

Russians See 'Permanent War' Escalation as Aimed at Them

by Rachel Douglas

Upon being informed that Russia's state-owned Gazprom firm had dropped U.S. interests from its giant Shtokman offshore natural gas project, both as potential co-developers and as future customers, Lyndon LaRouche observed on Oct. 10, "Russia is not reacting to the targetting of Iran or North Korea, but to the targetting of Russia—and China. On the provoking and targetting of Iran and North Korea, Russia is being very low-key. But on the targetting of Russia, not so. They are taking countermeasures against the real threat of embargo.

"It needs to be emphasized: Bush and Cheney are headed toward World War III, *in some form*. The signals of that are clear. But, unfortunately, most in the Congress are playing along, and pretending they don't see them. I tell my friends in the U.S. Congress that they should stop being stupid. If they want World War III, they'll get it from this White House."

Gazprom's shift was not a slight one. The Russian daily *Vremya Novostei*, for example, reported it under the headline, "Yankee, Go Home!", writing that "the Gazprom board has put an end to the Russian-American energy dialogue."

U.S. Pressures Mount

The Russian action follows ample provocation. A virtual "threat of embargo" against Russia arose, as President George W. Bush signed the so-called Iran Freedom Support Act on Oct. 1. This law not only codifies sanctions against Iran that had been imposed under executive order, but it mandates secondary sanctions against "any person or entity determined to be doing business that benefits Iran's nuclear program. . . ." Embedded in the legislation is a sense-of-the-Congress resolution that "it should be the policy of the United States not to bring into force an agreement for cooperation with the government of any country that is assisting the nuclear program of Iran or transferring advanced conventional weapons

or missiles to Iran," unless Iran suspends uranium enrichment activities, or that government suspends all nuclear assistance to Iran and all weapons transfers. The Russian government is the major contractor on Iran's Bushehr nuclear power station.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov responded, in remarks made Oct. 6, that this U.S. unilateral action "has complicated the collective work of the Iran-6," meaning the five permanent UN Security Council members, plus Germany, whose efforts have been the main diplomatic venue for work towards a peaceful resolution of concerns around Iran's nuclear program.

Lavrov, President Vladimir Putin, and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov also responded to pressures on Moscow, which were felt on a number of other fronts: the escalation of Georgia-Russia tensions by the Saakashvili regime in Tbilisi; plans to install anti-missile defense systems in Poland; and elevation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to "enemy image" status, as promoted by Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and other Bush Administration allies.

In addition, a recent topic of hot discussion in Russian political circles has been a report titled "On the Likely Scenario for U.S. Actions with Regard to Russia in 2006-2008," which makes the case that the United States is plotting another "colored revolution": regime change in the Russian Federation. The authors are Valentin Falin, who was Soviet Ambassador to West Germany in the 1970s, and Gennadi Yevstafeyev, a retired general in Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SRV). It circulated especially in the halls of the Russian State Duma and Federation Council.

"Behind the threat is the U.S.A.'s refusal to tolerate Russia's growing role on world markets as a sovereign power center," the authors write. They muster evidence from U.S. media and think-tank reports, to back up their charge that,

“The U.S.A. will attempt to initiate, using all the instruments and figures of influence accumulated back in the 1990s, a covert realignment of forces within the upper echelons of the Russian leadership and of the political and business elites, to pave the way to a ‘quiet Orange Revolution, Russian-style.’ ”

Stand-Off on Southwest Asia Periphery

On Oct. 2, Georgia handed over to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the four Russian officers it had detained for several days as “spies.” But tension between Moscow and the Rose Revolution regime of Saakashvili remained high, as Putin accused Georgia of engaging in “state terrorism,” and warned that “foreign sponsors” were encouraging its “anti-Russian direction in foreign policy.” Georgia’s policies, he said, were like those of Lavrenti Beria, the Georgian-born head of Stalin’s police-state apparatus. In an Oct. 2 phone conversation with Bush, Putin warned that Russia would not tolerate any actions by “third countries, that Georgia’s leadership could interpret as encouraging its destructive policy.”

While the officers were held, Russia imposed an economic blockade on Georgia, and suspended all transportation and mail communication, as well as cross-border banking operations and money transfers. Leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so-called autonomous regions in Georgia with close ties to Russia, continue to move toward full independence, even as Saakashvili vows to retake total control of those areas.

LaRouche replied to an e-mail query Oct. 2, concerning the Transcaucasus area (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), by situating it in the Bush-Cheney policy of targetting Russia: “The dispute between Russia and Georgia is part of the preliminary measures deployed in preparation for the intended U.S. destruction of Russia, China, India, and other targetted locations under the current policy of a single world empire, called ‘globalization.’ ”

Lavrov implicated Washington in the latest Georgian escalation, saying on Oct. 3: “The recent detention of Russian officers took place shortly after NATO decided on an intensified cooperation plan for Georgia, and it followed the visit of Georgian President Saakashvili to Washington. We are aware of statements by our U.S. colleagues that they have urged, and continue to urge, moderation on the Georgian authorities. But from the chronological point of view everything was as I said: the trip to Washington, the NATO decision, the hostage-taking.” President Putin, the next day, said about Georgia, that he “would advise everybody not to talk to Russia in the language of provocation and blackmail.”

Putin then followed up the release of the Russian officers, with a letter of thanks to the OSCE, in which he demanded action to restrain Saakashvili. “I have also been informed that, as current OSCE chairman, you are prepared to mediate in relations between Russia and Georgia,” Putin wrote to Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht. “I appreciate it, but I think that at the current stage the OSCE’s efforts should be

concentrated on encouraging the Georgian leadership to correct its current course, aimed at aggravating tensions and at the preparation for the use of force in the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian frozen conflicts.”

Missiles and Murders

On the eve of a visit to Poland by Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Ministry on Oct. 3 issued a warning against the deployment of U.S. or NATO missile-defense systems in Poland, a NATO member since 1999. Spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said that such a move would “produce a negative effect on strategic stability, security in the region, and international relations.” Defense Minister Ivanov followed up, saying on Oct. 10, “The announced purpose is the interception of Iranian intercontinental ballistic missiles, which have never existed and will not exist in the near future.” Ivanov added, according to RIA Novosti, “I think everyone understands against whom they [anti-ballistic missiles systems] can be used.” Russia considers the plans “a destabilizing element and an attempt to shift the strategic balance,” he said.

During an Oct. 5 visit to Russia’s air base in Kyrgyzstan, Ivanov was pressed with questions—from a Polish reporter, as it happened—about whether Moscow wanted to transform the Shanghai Cooperation Organization into a new Eurasian military alliance, that would confront NATO. Ivanov rebuffed that formulation, but emphasized that “Russia and China will be strategic partners on the international scene in the near future.”

In the setting of the international “permanent war” party’s targetting of Russia on all fronts, the official response to the Oct. 7 assassination of Anna Politkovskaya, the journalist, human rights activist, and harsh critic of the Kremlin, was no surprise. Putin spoke, at his Oct. 10 press conference in Dresden, about “people hiding from Russian justice, and nurturing plans to sacrifice someone as a victim, in order to create a wave of anti-Russian sentiment worldwide.” (Russian media pointed to a scenario for the murder of Politkovskaya as trigger for the destabilization of Russia, which was posted on the Internet and attributed to former Yukos Oil owner Leonid Nevzlin, who resides in Israel.)

Some of Politkovskaya’s associates did not disagree. Alexander Lebedev, co-owner (with Mikhail Gorbachov) of a 49% stake in *Novaya Gazeta*, the paper for which Politkovskaya wrote, published a commentary under the provocative title, “Whoever shot Politkovskaya was aiming at her opponents”—that is, the Putin regime. Politkovskaya was so well known as an opponent of the regime, wrote Lebedev, that it is too easy to suspect those she criticized. “But shouldn’t we consider carefully: isn’t that what those who ordered her killing want us to do? Perhaps a wave of anger at those the journalist criticized, is the very effect the killers were counting on? That is, firing on the journalist, they took aim at her opponents.”