

Putin Warned West of Nuclear Showdown over Crimea

by Jeffrey Steinberg

March 15—A documentary film, aired on Russian state television over the weekend of March 14-15, confirmed that Russian President Vladimir Putin was prepared to put his nation's strategic nuclear forces on alert, following the Western-engineered neo-Nazi coup d'état that overthrew Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014. Putin was interviewed for the documentary, which has been in preparation for eight months. He told an interviewer that he warned U.S. and European leaders to stay out of the Crimea, following the overthrow of Yanukovich, and he concluded that his warnings avoided a global war.

According to the Bloomberg News account: “We were ready to do that,” Putin said, when asked in the film about Russia's takeover of Crimea, if the Kremlin had been prepared to place its nuclear forces on alert. The Russian leader said he warned the U.S. and Europe not to get involved, accusing them of engineering the ouster of the Russian-backed Ukrainian President. “That's why I think no one wanted to start a world conflict.”

Putin added that, prior to the ouster of Yanukovich, he himself had not contemplated Crimea's return to Russia; however, once he concluded that the Obama Administration had played a pivotal role in the Maidan coup in Kiev, in which self-identified neo-Nazis took



CNN/Russia 1

President Putin stated in a documentary video, aired on Russian state TV March 14-15, that he is was prepared to put his nation's strategic nuclear forces on alert, following the Western-engineered neo-Nazi coup in Ukraine last year. This is a videograb from CNN's coverage.

part, he had an obligation to support the wishes of the Russian-majority population of Crimea.

These revelations on how close the world came to a nuclear conflict a little over a year ago, come as two prominent German statesmen have come forward to warn against the danger of such a war, should the Obama Administration and its NATO allies, go forward with a new phase of provocations, including arming the Ukrainian regime.

The Imminent Threat

European heads of state will be meeting in the coming days to review the existing sanctions against Russia, imposed as punishment for the “annexation” of Crimea, and Moscow’s alleged military involvement in the continuing conflict in eastern Ukraine, with some Western leaders saying that they want to link the lifting of sanctions to the full compliance of Russia in the Minsk II deal. In fact, there has been significant compliance by the Donbas militias in pulling back weapons in the Donbas region, while sabotage of the accords is coming from the Kiev regime.

On March 15, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko went on TV to claim that 11 European Union countries have agreed to provide arms to his country. The claim of EU weapons sales is not necessarily credible, as Poroshenko did not name the countries, and only four countries—the U.K., Finland, Poland, and Lithuania—have publicly announced such sales.

Also heating up tensions has been the intensive deployment of NATO forces for exercises along Russia’s

western border, especially in the Baltic and the Black Sea regions. Russian officials have warned that they will be forced to respond in some way.

It is precisely the arming of Ukraine that has prompted some key European figures to come out demanding a halt to any such plans, and instead, a concerted effort to restore diplomatic cooperation with Russia.

Steinmeier and Schmidt Speak Out

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was in Washington from March 11-13, meeting with Secretary of State John Kerry, National Security Advisor Susan Rice, and leading Members of the Senate, demanding a de-escalation, starting with the cancellation of any plans to arm Ukraine.

In a highly unusual speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on March 12, Steinmeier called for the normalization of ties with Russia, while directly opposing the arming of Ukraine (see accompanying article).

“If you increase the arms to Ukraine, Russia will simply provide the separatists with more weapons, and the balance of forces would remain the same, but at a much higher level. This would lead to a new phase that could get out of control. It could lead to a direct conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and no one, particularly Ukraine, would benefit from that,” he warned.

Steinmeier’s remarks were amplified the same day by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, in an interview with the mass-circulation daily *Bildzeitung*, in which he warned that the conflict in Ukraine might escalate “even into a real hot war” in Europe, if the provocations against Russia were not halted.

Lyndon LaRouche hailed both the Steinmeier and Schmidt warnings as critical interventions prevent global thermonuclear war. He warned that President Obama’s continuing provocations had reached the point, where his removal from office might be the only basis for averting global catastrophe.

Targeting China

The Obama provocations have extend beyond Russia to target China. A number of widely circulated media reports in recent weeks claim that Chinese President Xi Jinping is conducting a Maoist-style purge of all opposition forces, and that his actions will bring

about the collapse of the Chinese economy and the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

A broadside against President Xi was published March 6 in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* by David Shambaugh, under the provocative title “The Coming Chinese Crackup,” with the subhead “The endgame of communist rule in China has begun, and Xi Jinping’s ruthless measures are only bringing the country closer to a breaking point.” Scores of articles have appeared since the publication of the Shambaugh article, and the propaganda assault coheres with the Obama Administration’s Air-Sea Battle doctrine, which promotes a containment of China that could include the use of high-precision, high-power conventional weapons to knock out Chinese nuclear second-strike capacities.

The Iran Front

While the Obama Administration has concentrated its war provocations on the Russian and Chinese fronts, President Obama remains committed to a deal with Iran, through the ongoing P5+1 (the UN Permanent Five plus Germany) negotiations. The President has very little to show for his legacy in office for two terms, and the deal with Iran is his last, best chance for some meaningful accomplishment in the foreign policy domain. Secretary of State Kerry is now in negotiations with his Iranian counterpart, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. There is a March 24 deadline for reaching an agreement-in-principle, to meet the July final deadline for a signed agreement.

The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is dead-set against any deal with Iran, and the Israel Lobby in Washington, led by AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), is heavily lobbying Congressional Republicans to wreck any chance of a final deal. Forty-seven Republican Senators last week wrote to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, warning that any deal that Obama strikes with Iran will have to be acceptable to Congress, or it will be written off in two



U.S. State Department

President Obama wants a deal with Iran as a means of salvaging his failed Presidency. Secretary of State Kerry (left) is conducting intense negotiations over the future of Iran’s nuclear program, with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

years, if a Republican is elected President.

The Republican letter, in itself, was a bluff—Congress cannot weigh in on the deal, which is not a treaty requiring Senate approval. But by all recognized standards of international law, the agreement—if reached—would be binding on future U.S. administrations. The impact of the GOP action was to bolster opposition by ultra-conservative Iranian factions, who equally oppose a deal. In the view of the Iranian hardliners, no deal with the U.S. is reliable, because Washington will never grant Iran the status it deserves as a regional power, on a par with Israel and Saudi Arabia.

One indication of the impact of the GOP letter inside Iran was the election for the new head of the Assembly of Experts, the

powerful body that oversees the selection of a new Supreme Leader and has final oversight on the Supreme Leader’s actions. In the vote last week, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former President and key backer of President Hassan Rouhani in promoting a P5+1 deal, was defeated by a hardline cleric, Ayatollah Yazdi, a former Justice Minister. If Khamenei tilts significantly to the hardline stance, all bets are off on a final P5+1 agreement.

If no deal is reached between Iran and the P5+1, it becomes only a matter of time before war between the U.S. and Iran breaks out, an outcome that would be precisely that desired by the Netanyahu gang in Israel.

In the March 17 Israeli elections, Netanyahu is in the fight of his life to retain power. His defeat would fundamentally change the political landscape in the region and open the prospect for a revival of the peace initiatives of the Bill Clinton Presidency.

From Ukraine to the Middle East to the Pacific Far East, the world stands at the brink of war or peace, chaos or development. The British and their Obama White House are out to wreck any possibility of stability, particularly if it involves creating further opportunities for the BRICS nations to extend their development plans. This is the number one factor driving the world to the edge of global war.