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Lining Up for the Countdown
Do We Really Want a Third World War?
by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche is the chairwoman of the BüSo (Civil Rights Solidarity) party in Germany. This article was translated from German.

Whoever had the idea of holding the ``GröNaGiaZ'' (Greatest NATO Summit of All Time), in the modern and super-ugly Tower of Babel in Bucharest, which, at 330,000 square meters, is the second-largest building in the world after the Pentagon, must have a macabre sense of humor. Indeed, the monstrous building—about 3,000 official delegates and an equal number of journalists only required one-third of the gigantic structure for the summit—was built according to the wishes of the megalomaniacal dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, who was, however, overthrown and executed before the structure could be inaugurated....

In-Depth articles from EIR, Vol. 35, No. 15

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Feature

- **Lining Up for the Countdown:**
Do We Really Want a Third World War?

The April 2-3 NATO summit in Bucharest was held to transform NATO into an imperial global organization. If a totally different policy is not placed on the agenda, a new world war looms, which threatens to become even more horrendous than the world wars of the 20th Century. **Helga Zepp-LaRouche** reports.

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Economics

- **The British Empire's Economic Suicide Club**

The supposed regulators of the U.S. economy and the lawmakers have no idea why the world financial system collapsed, judging from a

Senate Banking Committee hearing on the subject of financial market turmoil. And everyone concurred that the illegal bailout of the already dead system is the right thing to do.

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International

- [Can Dick Cheney's War Against Iran Be Avoided?](#)

Vice President Dick Cheney's trip to Southwest Asia left Iraq-Iran and Israel-Palestine teetering on the brink of full-scale confrontations, including discussions of possible imminent attacks on Iran and Syria. Lyndon LaRouche warned that it would be an error to think that the impetus for expanded global irregular warfare could be contained by making local agreements.

- [Opponents of 'Lisbon Monster' Take to the Streets](#)

The European Union's Lisbon Treaty would strip member nations of any vestige of national sovereignty.

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[Lisbon Treaty Is 'Anti-Democratic'](#)

Alfonso Gianni is Undersecretary to the Economic Development Ministry in Italy's outgoing government.

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National

- [California Democratic Convention:](#)

[LaRouche Youth Bring Reality, Provide Leadership to Party](#)

The LaRouche Youth Movement, some of whose members were delegates to the convention, and others elected to official party positions, provoked many wellmeaning, but ignorant and impotent Democrats to reflect on the best tradition of the party, that of **President Franklin D. Roosevelt**, and its leading advocate today, **Lyndon LaRouche**.

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Science

- [The Subject of Principle:](#)

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Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. proceeds from a discussion of 'Collective Evolution and the Genetic Code,' by biologists Kalin Vetsigian, Carl Woese, and Nigel Goldenfeld, to consider important issues of epistemology which have been implicitly posed by their work. To get to the heart of it, start with **V.I. Vernadsky's** conception of the Noösphere.

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Interviews

- **Harry van Bommel**

Mr. van Bommel is a member of the Parliament of the Netherlands, and the foreign policy specialist of the Socialist Party, which is the country's third largest party and is currently leading the opposition in Parliament.

Editorial

- **World War III Has Begun!**

U.S. Economic/Financial News

- **USDA Forecast Delights Speculators; Food Chain Threatened**
- **July 2007 Crash Drives Soaring Food Stamp Demand**
- **They Were Warned: Ohio Bank Near Failure for Lack of HBPA**

USDA Forecast Delights Speculators; Food Chain Threatened

March 31 (EIRNS)—Today's release of the first-of-the-season plantings report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), forecasts an 18% increase in U.S. soybean acreage this year over that of 2007, and a drop of 8% in corn area. This occasioned a trading binge on the Chicago Board of Trade in which soybean futures (for May delivery) fell by the 70-cent maximum, or 5.5%, by midday. Corn futures jumped by their limit. But behind this cited explanation for today's trading drama, speculation in agro-commodities, along with gold, oil, and other commodities, is soaring out of control, as the financial system itself disintegrates. Index fund involvement in agro-futures trading is now running at \$42 billion, up from \$10 billion 18 months ago, according to estimates by AgResource Co., a Chicago research outfit.

Meantime, farmers are facing whip-saw conditions for deciding what—and whether—to plant, while consumers are facing extreme inflation of food prices. The total arable land base of the United States, as measured under technology now in use, stands at about 470 million acres. During the FDR years, the policy for use of this land, was to serve the national interest of providing a stable food supply, to keep family farming in operation, and to upgrade the resource base itself. Through a policy introduced by FDR called "parity pricing," farmers were induced to produce more or less of various commodities, and make land improvements accordingly. Huge increases in U.S. food output supplied the needs of World War II and Lend Lease.

But today, farmers are expected to make decisions based on "the markets"—the euphemism for the policy of increasing globalized control of economic activity by a select few financial and commodity interests, centered on London. Wild shifts in land use are the norm. For example, once the Gorey bio-fuels craze was made law in 2005 in the U.S. and other nations, U.S. corn acreage expanded to 93 million acres in 2007—the highest since 1944, when yield per acre was far lower. This year, about 25% of all the corn harvest will go for ethanol, and livestock feed prices are soaring. But, the corn area may shrink 8% in this year, down to 86 million acres, according to the USDA. Soybean acreage may hit 74.8 million acres, 18% above last year. The relatively high costs to produce corn compared with soy, is one factor. Other huge crop area swings are forecast, including a 13% reduction in cotton acreage and 6% increase in wheat. The USDA's forecasts can be far off the mark; they claim to survey 84,000 producers. But for certain, there is growing chaos in the food chain.

July 2007 Crash Drives Soaring Food Stamp Demand

March 31 (EIRNS)—The number of monthly food stamp users is expected to reach 28 million people by Oct. 1, the highest since the 1960s, when the program began. Average monthly use has been 26.5-27.8 million, since 2006. Food price inflation, job losses, and fuel price spikes are cited for the increase. More than 40 states, from December 2006 to December 2007, had an increase in case loads. Six states hit by the housing blowout—Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Nevada, North Dakota and Rhode Island—had a 10% increase in demand for food stamps in that one year time.

For example:

Michigan: One in eight residents receives food stamps. Officials there say the load has more than doubled since 2000 (the Bush years).

Rhode Island: Over the last two years, the demand has grown by 18%, to more than 84,000 recipients as of February 2007, encompassing 8.4% of the state's population.

New York: From July 2007 to January 2008, an additional 67,000 people were added to the program, bringing the total to 1.86 million or one in ten New Yorkers.

They Were Warned: Ohio Bank Near Failure for Lack of HBPA

April 2 (EIRNS)—One of America's biggest regional banks, National City Bank based in Columbus, Ohio, is facing bankruptcy, by the negligence and incompetence of a Federal government which was warned six months ago that this bank needed Federal protection, and which has just thrown away \$30 billion instead trying to guarantee the mortgage securities of a non-bank, Wall Street's Bear Stearns. By its own stupidity, National City earned itself massive losses in the mortgage bubble, and requires Federal bankruptcy protection, a thorough "asset" clean-out, and Federal regulation to operate as a sound institution.

Already on Sept. 26, 2007, an article on the LaRouche PAC's website, "National City: Why Chartered Banks Also Need Protection in Mortgage Blow-out," presented the bank as "an exemplary case" of banks needing protection under Lyndon LaRouche's proposed Homeowners and Bank Protection Act (HBPA). The losses then from mortgages, mortgage securities, and derivatives were \$750 million in 2007, \$333 million in the fourth quarter alone. Again in January 2008, LPAC called for the HBPA to provide Federal protection for National City. Another \$500 million in losses have been added in early 2008. The bank, tenth-largest based in the United States, with 1,300 branches, has shed 3,000 of its 11,000 employees.

Since then, 80 cities and three state legislatures have passed demands for the HBPA—but Congress and the White House have blocked it with "stimulus" and "bailout" measures instead.

"These idiots in Washington, D.C. were warned," LaRouche said today. "They were warned about this bank failing, simply for the lack of having enacted the Homeowners and Bank Protection Act. They learned nothing from reality. The HBPA is the only sane solution—and George Bush's *insanity* is no excuse."

Now, Cleveland press headlines are alternately reassuring nervous Ohioans about their bank accounts at National City, and warning them not to have more than the FDIC-insured \$100,000 in those accounts. The radiating effects will also hit a dozen other midwestern states where National City has 1,300 branches. With its core capital "direly low," reduced by the

losses right to the regulatory "minimum line" below which it cannot legally operate, National City has 19% troubled loans on its books. It is now trying to avoid failure by selling itself to the smaller Key Banking Corp. or to Wells Fargo, or to a Chinese or Japanese bank, or to the Dubai sovereign wealth fund.

Global Economic News

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- [Unless It's Stopped Now, Famine Is on the Way](#)

IMF Joins the Bank Bailout Brigade

April 3 (EIRNS)—International Monetary Fund general director Dominique Strauss-Kahn has joined the British empire's campaign to force national governments to bail out the bankrupt banking system. In an interview with France's *Le Figaro Economie* on April 2, Strauss-Kahn invoked the bailout of Crédit Lyonnais in the early 1990s as the model for today. Crédit Lyonnais, the largest bank in France at the time, had been bankrupted by its own speculative activities, and rather than let it fail, the government decided to bail it out with taxpayer money. All its bad debts and problem financial instruments were dumped into a state-owned company, and new capital was injected into Crédit Lyonnais to allow it to continue operation. Strauss Kahn said that "banks will have to be allowed to keep going to unblock a system which is totally frozen."

Following on the heels of the President's Working Group/Federal Reserve bailout/takeover of Bear Stearns, the central bankers—through the BIS's Financial Stability Forum—lobbied for similar government bailouts, and now the IMF has joined the fray. The Fed and the European central banks have already made more than \$3 trillion in loans to financial institutions since the system began to disintegrate in early 2007, an amount which has clearly been insufficient, as shown by the new calls for even bigger bailouts.

Nigeria: China Puts Its Money Where Its Mouth Is

April 3 (EIRNS)—China has offered Nigeria \$40-50 billion to overcome its huge infrastructure gap, AllAfrica.com reported March 31. Nigerian Minister of Finance Dr. Shamsuddeen Usman announced the Chinese support on March 30 in Abuja. Usman said that the memorandum of understanding "was signed between the AFC [the African Financing Corporation] and the SINOSURE [the Chinese Export Credit Guarantee Agency] on behalf of other Nigerian financial institutions, where the SINOSURE is committing an amount of \$40-50 billion for the financing of Nigeria infrastructural projects....

"This is the money that they will make available to any private sector or public sector arrangement. The way we want it utilized is that [it] is not likely to be money that the government will borrow, so that Nigerians will not be afraid that we have gone to bring back the debts that have been repaid."

Funds will be made available through Nigerian companies, so that they would be able to participate in the funding of infrastructure in Nigeria. "We have agreed with the officials of SINOSURE, and they have written, that they will be coming to Nigeria to explore this new opportunities and contacts in the last week of March or first week of April," Usman said.

In addition, Nigeria renegotiated a total of \$2.5 billion in loans which had been secured by former President Olusegun

Obasanjo. Usman said that now that Nigeria has left the Paris Club of creditors; it has "not been taking commercial loans. We insisted that any loan that Nigeria takes, must be extremely concessionary" in terms of interest rates and long repayment periods. Nigeria was "able to engage the Chinese authorities and really renegotiate these loans," to a concessionary level fully acceptable to Nigeria. "That was a very important achievement," he said.

In addition, a delegation of the China National Oil Corporation is due to arrive in Nigeria in a few weeks, to discuss investment in refinery, petrochemical, agricultural and training projects in Nigeria. "It is something that will be in the interest of both countries," Usman said. "Their interest is in our oil, but they also have interest in putting their money where their mouth is."

Unless It's Stopped Now, Famine Is on the Way

April 5 (EIRNS)—New records were set for grain futures speculation in Chicago this week (see above), at the same time that nations resort to export restrictions, consumption cuts, and diet substitutes, in the absence of a concerted international effort to mobilize to produce more food. In seven of the last ten years, grain production globally has been less than consumption, so "the food isn't there"—even if you happen to have money. Beyond mere "food shocks," famine is in the works. Indicative is the situation with rice, on which three billion people depend as their daily staple.

Only 30 million metric tons of rice are available for world trade at the moment, while the need and "demand" is far above that. Among major rice exporters, India has banned exports indefinitely (except for high-priced basmati) in order to protect domestic consumption; Vietnam has imposed export quotas; China has limited exports. Only the U.S.A. has not done so. Rice-importing countries are desperate. The Philippines, the world's biggest rice buyer, said yesterday that it would double the import quota allowed to private rice dealers. Earlier in the week, the Philippines fortunately concluded a government-to-government deal for rice from Vietnam. But where is the rest to come from?

This past week, the United Arab Emirates declared a rice "emergency," because, even though it has the money to pay soaring rice import prices, India has cut off its supplies. Most severely hit are, of course, poor countries, especially those of West Africa. Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ivory Coast are among the world's top ten rice importers.

Speculation on the grain exchanges is going wild. In particular, hedge and index funds dove in deeper, after a temporary credit squeeze at the end of March. On April 3, rice futures on the Chicago Board of Trade hit a record of \$20.35 per 100 pounds. Likewise, corn futures (July delivery) hit a record of \$6.215 per bushel the same day. Wheat prices are likewise climbing, and supplies are limited. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange reported that the number of trade transactions for wheat rose by 53% in the first quarter of 2008, over Q1 in 2007. For the month of March, soybean trades were 161% higher this year than in March 2007.

In the U.S. grain belt, the few remaining independent grain storage and shipping elevators are faced with bankruptcy and sellout to cartel companies Cargill and ADM, or even to hedge funds, now on the prowl to get in on gaming grain physically as well as gambling on "paper bushels." This is because the smaller elevators, which deal in real grain, and buy futures contracts to offset risk that the price will fall, get hit by margin calls they can't meet when the prices spike. There is a potential wave of defaults ahead. One small Illinois elevator near St. Louis went under recently. Another closed in Louisiana.

A process like the hyperinflation of 1923 Weimar Germany, as depicted in the "Firewall" video on www.larouchpac.com, is driving toward near-term world famine. Without an international drive for a food production mobilization—breaking with decades of "markets" brainwashing—famine is assured.

United States News Digest

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Murdoch's Daughter and Gore's Partner To Hold Obama Bash in London

April 4 (EIRNS)—A gala party to raise money for Barack Obama's U.S. Presidential campaign is planned for April 28, in the London home of Elisabeth Murdoch, daughter of British empire media mogul Rupert Murdoch. The affair will be co-hosted by David Blood, the London (U.S. expatriate) partner of Al Gore in the venture capital fund Generation Investment Management. Rupert Murdoch is a prime supporter of Gore's global warming scam, and the Murdoch family's Sky network enterprise effected a crucial deal, giving Gore's own Current TV network widespread viewership.

Tickets to the Obama event cost between \$1,000 and \$2,300, the maximum individual donation allowed in a U.S. Presidential primary campaign. The affair is promoted as having a "guest list [which] is a roll call of London's more glamorous U.S. expats."

On April 2, Associated Press reported that Obama said he was committed to appointing Gore to a Cabinet-level position or higher, but it may be Presidency, itself, that Gore is angling for.

Dean: Florida Will Be Seated, But Will They Vote?

April 4 (EIRNS)—Howard "The Screamer" Dean, Democratic National Committee chairman, announced in a press conference with Florida Democratic leaders on April 2, that a delegation from Florida would be seated at the Democratic National Convention, and that he was "optimistic" that a Michigan delegation would be seated, too.

Dean failed, however, to answer the real question: How will the delegates be chosen? Representatives of neither candidate attended the meeting where Dean's announcement was made. Incredibly, Dean announced afterward, "It is our hope that the candidates will join us in this effort, and without them an agreement is not possible." So what does his announcement mean? A "bread and circus" scenario whereby Florida's 210 delegates participate in convention social events and minor

issues, but are barred from voting to choose the Democratic candidate, as some media scenarios have floated? Michigan's 156 delegates face the same fate.

Florida's Democrats did everything possible to hold their primary during the DNC's timeframe, but the Republican-controlled state government forced through a primary date too early for the DNC schedule. Florida held an election with a record turnout, in which all the major candidates were on the ballot.

Court Ruling vs. FBI Raid on Congressional Office Stands

April 4 (EIRNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court announced on March 31 that it would not review an Appeals Court ruling that the FBI's conduct during its 18-hour raid on Rep. William Jefferson's (D-La.) Congressional office was unconstitutional.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit had ruled that although the May 2006 raid itself was not illegal, the "compelled disclosure of privileged material [of the Legislative branch—ed.] to the Executive during the execution of the search warrant" violated the Speech or Debate Clause of the Constitution, because the FBI searched the privileged materials without giving Jefferson the opportunity to review them.

This is a key ruling to uphold the U.S. constitutional doctrine of the "separation of powers" of the Legislative, Judicial, and Executive branches of the Federal government.

Top Gore Money-Man Pops Up in Chicago Rezko Trial

April 3 (EIRNS)—Chicago attorney Joseph Cari is to be a prosecution witness in the ongoing Chicago corruption trial of Barack Obama associate Antoin "Tony" Rezko, new reports say. According to court documents, Cari pled guilty on Sept. 15, 2005, to one count of attempted extortion of a political payoff. Earlier, Cari was one of three finance chairmen of the Democratic National Committee for the Gore Presidential campaign, beginning in January 2000; he was one of 30 Americans who each raised \$100,000 or more for Gore. The *Chicago Sun Times* reported that Cari "raised formidable amounts of soft money." Did he do it through political payoffs like the one to which he later pled guilty?

Clinton Presses Infrastructure Agenda in Pittsburgh

April 2 (EIRNS)—During a speech at the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO in Pittsburgh, Sen. Hillary Clinton noted that the United States has lost 3 million manufacturing jobs under the Bush-Cheney Administration. She proposed what she called "an aggressive infrastructure agenda" which would create 3 million new jobs over the next decade. "We're trying to run today's economy on yesterday's infrastructure," she said, pointing out that her "Rebuild America Plan" would create a \$10 billion Emergency Fund to identify and repair critical infrastructure problems, including modernizing transportation, and investing in public transit and intercity rail.

National Health Insurance Backed by Most Doctors

April 2 (EIRNS)—In a significant shift, a solid majority of U.S. physicians have finally come around to favoring a national health insurance program, such as the single-payer Medicare-for-All system advocated by Lyndon LaRouche. The question now is, "What will they do to help create the political and economic conditions that will make that a reality?"

The largest survey yet of physicians on health-care financing reform, conducted in 2007, and published in the issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine* released yesterday, shows a 10% increase in physicians' support for national health insurance, since a similar survey was conducted in 2002. In the 2007 survey, 59% of physicians favored the Medicare-for-All

approach, 32% opposed it, and 9% were neutral.

"Across the board, more physicians feel that our fragmented and for-profit insurance system is obstructing good patient care, and a majority now support national insurance as the remedy," said Dr. Ronald T. Ackermann, associate director of the Center for Health Policy and Professionalism Research at Indiana University's School of Medicine, who co-authored the study. Currently, an estimated 47 million Americans have no health insurance at all, and another 50 million are said to be "underinsured."

Bloomberg's Congestion Tax Runs into Albany Roadblock

March 31 (EIRNS)—In a special session called to vote on Mayor "Benito Mussolini" Bloomberg's toll tax plan today, the New York City Council voted 30-20 in favor of the nation's first congestion tax plan.

Councilman Lew Fidler (D-Brooklyn), an opposition leader, said his colleagues had set a bad precedent for their cash-strapped constituents. "This is the greatest city in the world, and one of the greatest freedoms is the freedom to move about it freely," Fidler said. "What's next? We're going to charge a user fee to go into Central Park because it's crowded?"

Bloomberg orchestrated a labor rally in favor of the fascist scheme to charge car drivers \$8 (\$21 for truckers) to drive into Manhattan, hours before the Council vote was taken. Yesterday, in Chinatown, citizens rallied against the plan, arguing that the London precedent has shown the scheme will cost more than its proponents expect. "It started about the equivalent of \$8, quickly went up twice that, and since has gone up even higher. It has almost tripled the amount since it was implemented," argued Councilman David Weprin. "Delivery truck expenses will be in the thousands of dollars per year," said Jan Lee, owner of Sinotique, an art and antiques shop. "We'll lose a lot of business to Brooklyn and Queens Chinatowns if the prices creep up."

However, at this time, it appears that the state legislature will not vote up the measure. If the state is to receive \$354 million in Federal matching funds for the project, the legislature must approve the measure no later than April 7. Reportedly, Bloomberg is desperately making deals behind the scenes, offering a modified plan in order to win last-minute approval.

Another Reason John 'Hoover' McCain Won't Be Tough To Beat

March 31 (EIRNS)—As former President Bill Clinton stressed to California Democratic Convention delegates yesterday, the Democrats will be able to win in November, if they "let every state's voice be heard" through the end of the primary season.

It only took FDR two months' campaigning to beat the original Herbert Hoover, and the economically clueless John McCain is doing a good Hoover imitation in the midst of an economic crash.

McCain's do-nothing speech, in Los Angeles last week, on the financial collapse, with its "I won't play politics with the mortgage mess," was sniffed out by the March 31 New York *Daily News*, which discovered that top lobbyists for the subprime mortgage lending industry hold top spots in McCain's campaign. All McCain presented in his March 26 speech, was a request to the mortgage lenders to "help their customers," and a vote of support for the Federal Reserve's massive bailout of the Bear Stearns Wall Street investment house. Now, McCain's spokesman says neither of the two Ameriquest lobbyists had input on his "plan"—the one Hillary Clinton said "reminded me of Herbert Hoover."

Ibero-American News Digest

- **What, Really, Is Inside the FARC's Computers?**
- **Bolivia on Chopping Block for National Disintegration**

What, Really, Is Inside the FARC's Computers?

April 2 (EIRNS)—Maximiliano Londoño Penilla, president of the Lyndon LaRouche Association of Colombia, issued the following statement yesterday:

"Amidst all the posturing, from each side, on the subject of Colombia's March 1 military operation in which Raúl Reyes and a score of his companions were killed in a FARC camp on Ecuadorian territory, and on the content of the hard drives of the FARC computers seized in the operation, there has been a deafening silence on the most fundamental aspect of the whole incident. Those computers contain certain information which neither the FARC, nor Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, nor Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, nor Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, nor Wall Street, nor the City of London, nor the Congressmen and leaders of the political parties of the region, never mind George Bush's government in the United States, want to be made public.

"What's really on those hard drives?

"The FARC, of course, deny that the original computers survived the attack, and say the revelations being circulated are apocryphal. However, with information from these computers, the Costa Rican police were able to raid a residence in which they found a strongbox containing a half-million dollars. But what is interesting about the case, is that the information on this FARC stash dates from 1997. That means that it is very likely that the hard drives also have information from June 1999, regarding an extremely embarrassing meeting which Reyes held with Richard Grasso, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange.

"In that meeting, held in the Colombian jungle of Caguan, Reyes and Grasso joined in the now famous '*Grasso abrazo*' ('Grasso embrace'), and discussed mutual 'investments' and a future Reyes tour of New York's financial district. The full story on this meeting and its sequel can be found in *EIR*'s July 16, 1999 issue, or at www.larouchepub.com/spanish.

"There, it is proven that Wall Street and the City of London's bosses not only flirted with, but established an intimate relationship with the FARC narcoterrorists, founded upon their centuries of promotion of free trade and the drug trade, as supposed 'licit' economic activity. Grasso and Reyes's infamous embrace represents the deep and lasting relationship, which continues to this day, of the Anglo-Dutch financial networks which plotted this new Opium War the FARC is waging against the United States, the nations of the America, and the entire world.

"In the face of the patent reluctance of the region's actors, all victims of this British manipulation, to speak frankly about the *Grasso Abrazo*, U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche recommends that everything be brought to light, so that the truth be known. 'It is like vomiting,' LaRouche commented; 'one feels better afterwards.'"

Bolivia on Chopping Block for National Disintegration

April 4 (EIRNS)—Global inflation in food prices is fueling the British drive to break apart Bolivia, as only the first domino to fall in South America.

Separatists in the gas- and agricultural-export-rich department of Santa Cruz have scheduled a referendum on "autonomy"

from the Federal government for May 4, which the separatists promise to hold, no matter who declares it illegal.

Santa Cruz's extensive soy cultivation supplies much of the cooking oil used nationally. With the price having risen 35% in the recent period, President Evo Morales ordered exports of cooking oil suspended temporarily on March 26, until supplies for the domestic market were assured. The separatist Civic Committee (its head, Branko Marinkovic, is one of the biggest cooking oil producers), mobilized a protest of 300,000 people on April 2 against the export ban, and for regional autonomy. The governor of the department, Rubén Costas, ranted there that the export ban doesn't matter, because after the May 4 referendum, the department will be able to make its own laws. "We're making the real revolution."

The foreign ministers of Brazil and Argentina, along with the vice foreign minister of Colombia, are in Bolivia now, attempting to mediate between the government and the separatists, to head off the vote. The Santa Cruz leaders dismissed them as friends of the Morales government, and representing "their multinationals"—as opposed to those who own the Santa Cruz leaders.

Western European News Digest

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Brits Move To Ban Small Parties from European Parliament

April 3 (EIRNS)—A European elected official warned in a discussion with *EIR*, that the Lisbon Treaty process includes the elimination of small parliamentary groups inside the European Parliament, the only supranational legislative assembly, ever.

On April 1, British MEP Richard Corbett presented a parliamentary rule modification before the Constitutional Affairs Committee, which passed. That change will raise from 20 to 30 the minimum number of MEPs needed to form a parliamentary group, and the number of represented member-states from six to seven, thus, seriously undermining the ability of small parties, and of MEPs without affiliations, to participate in the legislative process. French lawyer Christophe Beaudoin, from the anti-Lisbon Treaty website observatoiredeleurope.com, wrote that if implemented now, "60 Eurodeputies, though democratically elected, would be almost excluded from parliamentary work." Thus, the EP would be dominated by mainstream pro-Lisbon Treaty representatives, the right-wing PPE and left-wing PSE. It is to be noted that the only open opposition to the Lisbon Treaty and related anti-national sovereignty policy in the EP comes from small

parliamentary groups across the political spectrum.

Richard Corbett, a Labor Party, Fabian Society, Oxford-Hull creation, is a prominent member of the EP Constitutional Affairs Committee and a key enforcer of the anti-nation-state EU policy. He personally led the Lisbon Treaty ratification through the EP last February.

Dreams of NATO Fanatics: Mini-Nukes, World Governance

PARIS, April 2 (EIRNS)—The defense establishment-connected satirical Paris weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* revealed that the NATO Bucharest summit (April 2-4) would discuss new types of weapons, wars, and world governance.

Le Canard then denounced the five retired generals' report, "Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World," adding ironically that, in order to fight terrorism, these retired gentlemen offer the best of all remedies: the use of mini-nukes, including for first strikes. France does not possess this type of miniaturized bomb, but on March 21, while inaugurating the new French submarine *Le Terrible*, President Nicolas Sarkozy, in a speech on deterrence, adopted a similar approach. By declaring that a nuclear weapon made it possible to launch a warning to an aggressor, for example, thanks to a high-altitude explosion, which then could neutralize all energy sources of a country and make the adversary blind, deaf, and mute.

Axing of Transrapid a Wedding Gift to New Entente Cordiale?

March 28 (EIRNS)—The coincidence of the meeting in London between Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and of the decision of the German government yesterday to scrap the maglev project in Munich, is puzzling. The decision against the maglev project threatens to add this technology to the list of other pioneer technologies that have been sacrificed by Germany—nuclear power, high-temperature reactors, manned space missions, along with the German mark—as concessions to win approval from London and Paris for Germany's reunification following the fall of the East German communist government. The same German government that is throwing the maglev away, is also planning to scrap the German Constitution for the EU's Lisbon Treaty.

The Thyssen-Krupp firm, producer of the maglev train's engine, will enter negotiations with the Chinese now, on sale of the technology to China, where maglev projects have a better chance of being realized.

One may see a specific financial blackmail in this disaster, namely a threat by the powers that run the Anglo-Dutch (now joined by the French) financial system, against the German economy and its banking system. Furthermore, Chancellor Angela Merkel is a raving anglophile, as can be seen in her instant adoption of Tony Blair's global warming hoax as the key feature of her "foreign policy." Throughout her two and a half years in office, Merkel has not once mentioned the maglev among what she calls "future technologies."

Irish PM Resigns To Save 'Yes' Vote on Lisbon Treaty

April 3 (EIRNS)—Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern has resigned in what the press is reporting as a bid to save the "yes" vote in the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Ahern has been the target of an anti-corruption tribunal and is suspected of having received illegal payments from property developers. The issue has been at the center of a dispute between the ruling party and the main opposition party, both of which support the Treaty. Ahern's resignation was aimed at preventing his corruption from becoming a key issue, whereby the Treaty referendum would become a vote of confidence in him.

Irish sources have told *EIR* that his resignation stole the headlines from the fact that the Irish parliament yesterday introduced the Lisbon Treaty referendum bill. The referendum will most likely take place on June 10 or 12. The public

debate will intensify over the next ten weeks, and the supporters of the Treaty are doing everything to ensure that a yes vote prevails.

Sarkozy's France Will 'Disappear' If It Joins NATO

PARIS, April 3 (EIRNS)—In an interview with the website Marianne 2, influential French strategic analyst Emmanuel Todd issued a scathing attack on President Nicolas Sarkozy's reinforcement of the French contingent in Afghanistan, and attempt to return to the NATO integrated command. Asked whether anything justifies an enhanced deployment into Afghanistan, Todd replied, "One can imagine everything from Nicolas Sarkozy, even that he doesn't know where Afghanistan is. But I cannot imagine that people around him don't know ... that this war is lost."

The Afghans will defeat the invaders, continued Todd. "The social organization of the Pashtuns is designed for war, just as that of the Somali clans: War is the normal state of those societies, therefore its duration poses no problem. As long as the belligerents are supplied with weapons from the outside, it is obvious that those social systems will win over a few thousand men come from far away and confronted with difficulties.

"Why do those who govern us want us to participate in a lost war? ... If we become aligned, if we lose our independence, we disappear. De Gaulle understood that: [under those conditions] France does not exist on the world scale, cannot justify its [permanent] seat at the UN Security Council, and its possession of nuclear weapons. The world will want nothing to do with the France of Sarkozy.... France will be on the side of evil."

The End of Scandinavian Neutrality?

PARIS, April 2, (EIRNS)—On March 28, ending the country's long tradition of neutrality, the Finnish Parliament approved Finland's participation in NATO's Response Force (NRF), though limited to peace partnership missions. Sweden, which was also supposed to approve its participation in the NRF before the Bucharest NATO summit, which opened today, delayed its final decision, under pressure from the Social Democrats which oppose Sweden's participation.

Italy: 110,000 Families Are Defaulting on Mortgages

April 3 (EIRNS)—The chairman of the Italian anti-trust authority, Antonio Catricalà, reported yesterday that 110,000 families are defaulting on their home mortgages, and an additional 420,000 are under stress because of the increase in mortgage rates.

Russia and the CIS News Digest

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Russian Commentator: FDR Policy 'Inevitable' for Russia

March 29 (EIRNS)—Yevgeni Komisaruk, an analyst who is active with the Moscow "Realists' Club" and a group called "Collegium of Military Experts," wrote an important assessment of where Russian economic policy stands, which was published March 24 on the iamik.ru website. According to the headline of Komisaruk's article, "Further Intensification of the 'Roosevelt Policy' Is Inevitable for the Future Government" of Russia.

Komisaruk wrote that, after the excesses of ostensible "democratization" during the 1990s, the most important shift during the eight years of Vladimir Putin's Presidential tenure was that Franklin Roosevelt became "our ideological ally," as Kremlin aide Vladislav Surkov put it. Komisaruk quotes Surkov—who most observers consider likely to retain his Kremlin post under incoming President Dmitri Medvedev—on the importance of Roosevelt's fight against the oligarchy, and his belief that, as Surkov said, "the financial monopolies, speculative capital, and unrestrained banking dealers ... tried to seize control of the government and create a new despotism."

Of course, noted Komisaruk, Medvedev has a reputation for free-market "liberalism." But, why stick any "ism" label on the new President? "Ultimately, the policy of the country will be set not so much by D.A. Medvedev, as by life itself," he concluded, adding that Russia's survival and prosperity will depend upon the strength of the "Rooseveltians" within the country.

Regional Development Discussed at Academy Conference

March 30 (EIRNS)—The Russian Academy of Sciences scheduled a national scientific conference for April 4, to discuss regional development policies for Russia. Two of the people most closely associated with Russia's national and international infrastructure projects were among the listed speakers: Russian Railways CEO Vladimir Yakunin, fresh from his current visit to Iran for talks on the North-South International Transport Corridor; and Academician Alexander Granberg, the regional development specialist who heads the Council for the Study of Productive Forces (SOPS), and has been a major force behind the Bering Strait intercontinental transport link and other big Siberian infrastructure projects.

The announced title of Yakunin's talk was "Major Economic Infrastructure Agencies and the Development of Russia's Regions," while Granberg's was "Foundations of a Concept of Development for the Areas of the Russian Federation and Contours of a Fundamental Research Program." Specialists from the Academy and other scientists prepared scores of papers for the conference, on various aspects of real economic development.

Yakunin Visits Iran for North-South Corridor Talks

March 29 (EIRNS)—Vladimir Yakunin, CEO of the state-owned company Russian Railways, visited the capital of Iran beginning March 23, for talks with the rail system executives from Iran and Azerbaijan, according to Russian media reports. These countries are major components of the North-South International Transport Corridor, a Eurasian Land-Bridge route that travels from India, up along the Caspian Sea (skipping Pakistan, but touching on Persian Gulf states via sea transfer), into Russia, and thence to Finland.

With regard to the North-South corridor, the business newspaper *Vzglyad* quoted Yakunin as saying that their attention would be focussed on the 168-km Kazvin-Resht-Avtara (Iran)-Avtara (Azerbaijan) link. Iran Railways President Hossein

Ziari reports that this segment has been started and is 15% completed by the Iranians. Yakunin remarked that completion of this link will make the corridor operational from Helsinki to the Persian Gulf, but that it was important to look towards incorporating Pakistan, as well as links to China, into the system.

In addition, Yakunin held talks on Russian-Iranian cooperation on railway electrification in Iran, and other areas of bilateral cooperation on rail.

New Southeast Europe Rail Link Boosts Eurasian Bridge

April 4 (EIRNS)—A new step in the development of the Asia-Europe continental bridge is being taken, with the signing of an agreement among the railroad companies of Russia, Slovakia, and Austria. They will build a wide-gauge rail link, connecting Russia's Trans-Siberian Railroad to Central Europe. (Railroads in the former Soviet Union are built with wider-gauge tracks than those in the rest of Europe.) The new rail link will make passenger and freight transport on the Asia-Europe Transport Corridor both faster and less costly in the near future.

The agreement was signed during the visit of Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov to Slovakia April 3-4. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico wants the broad-gauge railway to be extended at least as far as the capital, Bratislava, a Danube River port just 60 km from Vienna. "Expert groups from Austria, Slovakia, and Russia are engaged in intensive work on this project, which will have a total value of more than 4.3 billion euros," Fico said today. "Unless some unforeseen obstacles arise, construction of this project can be expected to start in 2010." The rail line, from the eastern border of Slovakia to Austria, will create an entire new logistics center on the Danube.

The new link is a big step toward creating a single railway network for all Eurasia, linking ports on the Pacific with the Baltic Sea and with Atlantic Ocean, Voice of Russia reported. In January, the Beijing-to-Hamburg trans-continental bridge was launched, whereby a special train ran from northern China through Mongolia, Russia, Belarus, and Poland, to Germany, in record time. All six nations had agreed to resolve border and customs problems to prove that unhindered freight cars could move much faster across Eurasia by land, than around it by sea.

The new Russian-Central European rail link will eliminate the current five- to seven-hour wait for axle changes at the border of Ukraine and the Central European countries.

The head of Russian nuclear corporation Rosatom, Sergei Kiriienko, was also in Bratislava to propose upgrading existing nuclear facilities.

Bush in Ukraine; Vitrenko Points To Economic Crisis, in Anti-NATO Demo

March 31 (EIRNS)—President George Bush arrived in Kiev this evening on his state visit to Ukraine. Five thousand police were deployed for his security, while an equivalent number of demonstrators from Natalia Vitrenko's Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU), the Communist Party, and the Kiev Rus Party held an anti-NATO rally in Independence Square, then marched on the U.S. Embassy. Tomorrow Bush will have separate meetings with President Victor Yushchenko and with Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, who are both pushing for this week's NATO summit to adopt a membership action program for Ukraine, and with the leader of the Parliamentary opposition, Victor Yanukovych of the Party of Regions.

While the most visible features of the PSPU-CP demonstration were placards against Bush as a "dictator," and the trampling and burning of a NATO flag, Vitrenko also took the bullhorn to give a speech on the economic crisis. According to a PSPU press release, she presented the huge U.S. foreign debt of \$12.5 trillion and the collapsing dollar pyramid, as

being "the motive for the aggressive expansion of NATO to the East, to seize the natural resources of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, in order to save the collapsing U.S. economy." In 1997, the economist Vitrenko and Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche co-initiated the call for a New Bretton Woods conference.

The population of Ukraine continues to be largely against joining NATO. Even Yushchenko and Tymoshenko say that joining would be a decade-long process, including a national referendum. But, according to a report in tomorrow's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the pro-NATO former foreign minister, Boris Tarasyuk, is campaigning to speed up the process and skip a referendum. Said Tarasyuk, only three countries—Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia—held referendums before joining NATO. "In our case," he added, "the institution of a referendum is just something that the elites hide behind, when they're afraid to make a decision themselves."

Russian Security Chief Warns of Islamist Hits

March 31 (EIRNS)—Nikolai Patrushev, chairman of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), today warned that there is reason to anticipate stepped up threat levels from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Liberation), inside Russia itself. Speaking at a session of anti-terrorist agencies from the Ural Federal District and the State Borders Commission, Patrushev reported that operatives of these organizations have been detained in the Tyumen and Chelyabinsk regions during the past year.

The FSB chief said his warning was urgent, in view of the next Russia-EU summit, in June, being held in Khanty-Mansiysk in the northern Ural Region. He said that attempts have been observed by the two aforementioned organizations "to carry their criminal activity onto Russian territory, including in the Ural Region." Over 80 of their members have been identified in Tyumen and Chelyabinsk Regions.

"Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami calls for overthrowing the constitutional order in Tajikistan and forming a new state, an Islamic Caliphate, in Central Asia," said Patrushev, citing Tajik intelligence reports on Hizb's ties to the IMU. As *EIR* has reported, Hizb ut-Tahrir is one of several Central Asian organizations that maintains a major office in London, and for which there is a record of its being funded out of Britain, as well as sources in Saudi Arabia.

The Kazakhstan National Security Committee held a special meeting on threats from these same organizations, and the associated Islamic Movement of East Turkistan, on March 27. Its focus was providing assistance to China against Uighur separatist terrorist threats. [See also InDepth article by Ramtanu Maitra.]

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Israel's Peretz To Campaign for Barghouti's Release

April 3 (EIRNS)—Former Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz will begin a campaign after Passover (begins April 19), to seek the release of imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, and for holding negotiations with Hamas. Barghouti is in prison for his role in Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, which Israel calls "terrorism."

In a speech at a meeting of Labor Party activists loyal to him, Peretz said he would visit the families of Barghouti's victims and ask them to publicly press for Barghouti's release.

"I will tell them there is a leader respected by the Palestinian people and we need him out of jail, so he could run the Palestinian Authority together with [Palestinian President] Abu Mazen" (Mahmoud Abbas), Peretz said. "With all the pain I feel for the blood that [they] shed, we need this move to prevent further bloodshed."

Peretz also called for talks with Hamas, "because we need to make peace with all the Palestinians and not just some of them."

Barghouti is the most credible of Palestinian leaders from Fatah. While being among the most nationalist, he is a strong supporter of a peace process between Israel and Palestine. Other leading Labor Party leaders have called for Barghouti's release, including Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer. Both Lyndon LaRouche and former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III have called for his release as key to a successful peace process.

'Prudent' Syria Reacts to British Design

March 31 (EIRNS)—Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem was asked on March 30, if Damascus fears "a U.S. strike against Syria or Iran," if other U.S. efforts fail to isolate Syria. Muallem replied that Damascus is prepared for all scenarios, including the U.S. use of military force. "A prudent person must make all his calculations, especially when we have to deal with an administration which knows how to strike but does not know how to withdraw," Muallem told AFP at the end of the Arab League summit in Damascus. "We hope that this will not happen. We hope for dialogue and an accord in order to avoid more American destruction to our region, and more deaths to the Americans."

Syria, Fearing an Israeli Attack, Mobilizes Reservists

April 2 (EIRNS)—The London-based Arabic daily *al-Quds al-Arabi* reports that Syria is preparing for a possible "comprehensive" attack by Israel. The Syrians cite Israeli media reports and statements by Israeli defense officials as incitement and attempts to prepare the Israeli and global public opinion for a war. The newspaper reports that Syrian forces were conducting extensive military maneuvers and have called up reservists in preparation for an Israeli attack. It has also raised its security alert status, over fears of Israeli infiltration. Over the last week, Syria has stationed three armored divisions, special forces, and nine mechanized infantry divisions opposite Lebanon, as the Syrians estimate that an Israeli ground invasion may take place in the area.

Also, according to Ynet, Syria is expected to release the results of its investigation of the assassination of Hezbollah operative Imad Mugniyah, whom the Hezbollah claimed was assassinated by Israel on the streets of Damascus.

Lebanon Raises Military Alert Status

April 7 (EIRNS)—Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora announced on April 4 that the Lebanese Army was being put on a higher alert status, because of fears of a provocation during a five-day Israeli military and civil defense exercise. Siniora

urged the Lebanese Army to be alert for any "Israeli violation" of Lebanese borders, and he urged UN peacekeepers "to be careful" that Israel would not use the maneuvers "to launch operations capable to increasing tension."

Lebanese army commander Gen. Michel Suleiman also confirmed that his forces have been put on alert. And the Hezbollah commander in South Lebanon, Nabil Kaouk, said his group was closely monitoring the situation along the border with Israel.

The announcements by Siniora follows similar reports from Syria, that their forces are being put on a higher alert status for fear of an Israeli attack during the Israeli exercise. The real source of apparent tensions in the region can be attributed to the recent tour of the region by Vice President Dick Cheney, who promoted his British-designed plan to attack Iran, Syria, and the Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon.

The Lebanese warnings followed warnings issued by Gen. Claudio Graziano, the commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), that Israel was planning "unprecedented and massive military maneuvers" on April 6, according to a report in YNET. These exercises are part of a week-long civil defense maneuvers which involve various scenarios, including rocket attacks and chemical weapon attacks. Israel has sent messages, via the UN command, to inform the Lebanese government that the exercise will not harm Lebanon or Hezbollah, and will not take place near the border.

Netanyahu Loves Christian Zionists

April 7 (EIRNS)—Christian Zionist pastor John Hagee and his "Christians United for Israel, was praised to the skies by Likud chairman Benjamin Netanyahu during the latter's speech given before a Hagee-sponsored event in Jerusalem.

"This is a friendship of the heart, a friendship of common roots, and a friendship of common civilizations," Netanyahu gushed—perhaps because, at the event Hagee pledged \$6 million to various Israeli causes.

Hagee was also backed by Israeli fascist and Knesset member Benny Elon, of the National Union-National religious party. Elon had been a spiritual advisor to Yigal Amir, the assassin of Yitzhak Rabin.

Last week, the head of the Reform Movement in the United States, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, denounced Hagee as an "extremist" who has been working against Israel achieving a territorial compromise with the Palestinians. This is significant, coming from Rabbi Yoffie, since his pro-Israel credentials are well known.

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Pakistan: We Need Peaceful Coexistence; India Responds

March 31 (EIRNS)—The new Pakistani Prime Minister, Makhdoom Yousaf Raza Gillani, has conveyed to the regional countries (read: India), that Pakistan believes in peaceful coexistence, while maintaining a credible defense to prevent military attacks on Pakistan. Gillani chose to issue the statement the very day he swore in his 24-member Cabinet. A day before the Prime Minister's announcement, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the most prominent group of Islamic militants operating within Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, and widely identified by the Western media as the "Pakistani Taliban," said it was ready for talks with the government, if and when Islamabad reverses its pro-American policies. TTP leaders told a rally in Bajaur Agency that they welcomed the announcement that the government would negotiate with the Taliban and end the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR). TTP leaders also demanded the implementation of Sharia law and the jirga (assembly of elders), according to tribal traditions.

On March 29, Gillani told Parliament that fighting terrorism would be his top priority, and "We are ready to talk to all those people who give up arms and are ready to embrace peace." This prompted loud expressions of support from lawmakers.

Gillani's statement will no doubt be read very carefully in London, as well as in Washington. By improving its relations with its neighbors, particularly with India, Pakistan will strike a serious blow to the British-inspired destabilization in progress in the west of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan.

UN: In Bangladesh, Millions Face Starvation

April 4 (EIRNS)—Five months after Cyclone Sidr devastated Bangladesh, millions of people are still homeless and at risk of starvation, say United Nations agencies. Bangladesh is one of the poorest and densely populated countries in the world, and is particularly vulnerable to floods because it is situated in the low-lying Ganges River delta.

Officials from aid organizations, the media, and the U.S. Embassy visited Morelganj in Bangladesh's southern Bagerhat district this week, to monitor food distribution. The group was headed by Gaddy Vasquez, U.S. ambassador to UN relief agencies in Rome. "You can be in Rome and have many discussions and debates about how to help, but nothing will show you the real dimensions of the problem like a visit to the terrain," said Vasquez in an interview with Adnkronos International (AKI).

Meanwhile, reports by World Food Program (WFP) from Pakistan said nearly half of Pakistan's 160 million people are at the risk of going short of food due to a surge in prices. The WFP survey covering the year to March showed the number of people deemed food insecure had risen 28%, to 77 million from 60 million in the previous year. Food prices rose at least 35% in the past year compared with an 18% rise in minimum wages. "There is a very big gap between the increase in prices and increase in wages.... The purchasing power of the poor has gone down by almost 50%," said Sahib Haq, an official with the WFP's Vulnerability Analysis & Mapping Unit in Pakistan.

Mekong Nations Build Rail, Road Connections

March 31 (EIRNS)—The third summit of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) concluded today in Vientiane, Laos, with an agreement for five-year development of the region. This includes focus on the Singapore-Kunming rail line and regional highway transport projects. However, there was also bowing to environmentalist hysteria by promoting methane and other biofuel projects for rural areas. The prime ministers of Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and China all participated, with the head of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Haruhiko Kuroda.

In addition, the nations discussed measures to enhance cross-border links, while taking steps to curb the spread of disease.

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao called for increasing construction of transport corridors and a highway network among the GMS nations. Wen pledged RMB20 million (\$2.9 million) for an engineering study for the projected eastern link of the Singapore-Kunming rail line. He also said that China is already working with Thailand and the Asian Development Bank to speed up the building of the Houayxay-Chiang Khong International Bridge along the Kunming Bangkok Highway, so that this whole North-South road corridor will be completed by 2011. He proposed methods to form a unified power market in the Mekong Region, by developing power grid integration and power trade, as well as an Information Super Highway.

Wen also called for vigorous development of methane and other bio-mass energy as a rural project.

Final Stretch of Singapore-Beijing Road Completed

April 1 (EIRNS)—The prime ministers of China, Thailand, and Laos officially opened the Route 3 Highway in Laos yesterday, the last remaining section of a highway network that runs from Singapore to Beijing, at the conclusion of the two-day Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) summit in Laos. Route 3 will pass from northern Thailand near Chiang Rai, through Laos into China, spanning 250 kilometers.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), Thailand, and China each contributed US\$30 million to the project, with Laos contributing the remaining \$7 million. The project will significantly open up Laos, which is landlocked.

ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda said that the highway will be open year-round, reducing travel time between Bangkok and Kunming in China from three days to little more than a day, and "revitalizing this ancient trade route."

Eurasian Strategic Triangle Reaching Out to Brazil

April 1 (EIRNS)—The Eurasian Strategic Triangle nations—Russia, India, and China—will be drawing Brazil into their discussions on economic issues, when the three nations' foreign ministers meet in Russia in May, visiting Russian diplomat Konstantin Vnukov, director of the First Asian Department at the Russian Foreign Ministry, said at a press conference in New Delhi on March 28.

Vnukov was in Delhi for the initial meeting of the Russia, India, China (RIC) "Track One and a Half" group of foreign ministry officials and scholars, on strategic and economic issues. This process was launched at the last meeting of the three nations' foreign ministers, in Harbin, China in October 2007. This meeting, Vnukov said, "is expected to strengthen the dialogue process and solve problems that are political, economic, and humanitarian in nature." The foreign minister of Brazil has been invited to participate in one day of the talks, he said.

The fundamental issue is the Eurasian giants' role in the world, Vnukov and his Indian counterpart N. Ravi told the press. Russia, India, and China have 40% of the world's population and occupy 20% of its surface, but produce less than 10% of its GDP. Vnukov said that "in New Delhi, an exchange of views took place that included collaborating on the troika formation and coming together to deliberate on the security and stability of the region as a whole."

The most important topics discussed in New Delhi, which will be on the agenda of the May meeting in the Ural Mountains, are Central Asia and Iraq, and the "unfortunate" event of Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia, Vnukov said. "The ministers will discuss this problem," because such "separatist" tendencies have a "negative effect" on other parts of the world, he said. Asked about Tibet, he said it would be discussed if one of the participating ministers raised the issue.

United Nations reform and climate change were also on the agenda in New Delhi.

"Russia, India, and China are drivers of the world economy, [and] of course, there is Brazil as well," Vnukov said. "BRIC will be based on economic and financial ties. While RIC will not exclude economic issues from its discussions, it will chiefly concentrate on international problems," he said.

'Polite' Beijing Doesn't Like Paulson's Message

April 2 (EIRNS)—Visiting U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson had to admit that the leaders of China are concerned by the collapse of the U.S. economy. After he met with Chinese President Hu Jintao today, Paulson blathered about the U.S. markets "making progress." But, he told the press, "I would say there is no doubt that what is happening in U.S. markets clearly has to give the Chinese pause. They may be too polite to say that directly, but it clearly has to be giving them pause."

Paulson pressed China to loosen exchange controls on the yuan, which has risen sharply against the crashing dollar, at the same time that the nation is under so much pressure from Tibet and other separatist operations.

Hu responded by telling Paulson that China and the United States have a "shared responsibility" to safeguard the health, stability, and development of the world economy. Hu said China wants to work with the U.S. to "appropriately handle sensitive issues," the Chinese foreign ministry reported. Hu said Beijing would "intensify" communication and coordination with the U.S. on macro-economic policies. Paulson's trip will be followed up by the fourth meeting of the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue in Washington in June.

"This will not work," Lyndon LaRouche commented on Hu's statement. "The Chinese will keep trying, but this will not work. Behind the mask, which is hiding their real reaction to the crisis, the Chinese are developing a real, bitter hatred of what is being done to them."

Africa News Digest

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One Element of Good News on African Infrastructure

March 31 (EIRNS)—Construction of the multi-billion-dollar electric Trans-Kalahari railroad construction is not only on schedule, but is expected be completed as early as the end of 2009. The electrified railroad will be 1,600 km long, and will be the very first electrified, heavy-haul railway line in Namibia, and when completed will be the longest in the whole of Africa. Having been left by colonial rulers with little or no physical infrastructure, Africa has been visited with "natural" disasters time and again. One of the greatest drawbacks of African development had long been its inadequate railroad system.

The project is a joint effort of the South African Development Community (SADC), of which two countries, Botswana and Namibia, have joined to build the project, which involves building the railroad and a harbor at Shearwater Bay, on the Namibian coast. However, the project will benefit a number of countries in the SADC, shortening distances for cargo shipments destined to the Americas and Europe, while providing access to importers, exporters, and mining houses, and

guaranteeing access to mining companies of resource cargo such as copper, zinc, coal, iron ore, manganese, and crude and refined oil products. The 1,600-km line over the Kalahari desert will relieve import and export constraints of products and minerals for Namibia's hinterland countries, namely Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The railway line will also provide rail transportation to some South African provinces.

Zimbabwe President Prepares for Runoff; Brits Predict Violence

April 6 (EIRNS)—A top leadership meeting of the Zanu-PF party on April 4, endorsed President Robert Mugabe for a runoff election for the Presidency, according to the *Zimbabwe Herald* yesterday, putting to rest widespread media claims that Zanu-PF had been thrown into disarray after losing the parliamentary majority to the opposition.

Zanu-PF has requested, according to the *Zimbabwe Sunday Mail* today, that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) recount and audit all of its electoral material relating to last week's election, because of vote discrepancies. The party requested that the ZEC defer the announcement of the Presidential election results until the recount is finished.

In response, opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai, the day after the Zanu-PF announcement, charged that Mugabe is preparing loyal forces for a "war on the people" to reverse the results of the election, according to Rupert Murdoch's *Sky News*, today. Tsvangirai is now saying that a rerun will deepen the polarization in the country. He is calling on South Africa, the United States, and the United Kingdom to step up pressure on Mugabe to stand aside. Not mentioned is the fact that independent monitors' projections show that Tsvangirai leads Mugabe in the election, but does not have enough votes to avoid a runoff.

Tsvangirai's comments come just days after he had publicly embraced the idea of a runoff vote, when there was speculation that Mugabe would not participate in it. But the day after Mugabe's party announced Mugabe would participate in the runoff, Tsvangirai changed his tune.

After a meeting with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on April 6, South African President Thabo Mbeki said he preferred to wait until after the runoff election to draw any conclusions.

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