

# Security – partnership but not participation

Mrs May's speech on security cooperation last Saturday was given in Munich, famous for the meeting between Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler in 1938 where an agreement was signed which Mr Chamberlain, on his return to the UK, would lead to "peace in our time".

His hopes were sadly shaken a year later. Mrs May did not come away with any agreement, She was not expecting to. Instead, she went to Munich to deliver a speech which, like that by Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, earlier in the week, was good on mood music and aspiration but not at all satisfactory when it comes to detail.

Michel Barnier had stated that upon Brexit, we will no longer be part of Europol or the European Defence Agency. He did not mention the European Arrest Warrant, but it is not unreasonable to assume that we would be excluded from this too. At this point, virtually everyone who voted for Brexit should have been giving three loud cheers. Mrs May, in her speech, however, seemed to be saying what a disaster this would be. *"Let's be clear about what would happen if the means of this cooperation were abolished. Extradition under the European Arrest Warrant would cease. Extradition outside the European Arrest Warrant can cost four times as much and take three times as long. It would mean an end to the significant exchange of data and engagement through Europol."*

Fine, for as far as the EAW is concerned, as we have pointed out many times on this website, its convenience is outweighed by its serious flaws – flaws which have caused great grief to a number of UK citizens, For example, Edmond Arapi was subject to an Italian EAW in 2004, being convicted *in absentia* of a murder in Genoa, even though he had never visited Genoa

in his life and was working in a café in Staffordshire on the day of the murder. Andrew Symeou, a UK citizen, was extradited to Greece, denied bail and incarcerated for 11 months on charges of “fatal bodily harm” thanks to the signature of a Greek magistrate that no UK judge could overturn despite the evidence against him being obtained under duress. Mr Symeou published an account of his ordeal in a book called *Extradited*. He pointed out that unless, like him, you suffer from a miscarriage of justice, you are unlikely to appreciate just how flawed the EAW is.

Then, although we may be ejected from Europol, we would still be members of Interpol. If the EU is keen to cooperate with us on matters relating to criminal justice, which it would be foolish not to do, there are other models available which would enable us to maintain our independence.

Mrs May was right to highlight the need for close security cooperation between the UK and the EU after Brexit but we should be seeking to distance ourselves from the EU’s confrontational stance towards Russia. As Peter Hitchens put it, “Russia is no more of a threat to the UK than the Klingons”

Unfortunately, Mrs May has not freed herself from the widespread misapprehension that today’s Russia is merely the former Soviet Union under another name. She referred to “Russia’s hostile actions.” The reality is that blame for the current hostility between Russia and the EU lies as much, if not more, with Brussels than with Moscow. True, NATO must shoulder some of the blame for rapidly extending its reach to the boundaries of Belarus and Russia, but until 2009, it appeared that Russia was not that worried and might even have been considering joining NATO itself. It was the EU’s meddling in Ukraine, working behind the scenes to oust the pro-Russian but democratically elected Viktor Yanukovich, which has been the principal factor behind the deterioration in relationships between Russia and the West in recent years. Free from any

vested interest in seeing Ukraine join an organisation which we have just voted to leave, we have the opportunity to re-set our own relationship with Russia rather than having to toe the EU's expansionist, provocative line. It is surely wrong to seek to maintain enmity with a nation with whom we share a common European culture when it is possible to be friends.

Mrs May proposed that a new UK-EU treaty should be signed covering cooperation in defence and security issues. Will the EU play ball? Without a separate deal, it will take up to three years after Brexit for Britain – as a “third country” – to receive EU approval for data to be freely exchanged, so says the Independent. It will not be us who will be the biggest losers if the EU sticks rigidly to its rules about “third countries”, but then, if it is prepared to make an exception for security issues, this then poses the question, why not for trade?

All in all, the impression given by Mrs May's speech is that she fails to see that in these issues, she has the whip hand and can use it to ensure that we achieve a full and complete break with the EU, replacing participation in its agencies with a partnership which can still keep Europe secure. We just hope that as the negotiations proceed, in this area as well as in other key Brexit issues, her MPs will continue to give her a few gentle prods to ensure we do indeed achieve a proper Brexit in these key areas.

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