

‘The U.S.A. and Russia in the Arctic’

by Michael Billington

June 22—As the dying breed of neoconservatives—both the Republican leadership and the Obama/Hillary wing of the Democrats—is acting more and more hysterically and dangerously every day to stop President Donald Trump from realizing his stated intention of forming a friendly and cooperative agreement with Russia and President Putin, a two-day forum held in Washington’s Wilson Center on June 21 and 22 was a breath of fresh air, and an important strategic intervention into the hostile environment in the nation’s capital.

The Wilson Center, together with the Arctic Circle, an NGO of scientific, political, and business people involved in the development of the Arctic, sponsored the two-day forum, titled *The U.S. and Russia in the Arctic*, offering powerful insights from multiple perspectives on the urgency of maintaining the existing close cooperation between the United States and Russia in the Arctic.

More important, most of the speakers—from both Arctic nations and others who recognize the growing importance of the Arctic for world development—called for the existing close and critical cooperation of the U.S.A. and Russia in the Arctic, to serve more broadly as a model and an impetus for the restoration of ties between the two great nations.

The Arctic Circle’s initiator Olafur Grimsson, the former President of Iceland (who stood up to the Anglo-Dutch banks in 2012, and won), Wilson President Jane Harman, and Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski gave opening presentations, making

clear that the intent of the event was not only to advance cooperation in the Arctic, but to bring the United States and Russia together for international peace and development. While there were objections to this from a few speakers, most added their own support for this broader, urgent necessity.

Grimsson praised the U.S. chairmanship of the Arctic Council over the past two years (the Arctic Council is composed of government representatives from the eight Arctic countries—Finland is now taking the chair), noting that the United States had “significant help from Russia,” demonstrating that the two countries “can have a very constructive and successful relationship.”

Jane Harman added that it was important that this conference was being held in Washington, since “most members of Congress know nothing about the Arctic.” She said that the close cooperation with Russia in the Arctic “builds a bridge” between the two nations.

Sen. Murkowski, who serves also on the Standing



photo courtesy of Novatek

Liquefied natural gas plant and sea port at Sabetta on Russia's Yamal Peninsula.

Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians, called for “taking this positive relationship here [in the Arctic] to impact broader U.S.-Russia relations.” She said that cooperation between Secretary Tillerson and Foreign Minister Lavrov at the Arctic Council meeting in Fairbanks this past May facilitated an agreement on scientific cooperation in the Arctic. She also noted that Russia is far ahead of the United States in building the necessary infrastructure for Arctic development and for facilitating the Northern Passage, which is now far more accessible and important because of the dramatic recession of the Arctic ice cap.

Sen. Murkowski—and many others—noted that the United States once had seven icebreakers, and now has one, with another in dry dock. The South Korean Ambassador for Arctic Affairs, Kim Young-jun, who spoke later, said that his country had recently presented the first of 15 Korean-built LNG tanker/icebreakers to Russia. Others noted that Russia, Finland, and other countries are also producing icebreakers, while none have been funded in the United States—a sign of strategic and economic insanity.

One panel included the former Lt. Gov. of Alaska Mead Treadwell (a close associate of former Gov. Hickel, a pioneer in Arctic development), together with Russian Senator Igor Chernyshenko, who represents the Murmansk Oblast on the Arctic. Chernyshenko praised the work of the Arctic Council under U.S. chairmanship over the past two years, pointing out that there is no potential for conflict, now, in the Arctic. He said, bad relations between the United States and Russia at this time were “due to the moods in the Congress.” He described some of the 140 projects underway in the Arctic, including the huge Yamal gas and oil port, rail development, and other projects, noting the significant Chinese involvement (there were no Chinese participants in the event). He encouraged the United States and others to engage in the Russian projects, noting that the opening of the Northeast passage facilitates participation of all nations, not just the Arctic nations, adding that current tensions are forcing U.S. companies to lose out on great potentials.

Lt. Gov. Treadwell also called for U.S. cooperation with Russia, proposing a “League of Arctic Ports,” to, among other things, facilitate expanded container traffic through the passage. He noted China’s New Silk Road projects and their huge investments, calling on the U.S. government to engage in funding and infrastructure development in the region.

LaRouche and Putin—2007

In the Q&A session, *EIR* referenced the [2007 Moscow forum](#) on building a tunnel under the Bering Strait, noting that President Putin described the project as a “war avoidance” policy, building a physical connection between the United States and Russia based on the mutual interests of each. *EIR* noted that a paper by Lyndon LaRouche was presented at that conference, but that except for Alaskan Gov. Hickel, there has been no significant U.S. response to Putin’s offer. *EIR* asked if it were not even more urgent now to proceed with this beneficial project.

Treadwell answered that his friend Gov. Hickel had often said that the Bering Strait Tunnel “will not happen in my lifetime, but we must keep talking about it every day.” He said that every project, big or small, to drive cooperation with Russia, was extremely important, and described a joint ship-monitoring system now being developed for the Bering Sea. Treadwell also pointed to the recent agreement to pursue building a rail connection from the lower 48 states through Canada to Alaska, and noted that such a rail line could eventually reach the Bering Strait and proceed on to Russia via a tunnel.

Treadwell and others noted that China has now declared the city of Dalian to be its “Arctic port,” and that the United States needs to quickly develop a deep water Arctic port on the north shore of Alaska.

Congressman Don Young (R-Alaska) decried the fact that “our media peddles the idea that Russia is our enemy—there is no reason.” He said that the Arctic is our future.

Develop the Arctic—Develop Outer Space

Georgy Karlov, the Deputy Chairman of the Duma representing Sakhalin, said that developing the Arctic is like developing space, both because the technological challenges are similar in many respects, but also because the harsh conditions mean that no country can do it alone, that all nations need to cooperate. “The United States and the Russians went to space separately, but now they have learned that they must work closely together.”

Kathleen Crane, the coordinator of the Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic (RUSALCA)—Rusalca means mermaid in Russian—spoke on the close cooperation of Russian and American scientists in mapping the Arctic since the founding of RUSALCA in 2003, but at the same time expressed her sorrow that the sanctions have to a large extent, now, undermined their mission.