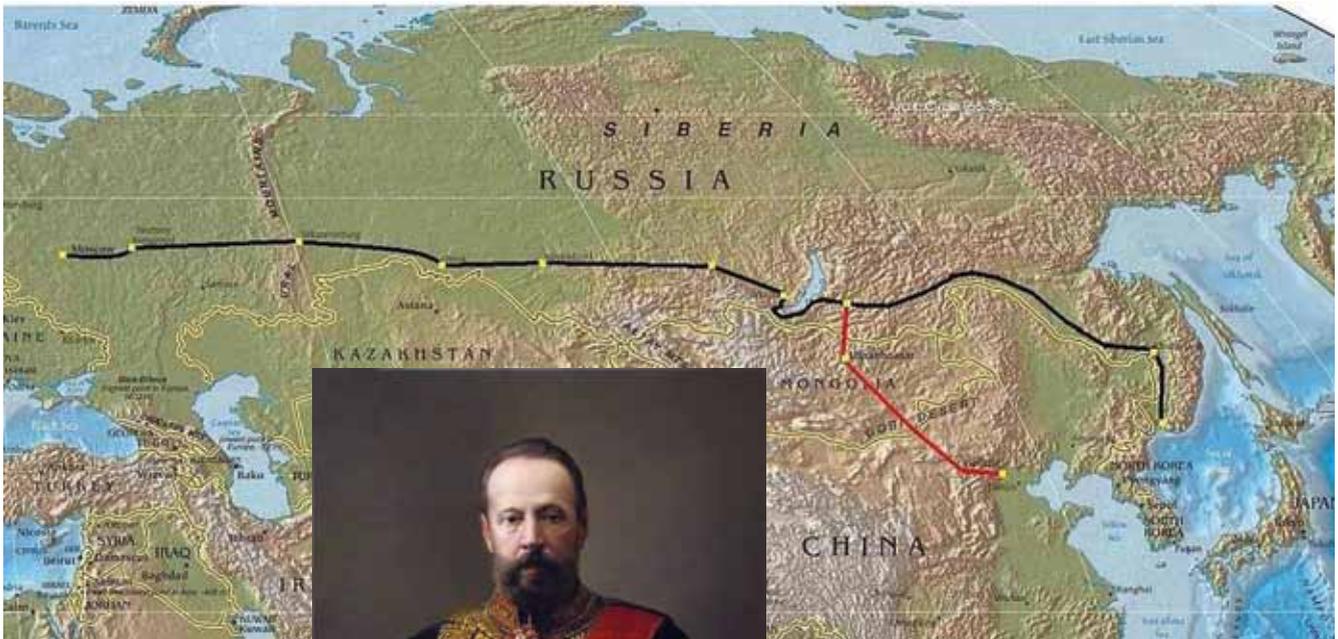
The scientist Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev was his close associate, the man who discovered the Periodic Table of Elements, which was developed further by Vladimir Vernadsky. And their idea was to develop Russia.

When the Trans-Siberian railway was built<sup>2</sup>, it was a pioneering effort that opened up the large expanses of Russia. As a result, 900,000 people settled in Siberia, opening it up for the first time.

Count Witte said in 1892:

“The global significance of the Siberian Railroad can no longer be denied by anyone. It is recognized as such both at home and abroad. Joining Europe and Asia by a continuous rail connection, that railroad becomes a global means of transport, over which goods can be exchanged between West and East. China, Japan, and Korea alone have a population of half a billion. Already there is a world trade turnover worth more than 600 billion rubles, and thanks to this steam-propelled transport system, we will be able to achieve more rapid and cheaper communications and exchange of goods, thereby entering into closer relations with Europe, which has a market with a developed manufacturing culture, thereby generating a greater demand there for the raw materials of the East. Thanks to the Siberian Railroad, these countries will also increase their demand for European manufactured goods and European know-how, and capital will find extensive new in-

2. See Dr. Sergei Cherkasov, “Developing Siberia’s Raw Materials: An Adventure for the 21st Century,” *EIR*, Oct. 15, 2010, speech to a Schiller Institute conference in Berlin on Sept. 25, 2010. [http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2010/2010\\_40-49/2010-40/2010-40/pdf/24-31\\_3740.pdf](http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2010/2010_40-49/2010-40/2010-40/pdf/24-31_3740.pdf).



[www.transsiberianrailways.eu](http://www.transsiberianrailways.eu)

*The Trans-Siberian Railroad (black line), built on the initiative of Russia's Count Witte (inset), starting in 1891, is the world's longest railway. Its vast expanse from Europe to the Pacific Ocean was a strategic threat to the British Empire. (The red line heading south is the Trans-Mongolian Railroad, built later.)*

vestment opportunities for the exploration and development of the natural riches of the Eastern nations. The Siberian Railroad can also be of great assistance to the Chinese tea industry, in which it could play a vital role. If the European states continue on their present course, however, they risk a great calamity.”

### Casus Belli for the British Empire

That was the situation, that this Eurasian cooperation would have built the overland route [from Western Europe to the Pacific Ocean], and from the standpoint of the British Empire, that was an absolute *casus belli*. The British controlled the maritime trade at that time, and thought that if this Trans-Siberian Railway were built, if Europe were to cooperate with Asia by an overland route, they would lose their influence. Then all these geopoliticians came along—Halford Mackinder, Alfred Milner—who created the geopolitical doctrine that said: The powers that control the Eurasian landmass<sup>3</sup> will control the planet; and thus

the trans-Atlantic states, England and France, would fall behind and lose their influence.

That was why this war was contrived by Great Britain, notably by the Prince of Wales, Edward Albert, later Edward VII. In a lengthy process, he manipulated the Entente Cordiale and the Triple Entente, and concluded a military alliance with Japan. Japan, with backing from Great Britain, attacked Russia's Port Arthur, and this led to the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, which lasted 11 months and was very bloody.

Thus, piece by piece, the chessboard was prepared, so that when the shots were fired in Sarajevo—which was actually just the trigger, not the cause of the war—these geopolitical manipulations were really made on the chessboard that had been set up long ago.

Today we can see the parallels: Russia, China, and Asia are growing; the Eurasian Land-Bridge, which we have proposed for over 20 years, is, more and more, bringing Europe and Asia together, at any rate more and more; and this is now the point from which, in some ways just like before the First World War, and from very similar motives, this threat of war results.

3. Mackinder famously wrote in 1919: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World.”