

## **Russia's War in Ukraine Must Not be 'Forgotten'**

### **Opinion**

Posted by:

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Many like to cite George Santayana's classic observation that "those who forget the past are condemned to relive it." That sage advice needs to be expanded with the words that "those who ignore what is going on at present will only hasten the return of the worst aspects of the past now and in the future."

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia" :: Feb 1 – Yesterday, the BBC described the fighting in and around the Ukrainian city of Avdiivka as "the front line of Europe's 'forgotten war,'" a characterization if accepted ranks alongside Nevil Chamberlain's dismissive remark about Hitler's demands on Czechoslovakia as "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing." The BBC title ([bbc.com/news/world-europe-38818543](http://bbc.com/news/world-europe-38818543)) at least put the term in quotation marks suggesting its problematic nature, but tragically what the British news outlet is saying is true: Many in the West are forgetting or out of laziness or self-centeredness pretending to forget the bloody consequences of Russia's continuing aggression in Ukraine. In the 1930s, Prague truly was further away psychologically and in terms of media attention than is Avdiivka today. Many in Britain were still in shock from the trenches of World War I, faced the difficulties of the depression and wanted above all to turn inward and away from the broader world. Now, Europeans and the West more generally have no such justification, if justification that can be said to be. Not only has Russian aggression in Ukraine been documented by all observers not desirous of cooperation with Moscow "über alles," but the Internet means that anyone who has not plunged his or her head in the sand can see what is going on. The problem now is not the lack of information but its superfluity, the fact that people are bombarded with so much information that they fail to pay attention to anything for very long and the equally important fact that some regimes like that in the Kremlin exploit that fact by promoting a fog of "alternative facts" and suggesting it's time to "look beyond" the past. That argument has always been a favorite of authoritarians. But it is fundamentally flawed: There are some things that can't be forgotten however much some would like them to be, and among those are Russia's illegal Anschluss of Ukraine's Crimea and its continuing aggression in eastern Ukraine. And that is all the more so because Moscow shows no sign of reversing course. The Kremlin said yesterday it has no plans to cut its military spending despite economic hard times ([themoscowtimes.com/news/kremlin-refuses-to-cut-russian-defense-budget-57000](http://themoscowtimes.com/news/kremlin-refuses-to-cut-russian-defense-budget-57000)), and a Russian senator openly talked about Russian forces taking Kyiv ([politnavigator.net/v-sovete-federacii-zayavili-o-vozmozhnosti-vzyatiya-kieva.html](http://politnavigator.net/v-sovete-federacii-zayavili-o-vozmozhnosti-vzyatiya-kieva.html)). Many like to cite George Santayana's classic observation that "those who forget the past are condemned to relive it." That sage advice needs to be expanded with the words that "those who ignore what is going on at present will only hasten the return of the worst aspects of the past now and in the future." Russia's war in Ukraine must never be "forgotten," especially at a time when Russian forces are killing

some Ukrainians and seeking to enslave more of them.

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at:

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