

Hungary's Prime Minister Embarks on 'Peace Mission' To Change the Climate in Europe

by Stewart Battle

July 11—On July 9, NATO leaders gathered in Washington for a three-day summit in a much gloomier atmosphere than had been expected even a few weeks ago. The main participants included the mumbling and disoriented U.S. President Biden, who shows signs of dementia; France's President Macron, who has just gone from one stunning electoral defeat to another; the UK's new Prime Minister Starmer, who was swept into office on little more than the rejection of his Tory opponents; and German Chancellor Scholz, whose government could fall apart any day now.

Despite their weaknesses, these leaders committed to even broader support for Ukraine and furthered the efforts to create a "Global NATO" in order to confront Russia and China. The reality of the failures of their policies and their widespread rejection at the ballot box have apparently not yet dawned on them.

Additionally, there was another big factor adding to the gloominess of the summit, namely the surprise initiative taken so forcefully by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, once he had assumed the presidency of the European Council on July 1.

The very next day, he flew to Kyiv to discuss with President Zelensky conditions for a possible ceasefire and the opening of negotiations, followed by a quickly organized visit to Moscow on July 5, for a meeting with Vladimir Putin. After a busy weekend, he was off to Beijing July 8 for a discussion with President Xi on China's and Brazil's peace proposal for Ukraine, before flying to Washington to attend the NATO summit.

Orbán stressed in all his many comments and inter-

views how much "Europe needs peace," which cannot be achieved without diplomacy, and without talking to all the parties involved. It so happens that Hungary is uniquely situated today to discuss with both Russia and Ukraine, and is one of the few countries in the Collective West that still has a relationship with Russia. Whether one agrees or not with all of the Prime Minister's poli-



NATO

Outspoken leader Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, also this month's European Council president, attended the NATO summit in Washington, D.C.: NATO must win the peace, not the war, he insists.

cies, in particular on the Middle East or immigration, he is on the mark as concerns this critical issue.

The power of Orbán's "peace mission," as he called it, is perhaps indicated in the string of attacks he has received from the power centers of Europe and the U.S. during and after his visit. The EU is even considering enacting sanctions on him or cutting Hungary's presidency short to prevent him from carrying out further actions like these while holding this position.

But Orbán’s trip is a powerful intervention into an otherwise bleak strategic situation, which has seen a near-blackout of relations between the West and Russia as the world sleepwalks toward a thermonuclear world war. Further, it can potentially serve as a pathway for other, less courageous leaders—who nonetheless recognize the need for an urgent policy change—to emerge.

Peace Mission Begins

Viktor Orbán is well-known for being an outspoken leader in Europe, but his efforts kicked into high gear with his appointment to the European Council Presidency July 1. Two days before, Orbán published an op-ed in the major Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet*, writing:

To make matters worse, the Brussels bureaucracy that lives in a bubble has made a number of bad political decisions in recent years. Europe is increasingly being dragged into a war, in which it has nothing to gain and everything to lose. The bureaucrats in Brussels want this war. They see it as their own, and they want to defeat Russia.

Instead of “looking after the interests of the people,” Brussels is “imposing their own ideologies” on the EU’s population, Orbán wrote. Making clear how he sees his role during his time as president, Orbán said in a July 1 interview on Hungarian public television, that the greatest opportunity during Hungary’s EU Council presidency will be a chance “to take Europe closer to peace,” and that this would be the focus of Hungary’s work.

On July 2, the day after assuming his new position, Orbán took off to Kyiv to meet with Volodymyr Zelensky. Orbán’s overall message was that diplomacy must supersede fighting, and the two parties should return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. Toward that end, he proposed that Ukraine consider a “quick ceasefire” in order to speed up negotiations and the process of bringing the war to a close. He also said that he would prepare a report for the European Council “that could be a baseline for the necessary European



NATO

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and U.S. President Joe Biden at the NATO summit: more weapons, and death, for Ukraine.

decisions.”

So far so good, as far as the European bureaucrats were concerned. But the following days would change everything.

Orbán Visits Moscow

Orbán organized a last-minute visit to Moscow, without telling any of his counterparts in Europe. Then, on July 5, he held an almost three-hour meeting with President Putin. While Orbán maintained that he had no mandate to hold peace talks, he did tell Hungarian media outlet Telex that Hungary could be “a good tool in the hands of people who want peace.”

Orbán laid out his intention during his joint press conference with Putin following their meeting:

Peace is what Europe needs most of all.... Over the past two years we have realized that we will not achieve peace without diplomacy, without channels of communication. Peace will not come by itself, we need to work for it.

I was just discussing with Mr. President today the ways to achieve peace. I wanted to know what the shortest road to end the war is. I wanted to hear Mr. President’s opinion on three important questions, and I heard his opinion. What does he think about the current peace initiatives? What does he think about a ceasefire and peace talks, and in what succession can they



Viktor Orbán Facebook page

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (left), shown meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in one stop on his “rogue” diplomacy mission to Ukraine, Russia, and China.

be carried out? And the third thing that interested me was Mr. President’s vision of Europe after the war. I am thankful to Mr. President for this open and honest conversation....

From my experience I understood that the positions are poles apart. Very many steps are needed to be done to become closer to the end of the war. However, we have made the most important step—we have established contact. And I will continue to work towards this end.

Immediately, there ensued a knee-jerk response from around the Anglosphere. A senior White House official was quoted saying Orbán’s trip “will neither advance the cause of peace nor will it promote Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.” European Council President Charles Michel said Hungary “has no mandate to engage with Russia on behalf of the EU. The European Council is clear: Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim.” Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk posed the question: “The rumours about your visit to Moscow cannot be true Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, or can they?” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen accused Orbán of “appeasement,” and the EU’s next High Representative of Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas said Orbán is “exploiting the EU presidency position to sow confusion.” Orbán responded sharply by simply saying: “You cannot make peace from a comfortable armchair in Brus-

sels. We cannot sit back and wait for the war to miraculously end.”

In an interview aired the following day with the Swiss site *Weltwoche*, Orbán said he had been aware that he would come under heavy criticism afterward, “But it is a moral issue,” he insisted. Making the effort was worth any price he would have to pay in Brussels. “Peacemaking is a Christian action,” he said, and pointed to the thousands of young people dying each day from this war. “There must be direct connections to the leaders of the two warring parties,” he said, adding that he was the only European leader who had had contact with both parties.

During the interview, Orbán also emphasized that Putin is “100% rational,” and that the discussions took place in a good mood. Upon departing, Orbán wrote on his X account: “I have concluded my talks in Moscow with President Putin. My goal was to

open the channels of direct communication and start a dialogue on the shortest road to peace. Mission accomplished! To be continued on Monday....”

‘Peace Mission 3.0’

In actuality, it was Sunday, July 7, when news of Orbán arriving in Beijing to meet with President Xi Jinping was revealed. China has refused to be drawn into the blame-game coming from the West in regards to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and has even made a peace proposal in collaboration with Brazil which aims to secure an agreement that is agreeable to all sides. Orbán was explicit in his praise for China’s work for peace, and said upon arriving: “China is a key power in creating the conditions for peace in the Russia-Ukraine war. This is why I came to meet with President Xi in Beijing, just two months after his official visit to Budapest.”

In a video report posted on his X account following his meeting with President Xi, Orbán said:

Of course, the warring parties have the last word in the war, but three world powers have a decisive influence: China, the United States and the European Union. They also influence when this war will end.... President Xi has made it clear today that he will continue his efforts aimed at creating peace. We are not alone! We will continue our work.

Parenthetically, Orbán's relationship to China is also very strong, a fact which could prove to be important, given the other strategic changes afoot and the amount of pressure on Western countries to adopt a confrontationalist policy toward China. In May of this year, President Xi visited Budapest and signed an "all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership" with Hungary. Orbán was also the only European head of state to attend China's Belt and Road Forum in October of 2023. During Xi's visit in May, Orbán said at their joint press conference:

Now we are living in a multipolar world order, and one of the pillars of this new world order is the People's Republic of China, the country that is now setting the course of the world economy and world politics.

On to Washington

Following his blitz of diplomacy, Orbán headed to Washington to attend the annual NATO summit. After having received an endless pile of attacks for his discussions with Xi and Putin, he did not exactly have a warm welcome. Nonetheless, he upheld his "peace mission." Orbán had already organized a carefully-timed article in *Newsweek* just three days before, in which he laid out his challenge to NATO on the occasion of its 75th anniversary:

NATO is approaching a watershed moment. It is worth remembering that the most successful military alliance in world history started as a peace project, and its future success depends on its ability to maintain peace. But today, instead of peace, the agenda is the pursuit of war; instead of defense it is offense. All this runs counter to NATO's founding values.... The task today should be to preserve the alliance as a peace project.

He warned of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" NATO is walking itself into with its further and further involvement in the war in Ukraine. He then quoted British historian Arnold Toynbee, who argued, "Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder." Orbán continued:

As the strongest military alliance the world has ever known, it is not defeat at the hands of any external enemy that we should fear. An external enemy, if it has any sense, will not dare to launch

an attack on any NATO member country. But we should very much fear our own rejection of the values that gave birth to our alliance. The purpose for which NATO was created was to secure peace in the interest of stable economic, political, and cultural development. NATO fulfills its purpose when it wins peace, not war. If it chooses conflict instead of cooperation, and war instead of peace, it will be committing suicide.

One can begin to hear a resonance with the great ideas percolating in the world today: President Putin's proposal for a Eurasian security architecture, President Xi's Global Security Initiative and Global Development Initiative, and Helga Zepp-LaRouche's New Security and Development Architecture proposed in March 2022.

During the summit, Orbán also met with Turkish President Erdoğan, whom he praised as "an indispensable player in peace-making," also referencing Erdoğan's role in securing the Black Sea grain deal between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. In another video, released following their meeting, Orbán noted: "If friends of peace join forces, together we can take the next step in the direction of peace."

The two presidents also discussed Israel's war in Gaza, against which Erdoğan has spoken out strongly over the previous months.

While it is not known at this point what other initiatives and discussions the prime minister engaged in during his visit to Washington, he reportedly ditched the NATO summit early to have a meeting with Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago.

The Role of Leadership

Contrary to the feverish attacks on Orbán from among his supposed collaborators in NATO and the West, he is not seeking to change Europe's policy through force or by the power of his currently held position as rotating President of the European Council—a practice which is so immaturely frequented throughout the "democratic" West. Rather, he is relying on a different power, one largely neglected in today's trans-Atlantic: the power of reason.

On the day of Hungary's admission to the presidency, Orbán said the following in an interview on the television channel M1:

What we can do is what it is always the job of the Presidency to do: to put proposals on the table.



NATO

President Biden (center-left) at NATO's North Atlantic Council, where the agenda was offensive war.

So we won't be deciding, but we'll help the twenty-seven prime ministers to decide. We'll be there in all the places that are important for Europe, we'll explore all the situations.... This leadership isn't bureaucratic—of course there are these dossiers and deliberations, but there also needs to be a political form of energy: an initiative which isn't a decision, but which puts a clear description of the situation on the table, the possible solutions. This is how we'll proceed. If in the coming days you or your viewers hear surprising news from surprising places, this is the way of working that's behind it....

In this culture of international diplomacy, what we represent and how we represent it is public, open and direct. I think that this is a virtue ... we'll call a spade a spade.

The world is currently undergoing the largest crisis in modern history, as the pillars of leadership in the Western world are crumbling, propelling us toward a threatened World War III. There are plentiful reasons for the nations of the trans-Atlantic to abandon their current path of self-destruction, but as of yet they have not, somehow lacking the mental or moral wherewithal to change. There are many factors of this crisis, but the most fundamental is the abandonment of reason itself by those leaders and establishments among the so-called "rules-based order." However, by playing this particular role today, acting in a "public, open and direct" fashion, Viktor Orbán may be in a position to awaken this

nearly-lost power within Europe and the West at large.

This is not simply a "common sense" kind of impulse by which countries realize that they must look out for their own interests, nor is it simply an "anti-war" sentiment which becomes activated to avert catastrophe. While both are truthful and important, today's crisis confronts us in an entirely different way, and presents an opportunity to discover the necessity for a shared future among equal, albeit different, sovereign nation-states. Such a discovery—a re-activation of the power of reason—can be the ignition for an entirely new security and development architecture, the necessity of which is already so palpable before the eyes of the world.

Let us hope that Orbán's peace mission pushes the world in this direction.

Let us hope that Orbán's peace mission pushes the world in this direction.



Executive Intelligence Review now offers

automatic monthly billing for its intelligence package. Receive EIR's weekly magazine and its *Daily Alert* in your inbox for \$50/month, billed monthly. Cancel anytime. Subscribe today!



Details at:
store.larouchepub.com/EIR-Daily-Alert-p/eirpk-0000-000-00-001-std.htm

