(This article by Peter Hitchens which appeared on  the Mail on Sunday website ( http://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/  ) on 20th July   has been posted on the *Apropos* website : www.apropos.org.uk for the information of our readers.)

## Mourn the victims... but don't turn one tragedy into a global catastrophe
*This is Peter Hitchens's Mail on Sunday column*



One thing we should have learned in the past 100 years is that war is hell. We might also have noticed that, once begun, war is hard to stop and often takes shocking turns.

So those who began the current war in Ukraine – the direct cause of the frightful murder of so many innocents on Flight MH17 on Thursday – really have no excuse.

There is no doubt about who they were. In any war, the aggressor is the one who makes the first move into neutral or disputed territory.

And that aggressor was the European Union, which rivals China as the world's most expansionist power, swallowing countries the way performing seals swallow fish (16 gulped down since 1995).

Ignoring repeated and increasingly urgent warnings from Moscow, the EU – backed by the USA – sought to bring Ukraine into its orbit. It did so through violence and illegality, an armed mob and the overthrow of an elected president.

I warned then that this would lead to terrible conflict. I wrote in March: 'Having raised hopes that we cannot fulfil, we have awakened the ancient passions of this cruel part of the world – and who knows where our vainglorious folly will now lead?'

Now we see. Largely unreported over the past few months, a filthy little war has been under way in Eastern Ukraine. Many innocents have died, unnoticed in the West. Neither side has anything to boast of – last Tuesday 11 innocent civilians died in an airstrike on a block of flats in the town of Snizhne, which Ukraine is unconvincingly trying to blame on Russia.

So PLEASE do not be propagandised by Thursday's horrible slaughter into forgetting what is really going on. Powerful weapons make it all too easy for people to do stupid, frightful things. Wars make such things hugely more likely to happen.

In September 1983, the Soviet air force, inflamed by Cold War passions and fears, inexcusably massacred 269 people aboard a Korean Airlines 747.

In July 1988, highly trained US Navy experts aboard the cruiser Vincennes, using ultra-modern equipment, moronically mistook an Iranian Airbus, Iran Air Flight 655, for an F-14 Tomcat warplane. They shot the airliner out of the sky, killing 290 innocent people, including 66 children. All kinds of official untruths were told at the time to excuse this. In October 2001, bungling Ukrainian servicemen on exercise were the main suspects for the destruction of Siberia Airlines Flight 1812 over the Black Sea. Whoever did it, they killed 78 passengers and crew en route from Israel to Novosibirsk – though Ukraine has never officially admitted guilt.

Complex quarrels about blame for such horrors are often never resolved. I am among many who do not believe that Libya had anything to do with the mass murder of those aboard Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie in December 1988, very likely an Iranian-backed retaliation for the Airbus tragedy. All the evidence points to a terror group operating from Syrian-controlled territory, and none points to Libya.

But at the time of the prosecution, we were trying to make friends with Syria, which has since gone back near the top of our enemies list but may soon be our ally again, against the fanatics of Isis. Confused? You should be.

So, let us just mourn the dead and comfort the bereaved, and regret human folly and the wickedness of war. Let us not allow this miserable event to be fanned into a new war. That is what we did almost 100 years ago, and it is about time we learned something from that.