

Murawiec's pals stole billions from Russia in mafia flight capital scam

by Dean Andromidas and Jeffrey Steinberg

See EIR Aug. 12, 1994, p. 57 and Aug. 26, 1994, p. 56 for the two previous articles in this series about British intelligence's strategic blunder, Laurent Murawiec.

EIR's ongoing investigation of Laurent Murawiec, a former associate of the political movement tied to Lyndon LaRouche, has now turned up an even nastier nest of British intelligence-owned gangsters and thieves than originally reported. After working for years as a European correspondent for EIR, Murawiec defected to British intelligence in the early 1990s, a move symbolized by his sponsorship into the ranks of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) by leading British China-basher Gerald Segal, and his patronage by Tavistock Institute Holocaust historian Leon Poliakov.

In June 1994, Murawiec showed up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on the eve of a major terrorist bomb attack against a building housing Argentina's most prestigious Jewish organizations. His presence in Argentina in his capacity as the managing director of an obscure Swiss think-tank, Geopol, set off alarm bells, because all of the other principals in the firm had previously been linked to international arms trafficking, drug money laundering, and black operations targeting Argentina, Brazil, Iraq, and other developing nations seeking to build up their domestic high-technology defense industries.

Moreover, the bombing of the Jewish center, AMIA, denounced by Israeli officials as the work of "extremists" out to destroy the Middle East peace process, conformed to the geopolitical prescriptions of the very British IISS crowd to which Murawiec and the Geopol crew were affixed.

Helmut Raiser and Robert Maxwell

Murawiec's sponsor in Geopol, Swiss-based German businessman Helmut Raiser, had been "Mr. Inside" in the mid-1980s Condor II scandal, in which the Bush and Thatcher governments targeted Argentina and Iraq for attempting to develop an independent medium-range ballistic missile capability. Raiser's engineering firm, Consen, was deeply involved in the Argentine and Iraqi facilities, and it was on the basis of inside information, leaked to British intelligence-sponsored journalists, that the Condor II program was gone after and ultimately shut down.

It now turns out that Raiser's company was also in the middle of a multibillion-dollar capital flight operation against Russia, in league with some leading figures in the old communist *nomenklatura* and the late Robert Maxwell.

Evidence of the Raiser-Geopol involvement in the ongoing looting of Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union emerged from a July 28, 1994 German television documentary about the life and death of British MI-5 agent Robert Maxwell (see EIR, Aug. 12, 1994, p. 54). The television show, aired on Germany's ARD television network, was prepared by a joint investigative team from Germany and Austria who traveled to Moscow to interview former top Soviet KGB and Communist Party officials who had been involved with Maxwell in a massive flight capital scheme during the final months of the U.S.S.R.'s existence.

According to the TV documentary, in late 1990, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov had hired Maxwell, a close friend and confidant, to represent the U.S.S.R. in a series of dubious financial ventures aimed ostensibly at generating \$15 billion in hard currency to pay down Moscow's debt to its international creditors. Maxwell was joined in the effort by a Riga, Latvia-based private firm called Nordex, headed by Grigorii Loutchanski, a close Communist Party ally of Gorbachov.

According to Baltic sources, Loutchanski was personally given the franchise to "invest" Soviet funds abroad by President Gorbachov. His Riga-based Nordex was protected by Baltic KGB chief Boris Pugo, who later became the last Soviet internal affairs minister, and was implicated in the August 1991 putsch attempt.

The ARD documentary charged that Maxwell's mysterious death in November 1991 was part of a pattern of murders of people involved in the illegal Gorbachov flight capital operations of 1990-91. At least seven leading Soviet officials, including Pugo and former Red Army Chief of Staff Sergei Akhromeyev, died in the weeks following the aborted coup; several other plotters, including Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov and KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, both identified by ARD as Maxwell's "task masters," were jailed.

Loutchanski not only survived the events of August 1991. He prospered. Nordex expanded operations, setting up overseas offices in Vienna, Zurich, London, and the Far East. Robert Maxwell's two sons, Kevin and Ian, work for Nor-

dex's Vienna office to this day. However, they didn't fare so well. They are both about to stand trial in England for their role, along with their father, in the theft of millions of dollars from the Maxwell corporate empire's pension funds. There is widespread speculation that Maxwell's flight capital schemes on behalf of Gorbachov did not work out, and he may have tried to cover the losses by dipping into his own company funds to gamble on the derivatives markets.

Nordex and Consen

A recent review of Swiss and Austrian corporate records by *EIR* investigators revealed that Nordex's "business" operations directly involved Helmut Raiser's Consen Group, as well as other shady Swiss financial figures closely linked to Geopol. Although Loutchanski is currently based out of the Vienna offices of Nordex, the Austrian company, Nordex Vienne, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Zurich firm NH Nordex Group Holding AG, with offices at Kreuzplatz 2.

The central figure in the Zurich company is a Zug, Switzerland-based attorney named Iso Lenzlinger. Lenzlinger's name appears on the board of directors of all of the Nordex companies, including NH Nordex Group Holding AG. Other Zurich subsidiaries of Nordex Holding include Industrial Financial and Trading SA, Contitrade AG, and FPI AG. All are located at the same Zurich address.

Since no later than 1983, Lenzlinger has also been closely tied to Helmut Raiser. His name appeared on the board of directors of all five of Raiser's Consen Group firms throughout their existence. Moreover, the Swiss complex of Nordex firms includes several other figures with longstanding ties to Raiser and other Geopol directors.

Most important among them is Dr. Alfred Hartmann, the former chief financial officer of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), the head of Rothschild family banking operations in Switzerland, and the former head of the Swiss branch of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL). BNL was a major source of funding for the Consen operations in Iraq. Hartmann sits on the board of the Zug company, Megomat AG, with FPI AG director Bruno Bataini.

Megomat, a cable manufacturing firm, is believed to have been involved with Raiser's Consen Group in the Condor II program during the 1980s. Megomat's chairman, Dr. Kurt W. Hackel, was for many years the director of the European division of National Cash Register (NCR), which is a subsidiary of Krupp Industries AG. Until he set out on his own in the early 1980s, Raiser was chairman of the Krupp-linked Bohlen Industries, and Krupp played a major role in Raiser's various engineering ventures—i.e., weapons production—during the 1980s.

Laundering the flight capital

According to a former high-ranking Soviet Communist Party official familiar with the Nordex story, Grigorii Lout-

chanski was given authorization from the Gorbachov regime to set up a string of "investment firms" with the exclusive franchise to funnel Soviet state firm profits into Swiss bank accounts. Between 1990 and the fall of the Gorbachov regime, an estimated 9,000 companies were established solely to smuggle Soviet funds into the West. Switzerland and Canada were two primary centers of this massive capital flight, and Loutchanski clearly was a central figure in all these operations.

In fact, a September 1994 article in the Swiss financial magazine *Bilanz* linked Loutchanski's Swiss partner, Iso Lenzlinger, to another flight capital operation that was set up by associates of Gorbachov's rival and eventual successor, Boris Yeltsin.

According to *Bilanz*, during the same 1990-91 period when Nordex was working with Robert Maxwell to siphon rubles, Soviet gold, diamonds, and other precious commodities into Swiss bank vaults, Lenzlinger was also the point man in Zug for a mafioso named Michael Preisfreund. On behalf of Preisfreund, a Finnish national linked to U.S.-based organized crime families, Lenzlinger set up a Liechtenstein-based outfit called Transatlantic Foundation. Lenzlinger himself had a Zug-based firm called Transatlantic Handels AG, which is now defunct.

According to author Claire Sterling, in January 1991, Preisfreund and his cohorts Leo Emil-Wanta, Jack Tremonti, and Martin Gulewicz, were implicated in a scam involving the proposed sale of 140 billion rubles for a total of \$7.8 billion, at a time when the ruble was trading at near parity with the dollar. The deal, had it gone through, would have represented one of the biggest thefts in history.

The story, detailed in Sterling's 1994 book, *Thieves World*, first came to light on Jan. 23, 1991, when Russian authorities detained British businessman Paul Pearson at Moscow International Airport. Pearson was representing a company called Dove Trading, headed by a South African con-man named Colin Gibbins. In his briefcase, Pearson was carrying a contract signed by top officials of Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation government, authorizing the ruble-dollar swap at the rate first offered by the Preisfreund-Wanta group months earlier.

In the weeks that followed Pearson's detention, top Soviet officials still loyal to Gorbachov stepped forward to accuse western secret services of attempting to bankrupt the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, at the personal behest of President Gorbachov, Loutchanski, Maxwell, Lenzlinger, et al. were apparently running nearly identical scams with the connivance of equally prominent Soviet Communist Party and KGB officials. And Lenzlinger, the business representative of Geopol's Raiser, was apparently a pivotal figure in both efforts.

The real crime cartel

Sorting through the maze of front companies, Swiss bank accounts, Russian gangs, and American hoodlums impli-

cated in the multibillion-ruble theft is difficult, indeed. However, the picture comes into sharp focus by looking back at Geopol, the new home of Laurent Murawiec, and a gathering spot for some of Switzerland's best-known and most-sophisticated con artists. As we have already seen, Helmut Raiser has been a central player in some of the biggest arms deals in recent memory, always in league with British intelligence.

Another director of Geopol, Elizabeth Kopp, is the former justice minister of Switzerland. Her husband, Hans Kopp, was implicated in one of the biggest drug money laundering schemes ever probed by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Kopp was the vice president of the Shakarchi Trading Company, owned by a Lebanese family of several generations of drug smugglers and money launderers whose laundering efforts were handled through banker Edmond Safra. Safra's Trade Development Bank is now a part of the Geopol apparatus.

Pierre Hafner, another Geopol director, is a senior official of the CBI-TDB Union Bancaire Privée, and Geopol's offices are in the TDB-UBP building. This bank is owned by the Picciotto holding company, CBI Holding SA, which is based at the bank's headquarters and of which Hafner is a director. It is common talk in Swiss financial circles that Hafner is a creature of the Rothschilds and related British interests, "without which he would be nothing," as a Swiss source told *EIR*. Only a few years ago, he shared board membership at Deutsche Bank Geneva with Albert Hartmann of BCCI.

Safra's Republic National Bank, headquartered in New York City, was implicated in drug money-laundering by both the Shakarchi Trading Company and a string of Medellín Cartel fronts in Colombia back in the late 1980s. More recently, TDB was implicated in funneling mafia money to Socialist Party politicians in Italy and Spain.

In 1982, Hans Kopp was convicted of fraud and sentenced to a one-year suspended jail term. The case involved another Swiss banker named Rudolph J. Ernst, who, according to reports in the Swiss press, was allegedly operating out of the Dominican Republic and shipping prostitutes to Switzerland, where they would have been set up in a porno club targeting government officials for blackmail. When Kopp's name came up in the Shakarchi-Safra probe by DEA agents in Berne, his wife was forced to resign as justice minister.

Elizabeth Kopp's career took a further turn for the worse when a former employee came forward with charges (published in Swiss newspapers) that while she was in office, whippings using bamboo sticks had regularly been administered to male employees of the Justice Ministry. Kopp is currently a director of Yugotours, a firm widely thought to be a front for Serbian intelligence.

Between Kopp, Raiser, Hafner, and Raiser's longtime confidant Iso Lenzlinger, Geopol represents a true crossroads of East-West corruption. No matter how much Laurent Murawiec may squeak about his London IISS credentials, he is residing in a high-class cesspool.

France toward a new Algerian crisis?

by Christine Bierre

In an interview given to *Le Monde* on Sept. 6, French Foreign Affairs Minister Alain Juppé announced a significant change in French policy toward Algeria when he declared, "there is no other solution to the present drama than the reconciliation of the Algerian people, a political dialogue which should lead to elections."

Tensions between France's government and Algerian Islamists (those who defend the idea of a political order based on Islamic religious principles) had increased massively following the assassination of five French citizens—two policemen and three consular personnel—in Algiers last Aug. 4. Responsibility for the attack was later claimed by the Islamic Armed Group (GIA), the most extreme of the armed groups fighting in Algeria's civil war, in a statement to the London-based Arab paper *El Hayat*. This attack, which for the first time targeted diplomatic personnel, represents a considerable escalation in the war which the Algerian Islamists are waging against the French government, which is accused of being the main western supporter of the Algerian regime.

The attack could have had far worse consequences. The five Frenchmen were killed in a shootout with the extremists, while these latter were attempting to place a car bomb in the area near the Max Marchand French school. The target of the car bomb appears to have been a building housing almost the totality of France's 70 diplomatic personnel who had been regrouped and moved there in an effort to improve their protection. Scheduled to go off at 7:30 a.m., the bomb's effect would have been devastating in this heavily populated area at a time when many people are busily buzzing around.

The killings were immediately condemned in a communiqué released by Rabah Kebir, the spokesman for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Europe, who hinted that Algerian military elements may have been involved in the provocation.

The background to this level of atrocity was the position of total hostility adopted by the French government against any participation in power by the Islamists, and an attempt to prop up an Algerian regime in spite of the fact that it never had any mandate to rule. This whole situation goes back to 1990 when the moderate Islamic forces organized