

## EU-Russia Summit Focus on Energy

President Vladimir Putin personally opened the European Union-Russia summit in Moscow May 28, and reiterated his proposal of 2001, for a long-term energy partnership between Russia and Western Europe.

The Russian President urged expanded EU investments in energy projects in Russia, in the larger context of securing oil and gas supplies to a Europe that will depend on increased imports. He reaffirmed Russia's commitment to provide secure supplies to Europe, also in case that supplies from other regions of the world came to a standstill. This was a reintroduction of the offer that Putin had made to Germany and Europe, during his visits to Berlin and

Essen, last September.

The EU-Russian Summit, which was scheduled to sign a deal on energy cooperation on May 29, featured prominent attendance, with the EU ministers on foreign affairs and security, energy, trade, and the EU Commission President, as well as the respective cabinet ministers from Russia.

In a background report to the summit, the EU Commission stated that "the EU has a vital interest in maintaining and enhancing Russia's role as a supplier of gas and oil, and to strengthen Russia as a secure reliable supplier by technology transfers and investments to upgrade the Russian energy infrastructure. The energy sector in Russia represents a major opportunity both for foreign investment and for export revenues. The need for new capital in the sector has been estimated at between \$460 and \$600 billion, to the year 2020."—*Rainer Apel*

bility of exploiting the resources and reserves of the Caspian Sea *before* setting up the legal regime," according to *Izvestia* (emphasis added).

The position of Russia in this regard, was not self-evident like that of America. In what has been dubbed by some Iranian press as a "schizophrenic Russian-Iranian nexus," the relations between Moscow and Tehran are indeed paradoxical. Russia has established excellent and improving economic, trade, and military-strategic relations, crowned by a summit between Presidents Mohammed Seyyed Khatami and Putin last year; and has maintained its commitment to cooperation with Iran to complete the Bushehr nuclear power plant, despite repeated U.S. pressure, most recently during Bush's visit. Yet, Russia has appeared to be playing both sides against the middle regarding the Caspian, and, more broadly, the raw materials factor in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Following the Caspian Sea summit, it was announced that Russia and Kazakstan had signed a bilateral deal defining, between them, the borders of the sea. Iran cried foul play, and then embarked on a diplomatic initiative to try to regain some leverage over Azerbaijan. Further "bilateral" agreements may be reached to the disadvantage of Tehran.

And it is not just the Caspian Sea resources, but the pipelines which have become a bone of contention. U.S. policy has been to sabotage any and every pipeline project running through Russia or Iran. Now, the emphasis appears to have shifted more toward Iran, and again, the position of Moscow is not clear.

Before the Caspian summit, *Izvestia* reported on March 14, that "America is trying to use Georgia as the main route for the transit of energy from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea." Immediately following the summit, the Georgian Embassy in Azerbaijan announced, "It has been decided that

another oil pipeline, called the 'Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan,' will be constructed by the year 2004 . . . to transfer some 50 million tons of oil per year." The Iranian news agency IRNA said on April 27 that the idea was to bypass Iran. David Woodward of BP Azerbaijan was quoted, "The good news is that the pipeline is not going through Russia or Iran."

### A Russian Double Game Is Dangerous

On May 28, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan announced a meeting to discuss launching a pipeline across their countries (the old UNOCAL "Taliban" project), again an alternative to the route through Iran. And the pipeline project to transfer gas from Turkmenistan through Iran across Turkey into Europe, has been consistently sabotaged by Washington.

The United States' power to dictate energy policy matters seems to express its growing military presence in the region. Azerbaijan has agreed to landing rights for U.S. planes on its territory, and reportedly to U.S. support to defend its maritime borders from Iran. Georgia is also hosting U.S. military; America has established bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and is inching its way in, via air-basing rights for "humanitarian" purposes, in Kazakstan and Turkmenistan. These are all resource rich regions, once the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union.

What emerges is a picture of a wild-eyed Anglo-American imperial predator, bent on establishing its control over the raw materials-rich areas of the globe, and preventing any independent state—Iran, or the Arab oil-producing giants—from maintaining sovereign control over resources. Russia's stance is the question mark in this picture. Rereading the text of the "energy dialogue" statement only reinforces suspicions that it may be playing a subtle, but very dangerous double game.