

Earthquake derails plan for Turkish move into Caucasus

by Dean Andromidas

A massive earthquake on Aug. 17, registering 7.4 on the Richter scale, struck a blow to the fortunes of Turkey. The earthquake was Turkey's worst national catastrophe in half a century, affecting the most productive part of the nation, killing up to 40,000 people, and causing an estimated \$20-40 billion in damage. But, at the same time, the quake also wrecked plans by the British-American-Commonwealth faction of the oligarchy to use Turkey as the spearhead of a geopolitical attack on Russia, by destabilizing the Transcaucasus and Central Asia.

The extent of the catastrophe, and the economic and political aftershocks that can be expected, throw an incalculable element into the future of the region.

The quake struck northwest Turkey in the early-morning hours, and devastated its industrial heartland, including the cities of Izmet (the quake's epicenter), Bursa, and Adapazari. Istanbul, a metropolitan region of 12 million, was seriously affected. Parts of the coastal city of Gölcük literally sank into the Sea of Marmara, crippling Turkey's most important naval base and killing several of its most senior officers. The economy of this region accounts for 35% of Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP), all of which has been brought to a standstill. The infrastructure, which was in poor condition to begin with, was hit hard, and the Izmet oil refinery, which accounts for 40% of the country's refinery capacity, was knocked out of operation.

The human devastation is immense. Estimates of the death toll range from 18,000 to 40,000 people. More than 200,000 people have been left homeless, and literally millions, including the vast majority of people living in Istanbul, have been sleeping in the streets and parks for fear of being buried by aftershocks. The complete lack of any civil emer-

gency contingency plans only made the situation worse, and hindered the effectiveness of the international teams that responded from all over the world. One of the most dramatic problems shown up by the earthquake, was the shoddy quality of the housing construction, in which collapsed apartment buildings accounted for the inordinately high number of deaths. This is having a serious political impact, even prompting the daily *Hurriyet* to run the headline "Murderers," charging building contractors and government inspectors with responsibility for the fatally substandard housing.

The country is now bracing for outbreaks of typhoid, cholera, and other diseases that result from decaying corpses and contaminated water. The entire city of Gölcük has been quarantined.

The BAC's cat's-paw in the Caucasus

This "act of God" hit Turkey just at the point when it was being set up to serve as the cat's-paw of the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) elites' geopolitical gameplan to break up the Russian Federation, through destabilization of the Caucasus region, including the outbreak of a British-supported insurgency in Dagestan. Russia views such moves by the BAC as NATO's eastward march, and a logical consequence of NATO's war against Yugoslavia. Turkey, as a NATO member with historic links to, and aspirations in, the region, has been groomed as key player in these designs. Last spring, Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic, made a request to join NATO, and asked for the stationing of Turkish troops on its territory, a move that would put NATO troops right on the border of the Russian Federation.

Turkey's location bridging Europe and Asia, and as NATO's eastern-most member, are seen by the BAC crowd

as an opportunity to have Turkey project its military power into the Middle East, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia. The United States and Britain launched their continuing air attacks against Iraq from several NATO military bases in Turkey.

Turkey has played a central role in the “pipeline politics”

of the region, where Anglo-American oil firms have been scheming to build new oil and gas pipelines, primarily to bypass existing pipelines that traverse Russia. They want to prevent pipelines from being built through Iran as well. Pipelines through Turkey have been proposed, but none of these projects have come to fruition because of Russia’s opposition.

LaRouche: Turkey quake shakes NATO strategy

The following statement was released by Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche on Aug. 25.

The awful spectacle of the recent earthquake in Turkey suddenly shattered the previously ongoing NATO strategy for transforming the entire Transcaucasus and Central Asia region into a field of military operations against Russia, China, and Iran. Consider the wretched quality of the construction of the housing in the region of the earthquake, the lack of even a minimum of suitable emergency arrangements for such a well-known earthquake zone, and the pathetic performance of Turkey’s military in response to the disaster. These shocking facts reveal the incompetence of NATO to conduct the kind of geopolitical warfare which the New York Council on Foreign Relations’ Zbigniew Brzezinski has been loudly demanding be conducted in Central Asia.

These facts about the condition of Turkey’s military have put a question-mark on NATO’s current operations against nuclear powers Russia and China, and also Iran, in the combined region of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Although the British monarchy, which is the principal motivator of this potential thermonuclear confrontation in Central Asia, is using Arab and other elements of the type it deployed in the same region during the late 19th century, the backbone of NATO’s military adventures in the region was to have been supplied, on the ground, by Turkey’s military.

As was also demonstrated in the case of the mobilization for British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s recent war against Yugoslavia, except for Germany’s military forces, already reduced to a fraction of what they had been a few years earlier, NATO had no in-depth war-fighting capability in the Balkans theater. For the next phase of NATO operations, in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, NATO was relying largely upon NATO member Turkey for placement of ground forces within Transcaucasia and the Turkic-

speaking region of Central Asia. The inability of Turkey, and especially Turkey’s military, to deploy the kind of engineering and related civil-defense emergency action needed in response to the recent earthquake, exposes the fatal weakness in both Turkey’s economy, and the lack of in-depth war-fighting capability in its army.

Meanwhile, back in the Balkans itself, NATO’s post-war policies are, as I forewarned, a monstrous strategic disaster. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) element which the Tony Blair government and its asset, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, adopted, to get the new Balkans war they wanted, is now the main threat to the security of Europe within the Balkans region as a whole. Neither the NATO military command, nor the forces which it has deployed into the Kosovo region, have shown the competence to deal with the skyrocketing disaster now spreading out of Albania and Kosovo into the region as a whole.

The general conclusion to be reached, is that neither the NATO command, nor the present leadership seems to understand what every U.S. military traditionalist used to teach at West Point and Annapolis military academies: There is much more to warfare than simply being able to kill human beings in large numbers. The purpose of war-fighting is to assist political institutions in winning the outcome of the armed conflict. That is what the awful earthquake has shown us about both NATO member Turkey, and, in fact, NATO as whole.

Thus, the combined lesson of the recent Balkans war and the aftermath of the Turkey earthquake, is, that the U.S.A. must scrap its present, incompetent strategic doctrine, with the intent, not only to return to earlier standards of competence associated with commanders such as General of the Armies Douglas MacArthur, but also with a global strategic political doctrine attuned to the new realities of today’s global situation.

Much more need be said, and will be said by me, on this and other elements of present U.S. and NATO military and related strategic follies. However, since these are complex subject-matters, I shall address the issues posed in bite-sized quantities. Expect much more clarification of the breaking strategic situation, from me, during the coming days and weeks.

The Dagestan destabilization was expected to weaken that opposition, allowing the projects to go forward.

Just days prior to the earthquake, several International Monetary Fund (IMF) “structural reforms” were forced through the Turkish Parliament. Surprisingly, the government even struck a deal with the Islamic Virtue Party, allowing its former leader, Necmettin Erbakan, who had been banned from politics, to run for Parliament, in exchange for having his party support changing the Constitution. Although these reforms are the same brutal structural reforms the IMF has forced down the throats of nations all over the world, the Turks were no doubt told that their implementation would pave the way for foreign investment by the oil companies which want to build the pipelines. The IMF reforms included changing the Turkish Constitution to facilitate privatizations, to allow foreign companies to invest in the state-controlled energy sector, and to provide for international arbitration in disputes between the government and foreign investors. This was seen as key to opening the way for Anglo-American oil and gas companies to invest in Turkey—obviously with an eye toward building the pipelines.

The reform package also committed the government to reduce the current 70% inflation to 10%, by maintaining high interest rates, now at 40%, and to reduce the budget deficit through austerity and privatizations. Also under debate is the

IMF’s demand to reform the social security and pension system, which has already led to labor protests. The IMF has made the implementation of its reforms a condition for releasing \$250 million in new loans.

Government, military fail to act

The earthquake has overturned all these plans. But, just as devastating as the destructive power of nature, has been the miserable failure of the Turkish government and the political and military elite to act in the crisis. Despite years of warnings from earthquake experts, every Turkish government in the past two decades has failed to draft civil emergency plans.

The military’s failure was most dramatic. Despite being the largest standing army in NATO, the Army appeared incapable of taking command of the situation. In fact, during the first days it seemed more concerned with the destruction of the naval base than with aiding the population. Much of the rescue work was done by international emergency rescue teams, some of whom, like the team from Ukraine, made it to the rescue site before the Turkish Army. The Army, lacking in-depth engineering and transport capabilities, which are essential to war-fighting, found itself paralyzed by the crisis.

One intelligence specialist said that the military failure not only pointed to its incompetence, but demonstrated its weakness as well. Given the politically central role that the Army plays in Turkish society, it could be very destabilizing, even creating a situation where the Army would see it as necessary to make a show of force, in order to regain credibility.

The government and political parties have come under heavy attack, especially because the shoddy housing crumbled at the first tremors. Some building contractors, who ignored building codes that enforce building in stability in a quake, have fled the country because of the fury among the population. But, it is also clear that the builders could never had gotten away with it, had the government enforced its building codes.

The government’s performance is seen as an inability of the political class to get beyond its practices of the last decades and to deal with the catastrophe. For example, the heavy attacks on Health Minister Osman Durmus, of the ultra-nationalist National Movement Party (MHP): Durmus is accused of turning down an offer by the U.S. Navy to send hospital ships into the area, and he rejected donated blood because it came from Greeks. Outlandish as it sounds, this is typical, given that the MHP was founded by Aparslon Turkesh, creator of the fascist Grey Wolves. As the number-two party in the government coalition, MHP has strongly supported Turkey’s march to the east.

The government’s announcement that it will move ahead with the IMF “structural reforms” signals that political unrest is to be expected. While reconstruction costs have been esti-

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mated at up to \$40 billion, the IMF is promising to send a team in September to discuss a new loan—for a miserly \$330 million.

The government now seems to be intentionally downplaying the extent of damage. It is circulating a figure of no more than \$2 billion in reconstruction costs for infrastructure, housing, and industrial enterprises. It has announced a commitment to implement a tight-money policy, as demanded by the IMF. It expects to finance the entire reconstruction cost through a special tax on mobile phones, property, real estate, and private vehicles. It also claims that production losses of no more than \$1.3-2 billion and a fall in tax revenue of \$700 million can be expected.

Under the circumstances, Ankara is whistling past the graveyard. The stock market has been closed since the earthquake, not because of physical damage, but because a massive sell-off can be expected within the first minutes of its opening. Foreign investors have been pulling hard currency out of the country. Rather than slapping on currency controls, the Central Bank has been injecting cash into the financial system, through the interbank money market, repurchase agreements, and currency intervention. Government yields on the benchmark one-year government bonds have increased by 13 percentage points to 112.7%. Crédit Suisse has released its new estimates, predicting a 2.5% negative growth rate for this year.

One ominous indication of the government response to the anticipated political backlash, is the shutdown of Channel 6, one of the national TV networks, under the excuse that its coverage of the earthquake was “provocative.” In addition, troops under orders to shoot looters are now being deployed to maintain peace—despite the fact that there has not been an atmosphere of widespread lawlessness.

Throw out the IMF and BAC schemes

The only hope Turkey has, is to throw out the IMF and to reject the geopolitical scheming of the BAC. The earthquake has only revealed the tremendous shortcomings in the Turkish economy and economic policy. The disaster is not just the result of shoddy housing construction by dishonest contractors and corrupt officials; rather, it is, in greater part, the result of three decades of apparent rapid economic expansion, at the expense of developing infrastructure. The earthquake zone, one of Turkey’s most densely populated regions, had serious deficits in such essential infrastructure as transport, sanitation, and carefully planned housing and industrial development zones. Even before the earthquake, experts had predicted a major economic crisis because of this deficit.

If a social explosion is to be averted, the IMF conditionalities and free-market policies which have come to dominate the Turkish economy have to be thrown out. Turkey would have to join the “Survivors’ Club,” and begin implementing the dirigist policies required to rescue the country.

Theater, national missile defense: revolution, or bluff?

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

Recent pronouncements by U.S. officials and others, in favor of a near-term introduction of Theater Missile Defenses (TMD) in the East Asia/Pacific and other regions, together with plans to build a National Missile Defense (NMD) system for the United States, have injected a dangerous destabilizing element into the world strategic situation. While repeated references to a ballistic missile threat from North Korea and other so-called “rogue states” have until recently been the main rationalization for the TMD-NMD “hype,” the real target of the campaign is, obviously, *China*.

If any doubt remained on that point, one need only juxtapose the ongoing, orchestrated anti-China hysteria in the United States to the recent chorus of demands by U.S. Congressmen and politicians for the United States to provide TMD systems to “defend Taiwan”—coming hard on the heels of Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui’s deliberately provocative statements on Taiwan independence, and in the middle of major U.S. and joint naval maneuvers around Korea and in the South China Sea.

Referring to the widely publicized calls by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) and others for the United States to deploy TMD systems “in defense of Taiwan,” Lyndon LaRouche recently remarked: “Those Congressmen have to be exposed for what they are: political *whores*, who have no concern whatsoever for defense or for protecting anybody. The purpose is only one thing: to try to provoke China into actions which would destroy any positive relation to the Clinton Presidency.”

The “logic” of the TMD provocation, if we may call it that, includes the following obvious consideration: Although Beijing is strongly committed to a peaceful process leading to reunification with Taiwan in the long term, China adamantly reserves the right to use military force, if necessary, to prevent a splitting-off of Taiwan. That military option rests in significant part, at present, on the use of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. Threatening to “close the window” on such a military option, through the deployment of TMD systems a few years hence, while at the same time threatening (by the NMD) to eliminate the deterrent value of China’s tiny intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, greatly increases the pressures in China in favor of utilizing a military option against Taiwan “before it is too late.” By simultaneously turn-