

Putin Moves To Outflank 'Ring Around Russia' Provocations

by Rachel Douglas

President Vladimir Putin the judo practitioner was in evidence at the Heiligendamm G-8 summit, where he surprised all with a proposal, announced on June 7, for joint Russian-American upgrading of a Russian-rented radar in the Gabala district of Azerbaijan. This would become an anti-missile defense facility to give warning against launches from points south, in place of the planned U.S. anti-ballistic missile (ABM) installations in Poland and the Czech Republic that Moscow so vehemently opposes.

Russian State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Konstantin Kosachov called Putin's proposal "the event of the decade," saying that the future of the world would depend on the U.S. response. The Bush Administration, whose nominal head had remarked snidely the previous day about Russian "hyperventilating" about missile defense, sent National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley to tell the press the Russian proposal was "interesting."

Qualified Washington sources reported to *EIR* that the Bush Administration was already caught off guard by the strong Russian reaction to recent provocations from the U.S.A., Britain, and NATO. Those include the ABM deployment; intended new NATO bases in Romania and Bulgaria; a push for the full independence of Kosovo from Serbia; a London-centered anti-Russian campaign around the death of ex-spy Alexander Litvinenko; and the stoking of conflicts in and around the Baltic states, Ukraine, the Transdnestr district of Moldova, and Georgia's breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The use by Putin and other Russian officials of the term "imperial" to describe the Bush-Cheney policy against Russia is not merely a reaction to each of these provocations individually, Lyndon LaRouche observed about the Washington reports. It is their response to the overall policy governing the Bush Administration, and to the recurrent ad-

versarial direction of Anglo-American policy since the death of Franklin Roosevelt.

'Apocalypse on a Planetary Scale'

Putin himself keynoted Russia's Spring of blunt talk, with his Feb. 10 speech to the Munich International Security Conference. There he charged that the "unexploded ordnance" of the Cold War was being reactivated by the U.S.A. and NATO. In recent weeks, as plans for the Eastern Europe ABM installations went ahead, and Polish officials repeatedly clarified the situation by saying that, indeed, they were designed against potential confrontation not with Iran, but with Russia, Putin and other Russian officials spoke more and more forcefully.

On May 9, the 62nd anniversary of the Victory in Europe over Fascism, Putin said that the cause of World War II had been "an ideology of confrontation and extremism." He drew a parallel with the present day, saying that "these threats are not becoming fewer, but are only transforming and changing their appearance. These new threats, just as under the Third Reich, show the same contempt for human life and the same aspiration to establish an exclusive dictate over the world."

On May 29, meeting with Prime Minister José Socrates of Portugal, Putin said that to deploy U.S. missile defense elements in Europe was "turning the continent into a powder keg." Two days later, at a press conference with Greek President Karolos Papoulias, Putin said that Washington had triggered a new arms race. He warned that Russia will strengthen its military potential to maintain a global strategic balance.

In a June 4 interview to press from G-8 countries, Putin charged that U.S./NATO military programs were lowering the nuclear threshold, preparing to use small-payload nuclear weapons, and putting nuclear weapons in space. He also said



Presidential Press and Information Office

President Putin at a press conference on June 8. He surprised the G-8 summit with his proposal to share radar facilities.

that the problem with the anti-missile defense elements, planned for placement in Eastern Europe, was that they “will work automatically with the entire nuclear capability of the United States. It will be an integral part of the U.S. nuclear capability.”

Commentaries by Russian military officers, published in *Izvestia* of May 31, spelled out this assertion, charging that the U.S. deployments would be part of a first-strike capability for the demolition of Russia in a nuclear war. Vadim Kozyulin, a professor at the Academy of Military Sciences, wrote that some people call the planned ABM systems in Central Europe “insignificant”; but, he asked, what if the side that has them “plans to inflict a pre-emptive strike on the missile bases of its opponent, with the aim of eliminating part of its missile potential? Then, the possible ‘contribution’ of the ABM system in neutralizing the retaliatory potential of the opponent increases substantially.”

Retired Navy Captain First Rank Mikhail Volzhensky presented a scenario of a U.S./NATO first strike against Russia, using sea-based long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles. The role of the Europe-based ABM systems would be to suppress Russia’s retaliatory capability, hitting Russian second-strike missiles in their boost phase.

Volzhensky listed the countermoves that would occur, upon detection of a cruise-missile launch against Russia: In the two and a half hours before Russian strategic facilities were struck, Russian forces would move to destroy U.S. ABM systems in Europe and at sea, and “destroy space-based communications, navigation, intelligence, and target-designation” systems—something that “Russian Federation Space Troops have the resources to do.”

Izvestia military commentator D. Litovkin wrote that the Iskander short-range missile, which underwent successful testing on May 29, the same day as Russia’s new RS-24 ICBM with multiple retargettable-in-flight warheads, was made to deal with the Eastern Europe-based ABM systems.

As much as the details, some of which replayed scenarios of the 1970s and 1980s, when key advances in the forward basing of offensive nuclear systems occurred, the tone of these articles conveyed the seriousness about a potential military showdown. Volzhensky wrote: “Commentators most frequently leave out of the frame the real aims and probable consequences of the creation, as well as scenarios for the use, of ABM systems.... The problem is obviously so serious, that people who are fully aware of its profundity prefer to use euphemisms.... We really are facing a fundamental change in the strategic confrontation between America and Russia.... [E]ven after the catastrophe of the 1990s, Russia remains the only country in the world capable of destroying the United States, and in no more than half an hour.... What if not all the American cruise missiles are able to destroy our launch vehicles? Even if only a tenth of the Russian nuclear potential—200 warheads—leave their starting positions and strike American towns, this will be an apocalypse on a planetary scale. The ABM system is being created for this situation.”

The same Russian leadership that warns about a global showdown in such stark terms, has put out feelers in search of a Rooseveltian response from the United States. And it is from the Russian government and the Academy of Sciences, combined, that the impetus has come to launch international cooperation on great projects like the Eurasian Land-Bridge extension across the Bering Strait. In the meantime, each of the hot spots—traditional British Intelligence stomping grounds—on Russia’s periphery is close to the boiling point.

The Baltic Corridor

In his April 2007 Message to the Federal Assembly, Putin called for developing sea transport infrastructure. “It is a disgrace that Russia is still using foreign ports for export of its commodities,” he said. These remarks came against the backdrop of rising tension with Estonia, one of those seaport countries. Russian-Estonian trade, including export transshipments, had doubled from 2005 to 2006, and decisions were taken to upgrade the road bridge over the Narva River between the two countries.

Last Fall, however, a Swedish-born, U.S.-raised long-time Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty employee named Toomas Hendrik Ilves was elected President of Estonia. A Social Democrat, he was backed by the right-wing opposition. The coalition government of the Reformist, Fatherland, and Social Democratic parties that was formed, began to push on issues of greatest sensitivity to Russia.

Prime Minister Andrus Ansip of the Reform Party pushed ahead with the (former) opposition’s long-standing goal of removing the Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn, a statue of a World War II Soviet Red Army soldier, from its location in central Tallinn. On April 24, Ansip said that the grave under the statue held the remains, not of anti-fascist liberators, but of “drunkards and marauders.” The Estonian authorities dismantled the monument on the eve of the May 9 Victory

Day holiday, despite protests from European officials, German ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and clergy including Cardinal Ersilio Tonini. Incoming U.S. Ambassador Stanley Philips, however, praised the actions.

The history of the Baltic littoral countries poses tough questions regarding nationality and statehood. Estonia is an enclave of Finno-Ugric culture, while Latvians and Lithuanians represent the Baltic branch of Indo-European language-culture, and Lithuania is a descendant of the once-powerful Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. These countries have been operational centers for the Venetian and British oligarchies over hundreds of years. As part of the Black Sea-to-Baltic grain belt, they were areas of interest and influence for the merchants of Venice. Contested between Russia and Sweden in the Great Northern War at the beginning of the 18th Century, the Baltic coast came increasingly under Russian domination between 1710 and 1795, when the three territories were formally taken into the Russian Empire.

Historical figures of importance for Russia came out of the Baltic German aristocracy, among them the powerful Count Ernst Biron (Bühren) of Tsarina Anna Ivanovna's court (1730-40) and Julie von Krüdener, who helped orchestrate Tsar Alexander I's acquiescence to the Holy Alliance at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. So integrated into Russia was the Baltic coast, that when British diplomats, especially, raised the cause of independence at the close of World War I, the United States resisted!

The Baltic states did gain international diplomatic recognition in the early 1920s. During the 1920s and 1930s, they were a listening post and staging ground for anti-Soviet operations by British Intelligence, including a project known as the Trust. They came under the Soviet Union again in 1940. The same anti-Russian currents that had welcomed the Nazis as liberators, drew strength from popular anger at mass deportations to Siberia, carried out by Soviet authorities after World War II. The Baltic states, which declared independence in 1991, have large Russian-ethnic minorities, dating from the past centuries, and especially Soviet-era industrialization.

Even such rough historical terrain could be smoothed, under a Westphalian policy of mutual benefit through economic development. But strategists who seek a new global showdown with Russia prefer the Baltics as pawns. Estonia's former Ambassador to Russia (1996-99), Mart Helme, exemplified that view in his April 5 article in the *Brussels Journal*. Helme demanded that the European Union ally with the United States and its "Anglo-Saxon allies, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand," together with "the new Europe" (Eastern European EU members), to confront Russia. A Baltic Anglophile, he reflected the vehemence of the "New Cold War with Russia" line in Anglo-Dutch circles. Helme raved that Russia's "collaboration with China, India, and other Asian countries" means that it "no longer needs Europe," and

that it is already using the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to challenge "the U.S. and its allies." He called for "a new Truman doctrine"—a replay of the reversal of Roosevelt's policies into a "contain Russia" posture, which marked the beginning of the Cold War. "We need a new 'Berlin Wall' against neo-Stalinist Russia and its anti-Western allies," wrote Helme. "Russia, which is threatening world peace, must be opposed through a New Cold War."

Frozen Conflicts

The London *Economist* berated Russia over the so-called "frozen conflicts" in the former U.S.S.R., already in 2004. The *Economist* grouped fighting in South Ossetia together with other "former Soviet war zones," where "unresolved wars have poisoned the newly independent republics of the former Soviet south, and could flare anew." These conflicts include the Transdnistria district (in Moldova; it was part of Ukraine in the mid-20th Century), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (in Georgia), and Nagorno-Karabakh (disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan).

A refrain from EU circles is that Russian forces in the first three of these regions, dating either from Soviet basing patterns (the 14th Army in Transdnistria) or Russian peacekeeping efforts in the early 1990s (Abkhazia), should be replaced by international units, including NATO forces, under Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) auspices.

Now the frozen conflicts may be rekindled, if the so-called Ahtisaari plan for independence of Serbia's Kosovo province goes through. "Kosovo is heading for independence, whatever the Russians say or do," chirped the *Economist* in March 2007. Former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, who tried through diplomacy to stop NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, and who arranged an interim Transdnistria settlement in the mid-1990s, has urged caution, warning that full independence for Kosovo could quickly lead to the disintegration of neighboring Bosnia.

Putin reiterated in his June 4, 2007 interview, "There is nothing to suggest that the case of Kosovo is any different from that of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, or the Transdnistr." That the plan to grant independence to Kosovo is pre-programmed to detonate the frozen conflicts, was dramatized again after a June 5 meeting in Moscow between the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Sergei Bagapsh and Eduard Kokoity said, "If Kosovo is being split from Serbia, this is another strong proof that conflict between peoples can be solved by other principles than respect for territorial integrity."

All this produces only suffering for the beleaguered populations of the areas, as *EIR*'s Christine Biere found on a visit to the unrecognized Transnistrian Republic with a delegation of the French organization Réseau Voltaire. In early 2006, as part of the EU's and its own sparring with Moscow, the Victor Yushchenko regime in Ukraine, citing EU requirements, mandated that all cargoes moving from Transdnistria into Ukraine have an official Moldovan customs stamp, allegedly to curb smug-

gling. Since Transnistria has operated independently of Moldova's central government for over a decade, such stamps were not forthcoming. The authorities in Transnistria warned of a "humanitarian catastrophe." During the first half of 2006, the Transnistrian Republican Bank reported that the area's exports fell by 49% and imports by 15.9%. Russia, terming the Ukrainian policy an "economic blockade," sent humanitarian relief.

Forced to send shipments an extra 500 km for the customs stamp, the Moldova Steel Works (in Transnistria) has shown no profit for two years. Plant director Andrei Yudin told *EIR* that it will not survive five years under these conditions, despite having advanced technology.

A new deadline for Transnistria comes on July 1, when its imports will also be forced to clear Moldovan customs, provoking even deeper economic trouble.

Ukraine: A Near Civil War

Ukraine is no enclave, but a nation of 50 million people. For three days in late May, it was on the brink of civil war. Ministry of Internal Affairs forces were moving toward Kiev on orders from President Yushchenko, nearly two months into a showdown with the parliamentary majority under Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich and his Party of Regions (POR). City police and POR activists took to the streets in an attempt to block them, while the Ministry of Transport refused them conveyance.

The crisis flared in March, when members of Yushchenko's Our Ukraine started defecting to the parliamentary majority. On April 2, Yushchenko, the victor in the December 2004 U.S.-backed "Orange Revolution," abolished the Supreme Rada and called snap elections, claiming it was unconstitutional for the POR to accept defectors from his party. Throughout April-May, the matter was under review by the Constitutional Court. Then Yushchenko started firing members of the Court.

Amid the serpentine turns of the political crisis in Ukraine, which has been cooled out for the moment by an agreement for new elections in September, the constant involvement of U.S. and British officials is visible:

April 3: Central Election Commission chairman Yaroslav Davydovich returned from the U.S.A., where he had met with Vice President Dick Cheney. Cheney hosted another Orange Revolution figure, Yulia Tymoshenko, one month earlier, after which she declared that Washington supports new elections in Ukraine.

May 23: U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David Kramer met with Yanukovich.

May 23: British Ambassador Tim Barrow met with Davydovich, who thanked "international organizations" for "technical assistance" in preparing elections.

May 24: Yushchenko met with Kramer.

May 24: Yushchenko cancelled a foreign trip, convened the National Security Council, and declared Internal Affairs Minister Vasili Tsushko a criminal.

May 25: Yushchenko put Internal Affairs forces under his personal command and ordered them to move to Kiev. Emergency overnight talks averted open clashes.

Who told whom to do what in Ukraine is not known for sure. But, certainly an explosion in Ukraine is "the big one" for British geostrategists who abhor the prospect of Russia's playing a key role in Eurasian stabilization and development. Read the opening of the London *Economist's* March 17, 2007 futurological article, "The European Union at 100," on a British-led EU vanquishing both the U.S.A. and Russia, after a U.S. financial collapse and an EU-instigated U.S./Russian nuclear showdown over Ukraine:

"The EU is celebrating its 100th birthday with quiet satisfaction. Predictions when it turned 50 that it was doomed to irrelevance in a world dominated by America, China and India proved wide of the mark. A turning-point was the bursting of America's housing bubble and the collapse of the dollar early in the presidency of Barack Obama in 2010. . . . The other cause for quiet satisfaction has been the EU's foreign policy. In the dangerous second decade of the century, when Vladimir Putin returned for a third term as Russian president and stood poised to invade Ukraine, it was the EU that pushed the Obama administration to threaten massive nuclear retaliation." After its humiliation, in the *Economist* scenario, Russia applies to join the EU.

No wonder Putin minced no words in his June 4 interview. "Public opinion in Russia is in favor of our ensuring our security," he said. "Where can you find a public that favors the idea that we must completely disarm, and then, perhaps, according to theorists such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, that we must divide our territory into three or four parts? If such a public did exist, I would argue with it. I was not elected President of the Russian Federation to put my country on the brink of disaster."

Putin rejected the demand to extradite ex-KGB agent Andrei Lugovoi—accused in London of killing Litvinenko, while Lugovoi says he was framed by British Intelligence—to Britain. He added, "I think that after the British government has allowed a significant number of criminals, thieves, and terrorists to gather in Britain, they created an environment which endangers the lives and health of British citizens."

Putin also, answering a question from the *Times* of London on Russia's having suspended Shell Oil's license to develop the Sakhalin II oil and gas project, said he was glad Shell had violated environmental regulations, because otherwise Russia would have been stuck with unjust economic relations, dictated by the Anglo-Dutch multi in the first years of the Yeltsin regime: "You know, [the original agreement] was a colonial contract, having absolutely nothing to do with the interests of the Russian Federation. I can only regret that, in the early 1990s, Russian officials allowed such incidents to take place."

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