

Baiting Germany, Atlantic Council Beats the Drums of War

by William Jones

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 5—On the eve of a key meeting between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Barack Obama, the Atlantic Council held a love-fest on April 29-30 entitled “Toward a Europe Whole and Free.” Invited to the conference were an array of ambassadors and envoys from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, to speak of the wonders of being members of NATO and the need for heightened vigilance against the “Russian threat.”

Given the face-off in Ukraine as the conference began, with Ukrainian forces preparing to move against Russian-speaking activists in eastern Ukraine, this particular confab had a clearly designed purpose: to push the confrontational policy of bringing Ukraine under the EU/NATO umbrella. It was also an attempt to mobilize Congress and the general public, neither of which has shown enthusiasm for getting involved in a new military venture in the heart of Europe.

History Upside-Down

While the conference consisted of two days of Putin-bashing, the real target seemed to be Germany. The question of direct military action against Russia was never mooted directly, as it presently lacks any support and would quickly escalate to a nuclear showdown; rather, the prime means of targeting Putin was a gradual strangulation of the Russian economy through ever more stringent economic sanctions. This would require, however, forcing the German government to agree to “sectoral” sanctions against Russia, notably against its vital oil and gas industry.

Such sanctions would be suicidal for Germany, which is dependent on Russia for 35% of its oil and 30% of its natural gas—and many German politicians and industrial leaders have made that crystal clear. Conference organizers apparently hoped that by bringing the countries of the “new Europe” together in a round of

“Germany bashing,” they might just overcome the resistance.

The nature of the event was underlined from the first panel. Neocon ideologue Robert Kagan, the spouse of Victoria “Fuck the EU” Nuland, the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe who had so generously provided cake and cookies to fascist activists on the Maidan during the coup in Ukraine, presented his take on the history of Europe. Kagan serves on the State Department’s Foreign Affairs Policy Board and was instrumental in the creation of the Project for a New American Century, which paved the road to the Iraq War.

The problem, Kagan explained, was that Europe “could never successfully deal with a “hegemon.” “The only time they could,” he explained, “was with the help of the United States.” The “hegemon” he was referring to was Germany in World War I, which had simply become “too big for Europe,” he said.

Kagan failed to note that World War I had nothing to do with the size of Germany, but rather with its loss of its “pilot,” in the person of Otto von Bismarck, whom the British had succeeded in getting Kaiser Wilhelm to fire in 1890. The machinations of Britain’s King Edward VII with Russia and France left Germany without those alliances which Bismarck had so carefully created and which had long preserved the peace of Europe.

In this case, as in World War II, Kagan said, salvation came only with the intervention of U.S. forces.

Guerrilla Warfare in Ukraine?

This set the stage for that “Merlin” of Atlanticism, Zbigniew Brzezinski, to spin his own web on the same theme. While rejecting any outright security treaty with Ukraine, Brzezinski opined that “Putin’s reaction is not a strategic calculation, but is based on pure rage. He was humiliated by his isolation in Sochi,” the Olympics having been boycotted by many Western heads of state.

In Brzezinski's worldview, Putin comes off even worse than Stalin. "Stalin was quite rational," he said. "Putin is more volatile." Brzezinski lamented that no shots had been fired when the Russian activists in Crimea took over military posts. "Poles would have reacted differently," the Polish-born emigré said with a grin.

"Can Putin survive?" Brzezinski asked. "We're not going to go to war," he claimed, repeating the mantra of the very people in the West who are making war preparations. The key, he said, was to support the "other Russia," the Russia of the "new middle class." And also to undermine Russia's allies, like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, both of which, he noted, had refrained from supporting Russia in the United Nations on the vote for sanctions (they abstained). As for Ukraine, it is no match for the Russian Army if it came to an invasion, Brzezinski, but it could conduct urban guerrilla warfare. The West should provide weaponry for such a conflict, including hand-held rockets and anti-tank weapons!

Brzezinski also targeted the Germans for their reluctance to press sanctions, blaming the "industrial complex that controls Germany." He related the objections raised by a representative of Siemens to Brzezinski's proposal for tougher sanctions. Brzezinski noted that Robert Zoellick, President George W. Bush's trade guru, had pointed out to the Siemens representative that the company's trade with Russia was only 2% of its total trade, whereas its trade with the U.S. was 20%. Therefore, Brzezinski warned, they should take heed of the consequences of non-cooperation with the sanctions.

Theater of the Absurd

The Atlantic Council organizers tried to get some of the more hawkish Senators to come and speak, but the Senate voting schedule prevented half of them from attending. But that old, faithful warhorse, John McCain (R-Ariz.), did attend, and along with Democratic sparing partner, Christopher Murphy (Conn.), who never saw a war he didn't like. Both seconded Brzezinski's call for weapons for Ukrainians to conduct guerrilla warfare. "Ukraine has a history of successful guerrilla partisan warfare," therefore the West should provide equipment for such an undertaking, McCain said with satisfaction.

In contrast to Brzezinski, who had some concerns about the purpose of President Obama's recent trip to



AtlanticCouncil.org video on YouTube

Zbigniew Brzezinski at the Council meeting on April 29. Disappointed that not a shot was fired when Russian activists in Crimea took over military posts, the Polish-born Brzezinski quipped, "Poles would have reacted differently."

China, thinking that it would not be appropriate at this point in time to also make China an enemy, McCain was proud of Obama's trip. "We're assembling a fine array of countries in that region," he said, noting with some satisfaction that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was intent on revamping the Japanese Constitution in order to expand Japan's military capabilities and radius of operations.

Secretary of State John Kerry put in an appearance, no doubt to hype the event, reiterating his tired and false claims that the Ukrainian government had lived up to its Geneva commitments, whereas the Russians had done nothing. This, although Kiev did not disarm the Maidan Right Sector and other fascist thugs, but rather brought them into the government fully armed, and at a time that Ukrainian troops were moving in an attempt to crush the uprising in the east. Kerry also fed into the overall frenzy by saying that NATO must now return to its traditional role of defending Europe, stressing that the borders of the NATO countries were "invulnerable." Kerry did not say, however, what the U.S. would do with regard to Ukraine. He called on the Europeans to do more for their own defense and to make arrangements for alternative sources of energy. He also played into the fantasy bandied about in Washington that the U.S., with its shale oil and gas boondoggle, will now become an alternative to Russia in supplying gas and oil to Europe.

The Council also trotted out European Commission President José Manuel Barroso to talk about the energy

situation in Europe and to babble about democracy, which the EU has done its best to eliminate. Barroso was given a Distinguished Leadership award by the Council.

The Atlantic Council meeting overall had the air of a macabre charade, completely detached from reality.

- A Moment of Sanity - The only moment of sanity occurred in what was supposed to be a retrospective of the history of the Atlantic Alliance, with Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor to Presidents Ford and George H.W. Bush; Horst Teltschik, former security advisor to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl; and former Netherlands Prime Minister Timmermans. While Teltschik was probably invited to also serve as the recipient of the rebukes of this crowd for German recalcitrance, he succeeded in turning the tables on his accusers. [See article in *International* for a German perspective on Teltschik's intervention—ed.]

Teltschik placed the present crisis in the context of the history leading up to it, which included the gross blunders made by the Western countries in their dealings with Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. He reviewed the "broken promises" given to Russian leaders, including Putin, over the years, describing how Romano Prodi, then head of the European Commission, had called for a united Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok. Putin later came to Brussels, Teltschik said, and repeated this proposal, but it fell on deaf ears.

"If the EU had said, 'let's go,' the results would have been different," Teltschik said. Chancellor Kohl, he explained, had signed 22 agreements with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov in order to align the Soviet Union closer with Europe. "The Russians were particularly sensitive on the security issue, so Kohl was keen on embedding security guarantees in the agreements." But these were later abrogated. "More could have been done to develop the relationship between Russia and NATO," Teltschik said, in something of an understatement. He talked about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. A few months after the invasion, the Soviets proposed to have a conference on security in Europe. This was accepted by NATO, he said, and it led to the establishment of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).



Senators John McCain (center) and Chris Murphy (right) yuck it up with panel moderator Jim Sciutto of CNN. They agreed that the U.S. should send weapons to Ukraine for "urban guerrilla" warfare.

Similar negotiations and dialogue ought to be maintained now with Russia, in spite of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's incorporation of Crimea, Teltschik said. "This was not as bad as the invasion of Czechoslovakia," he added. "And I have no understanding that we [should] give up everything that has been achieved with Russia because of Ukraine."

Teltschik's words may have caused a bit of a shock among those attending, but they quickly returned to their fantasy-filled back-slapping, delivering further Distinguished Leadership awards to some of those individuals who have made the biggest ruckus on behalf of the war party. Vice President Joe Biden joined the fray in a speech in which he also urged heightened vigilance and warned of increased sanctions. He also put the onus on German reticence to go for stronger sanctions. "We have to be resolute in imposing costs," Biden said. "And I'll note parenthetically that costs are going to be shared in some cases disproportionately. That's the reality."

While there is little support among the U.S. population, or even within Congress, for military action against Russia, the deployment of U.S. troops on the borders of Russia, in the Baltic States and Poland, and the strident rhetoric coming from the think-tanks and the White House, indicate that President Obama is intent on conflict with Russia. Until we impeach this berserker, the world will be heading for conflagration between nuclear powers.