
Brig. Gen. Paul-Albert Scherer

Western error in the Balkans means crisis in the former Soviet Union

General Scherer (ret.) is former head of the West German military intelligence service (MAD). The speech below, translated by Schiller Institute staff, was delivered to the June 11-12 conference in Bonn, Germany on "For Securing Lasting Peace in Europe" (see EIR of June 25 for an overview). That historic conference, addressed by major governmental and private policymakers from three continents, was sponsored by the Schiller Institute and EIR, which are currently preparing the full proceedings for publication as a white paper.

General Scherer has visited Washington at regular intervals since before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, warning of the consequences for peace of false assessments of Russia and the Soviet domain.

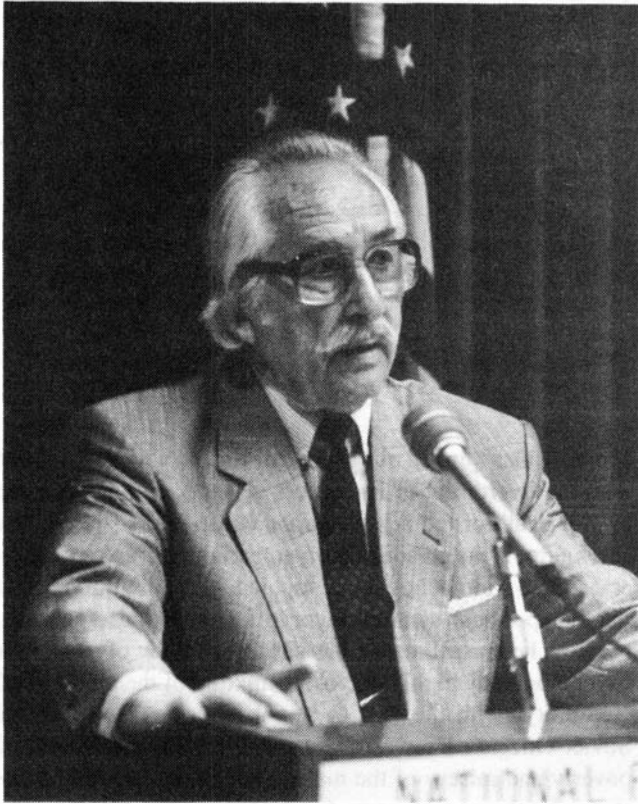
How to assure a durable European peace is the central theme to which this international conference of the Schiller Institute is dedicated. For me, as an independent situation analyst who does not seek publicity, it is difficult in a brief sketch to indicate those complex conditions which are now making it incredibly more difficult to ensure peace, and are provoking armed national conflicts for the first time in over 40 years. Because I concur with the constructive political work of the Institute, last March I sought, during my semi-annual visit to the United States, to especially discuss the threat to the future arising from the problems in the Balkans when I met with Lyndon LaRouche in prison in Minnesota. We saw eye to eye that unless peace were restored by ending the genocide there, a satanic process of copycat provocations would ensue in the region of the dissolving Soviet Union, which could jeopardize world peace. We are all blanketed with detailed information every day, but the clouds of disorientation make vision nonetheless very difficult, since the very quantity and rapidity of the news functions as disinformation.

The prevalent shallowness of the media, western mis-evaluations, and scant knowledge of history make explanation all the more necessary, in order to get a somewhat realistic overview of the complex breakdown conditions in the biggest empire of our time. Indeed, the changes in the East show all the earmarks of an oligarchical revolution from

above, which slipped out of control six and a half years later with the overthrow of its makers in the Kremlin. With the kiss of death of the *nomenklatura* conspirators, the West's cult figure, in the person of party imperial bankruptcy manager Mikhail Gorbachov, was toppled from his throne. His internal political sympathy curve finally skidded to zero, because he misestimated the strategic factor of *time* in a psychologically highly explosive mixture of the total loss of credibility, with the loss of social security of millions of Soviet citizens. He was neither able to halt the growth of poverty and misery of the masses nor to outflank the thick-skinned sabotage of party functionaries. He did not even make a serious, visible attempt to fight poverty by rapid reforms which were economically realistic, although unusual. Only after he had obtained increased power for presidential functions, did Gorbachov believe that he could fully get his way and get his ideas under way with a purged CPSU.

The surprising rise to power of his opponent Boris Yeltsin, then an ardent reformer who came to be the only person trusted by the voters, was due to the courage of the generals in command positions in the air force, navy, strategic and rocket troops, and the paratrooper commanders, who defied orders to join the conspiracy from the combined intelligence services and two divisions in Moscow. The downfall of the shattered, gigantic, centralized Soviet administrative state, and the total breakdown of the socialist dictatorship in education under police-state conditions, thus became inevitable. Yeltsin's loss of power since Aug. 19—as a result of bitter popular disappointment over the lack of social-economic results from the vacillating reformer, of the counter-program of the centrists, and of the resurgence of the old communists who had been driven underground—is so notorious, that already in the short-run we must reckon with a new shift in leadership. These energy-draining power struggles meet with little sympathy among the people.

The feverish pursuit of a new Russian social identity is going in two directions. Either it will come to a new version of the Great Russian, colonialistic, imperial thinking, with horrifying consequences for security policy and military strategy far beyond the immediate geographical surround-



Brig. Gen. Paul-Albert Scherer: A rabid return by Russia to world power pretensions is foreseeable even in the short term.

ings; or Russian nationalism will settle for great-power pretensions, which as a trend in mentality can also considerably weigh against world peace. A rabid return to world-power pretensions is foreseeable even in the short term, in the internal power relations and the existence of Jacobin revolutionary developments; but outwardly, these will only provoke scorn and ridicule if they are projected into a shocked world without economic substance, without missionary zeal, and without readiness for self-sacrifice. In my view as an analyst, many of the possible scenarios, such as those developed in western think-tanks on the basis of secret intelligence knowledge, will not take place, simply because of the ongoing destabilization, which is making it impossible to act, and because anti-Russian national feelings are becoming so strong they can no longer be contained in the 15 states which succeeded to the former Soviet Union and in 18 of the autonomous republics or regions of Russia.

Cast a glance at Ukraine

Here it becomes necessary to cast a glance at Ukraine. Since August 1991, this second strongest of the former Soviet states, assessed and recognized worldwide as the most European, emerged from the bankrupt Soviet empire with a legacy of 52 million inhabitants, bigger than France, and pro-

grammed for a total break with Russian centrism. Weighed down with Chernobyl and 4,000 nuclear rocket systems, Ukraine refuses to give these back to Russia because of well-justified fears for their own survival, although they are pledged to nuclear nonproliferation in the future. Disappointments in the West and growing economic need are unfortunately forcing a rethinking in the direction of a transitional European Free Trade Association-like eastern market development at this time, even if they thereby unwillingly set back the goals for full European integration.

Alienation, fear spreading

As a whole, since 1989-90, the incalculability of the Russian-dominated Eurasian, late-Byzantine-style civilization is growing, its social developments and its radiating power is expanding from day to day more onerously within Eurasia and over the borders into the outside world. The fact that the once tightly bound six satellite states on the western strategic front lines of Moscow—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and communist East Germany—were let go under conditions of exhaustion, was and is increasingly viewed and condemned by broad layers of the Soviet public as a hasty surrender of a possession, and as treason by the Gorbachov faction as well as by the reformers generally. Added to this, the bloody civil wars of raging dissolution on the periphery of the former Soviet Union have led to a period of confusion, which already, because of the uncontrollable availability of atomic weapons and modern arms, is producing high degrees of irrationality. Nobody can definitely say how the present state of things will develop. At this time, if we were to develop serious and solid prognoses, as a result of a rough analysis of expectations for the immediate future, as a help in making decisions, we could only speak of trends. More than that would be at the level of tea-leaf reading. The generally clearest tendency goes in the direction of disappointed, even shocked, alienation from radical western reforms, which don't adequately take eastern circumstances into consideration. The sudden plunge out of the window into the dustbin of history is already a unique tragedy for a state mega-enterprise which, after all, had some 287 million people, with their hopes, their right to life, and will to survive, with their full-fledged expectations of order and property. It brought a shock of fear with changes of personality and society-endangering effects, which urgently require appropriate counter-effects. Do they exist? Only conditionally, and more weakly than the extreme radical offers. The escapes into the nationalistic and racist mental bunkers of a presumed Slavic superiority and Russian expansionism are a dangerous mass-play of a prefascistic dimming of consciousness, which so far is only displayed by loud-mouthed militant minorities. To this belong also the anti-Semitic embarrassments in black uniforms, who have triggered a great part of the stream of emigrants and loss of the intelligentsia.

The Russia of 155 million people—not counting the over

20 million Russians in the CIS states, of which 10 million are in Ukraine alone—can embark on the path of a spiritual recovery, without the crutches of a poisonous left- or right-wing extremism, if the West facilitates its quest for the indispensable national self-consciousness and a Russian way to appropriate self-respect as a great nation.

Certain western big-shots from the nasty part of the capitalist camp and would-be power-grabbers from western economies must stop making the Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and so forth feel that they have to swallow western concepts without a word. The state of normal relations in the enormous stress conditions of the political, economic, and cultural revolution is already restricted and encumbered enough by the gigantic loss of self-esteem and also by neurotic inferiority complexes which resulted from the breakdown of society as a whole and its social ramifications. That is not only true for the fallen elites, who have become absolutely unpredictable. It is also true for broad layers of the whole population of 132 different nationalities, who speak 98 languages, write four alphabets, and live in eleven time-zones with completely contrary climates. Whoever obstructs the people in the East from creating their own paths, destroys their search for identity, depicts healthy nationalism or patriotism as old-fashioned, and rejects too quickly the collective ownership relationships which have been practiced for nearly 1,000 years—known as the so-called *Mir*-village property and communist weaning—will reap the whirlwind. Aid in moderation, aid in self-help, advice tailored to the region with diverse conceptual possibilities, only advice which is requested without any diktat, and free decision for self-chosen options: Those are the minimum assumptions of a basic peace-minded attitude by all powers who would or should influence from the outside what happens from across the River Bug to the Sea of Okhotsk.

Is rapprochement possible?

The *fatal question* which decisively influences all of our future as contemporaries of today or tomorrow and will be decisive for a durable peace in Europe, is thus forced to the fore: Is the post-communist, gigantic mass-society of Russia really capable, voluntarily, to now go through the process of a *western rapprochement*, which assumes being ready for integration, not only for cooperation in free world legal policy, trade policy, and the economic sphere, but also in broad security policy matters? This can't be compared with Gorbachov's demand for entrance into the European "house of nations," because his demand was loaded with a cunning ulterior motive for the scaled withdrawal of the American troops and power claims. What it means is: Is there sufficient political maturity, under the burden of enormous exhaustion and stress, to say yes to a full 180-degree change in course away from the zero prospects of the former concepts of living and of order, so as to link up their own particular options to fast-start western models, insofar as these offer advantages?

What speaks in *favor* of this, generally, is the boundless disappointment over the betrayal of political faith, the surprisingly unequivocal pro-western mood of the youth, the knowledge and communications radiating from the soldiers and their families who were stationed in the western occupation zones, who number in the millions. Also in favor of this speaks a naively exaggerated dream-image of America and its dynamic, and of the western way of life; but especially, the Russian electorate's behavior of the last four years, in its perceptible readiness to accept near-democratic and democratic behavior. Finally, the majority's recognition of the European cultural level as a certain role model for the development of their own society also speaks in favor of this. On the level of positive readiness for rapprochement the urban intelligentsia are moving most clearly. Naturally this analysis encompasses more essentially classical factors of evaluation: the internal psychological state, authority structures and potential conditions in relation to the state of consciousness. It is important that the critical state of things, with respect to a rapprochement, not be judged with western prejudices, but with eastern eyes. In my experience, the western world often lacks essential parts of the basic historical knowledge about the development, evolution, growth, and specifics of the Great Russian mentality, imperial history, and animosity towards the West.

Obstructions to rapprochement

Against a politically strong rapprochement with the West and a readiness to integrate into western culture, significantly stronger factors are in the works than emerge in our media. Extremely suspiciously, a creeping and stifling fundamental Russian tendency is spreading, of accusations of insulting the nation and of treason. As the most highly decorated Afghanistan veteran with his military following, Vice President Rutskoy, who has meanwhile become inexorably hardline and committed to his anti-Yeltsin confrontation, swims on this wave with his appeals to put the government on trial because of its supposed crimes. The psychological side-effects of the worsening poverty and misery of the masses, as well as hyperinflation, with the daily evidence of the pariah position by social outcasts, are no longer short-lived moods; rather, with all the Russian mentality's capacity to suffer and to bear a burden, we recognize a clearly pathological, preponderant neurotic hardening, which can't be explained by the well-known national tendency to alcoholism. Disappointment in the West and the social collapse have led to a critical self-examination and an increased search for an identity, but also, for many, to a renewed animosity toward the West. This should make us reflect. Gorbachov's six and a half years of loss of precious recovery time, through a wrong setting of priorities, has caused untold world problems: not only the insane arms buildup, the gigantic tendency for self-overestimation, and the loss of substance. The blame for the inflation must be largely ascribed to the West, as well

as the moral degradation with the gigantic rise in criminality and mafia takeover. In the midst of current troubles, the traitor-criminal complex is sprouting out among a large layer of the enraged and downtrodden ordinary people, into a revived enemy-image which is stirred up by the old *Nomenklatura*, which can have terrible consequences. To that extent, we do not exaggerate to say that the conditions for a possible cultural integration and political rapprochement with the West are getting worse every day.

The psychological unrest of the military must be viewed increasingly negatively. This is the last remaining (from the Russian view) force of order, after the destruction of the Communist Party, the secret police, and the central administration. The loss of prestige of officers and all military, wholesale refusals to serve in the military, and the flight of recruits without real punishment, change of location of units and groups because of reorganization of the state and consequent lodging in the open fields in tents, lack of housing, prejudice in assignments, late pay raises, and poor care and control have resulted in bitterness and partly in resignations. Because of the split-up of the former Soviet Union and participation in different civil wars with changing fronts, a process of discouragement and difficulty in damage-control is ongoing, differentiated by the location of the army and navy. Political activity in extremist parties or groups also reflects the destruction. It is amazing to observe from here, that the military machine and the troops collectively haven't experienced a moral and disciplinary breakdown. What army on earth would have survived so relatively intact so many horrible burdens, like the breakdown of the empire, the semi-chaotic divisions into new states, difficult new oaths of allegiance to new nations (for example Russian naval officers serving on board disputed parts of the Ukrainian navy), or a coup with unclear loyalties?

The key to understanding this lies in the brutal, authoritarian mentality, constantly forced and as obedient as possible, and in a completely different attitude toward primitiveness and endurance of chaotic conditions, as well as the hardness without western self-pity which is justified in this mentality. With regard to the problem of a political rapprochement to the West, the area of the army and navy seems to me to be the most open of all the official elites, after the Afghanistan fiasco and the great western influence during the occupation period. But it will obey the policy, if it can produce a credible enemy image in foreign policy or domestic policy. This is imminent. It appears quite possible to turn parts of troops against each other politically, if their officers can convincingly represent contrary positions.

Therefore the question arises, if the signals point to turmoil, should there be a second overthrow attempt. I don't think it is likely that an anti-western confrontation will be pursued. But the catastrophic living conditions are worsening exponentially, so that the explosive pain limit will be reached in 1993. Unfortunately this brings on self-destructive conse-

quences, because reform solutions can no longer be implemented. This will drive a self-purging process in which violence is used between the rival potentials, which could lead a junta to power for some time. The next Russian trend in thinking seems to be moving in the direction of a reoccupation of the Baltic area and a return of the coast of the Black Sea and the Crimea. To that extent, the world political scene could be in for very stormy times, because the Muscovites closely observed the West's inactivity in the Balkans.

Western error leading to war

The insane, cowardly neglect of the extraordinarily dangerous destabilization of Europe for the last two years, has led to the creation of a war zone in southeastern Europe, between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, whose aggressive potential for bloody revenge will darken the immediate future. If it is not possible to force, from the outside, a toleration of minorities, then the murderous looting and barbaric expulsion of undesired peoples of non-Serbian nationality, appears to be only the beginning of a bloody dissipation of formerly closely connected groups in this complicated region with historically developed cultural oppositions and national rivalries. The inability to secure absolute priority for human dignity, the principle of constitutional law, and democratic self-determination through the re-creation of peaceful countermeasures, has several causes. The most important is that the anti-Turkish expansion of the czars toward the south, and the currently pro-Serbian position of Moscow, on the one hand, and on the other hand the treaties of Versailles, Trianon, and Saint Germain since 1919, after the building of the Baghdad Railroad and the First World War, weigh heavily on this conflict zone. Moreover, the region, still to this day, is influenced by Great Britain in agreement with France as a strategic counterpole against the potential for the development of the power of Central Europe. Therefore, Serbian friendship has to be maintained. Even the American readiness, since Clinton was inaugurated—different than the pro-British-acting President Bush—to begin belatedly to consider the use of military force so that millions of people would not have to die through genocide because of an outdated "balance of power" doctrine, fell apart, clearly because of British and French reluctance.

It is still a long path, and full of sacrifices, to leave behind the postwar world of Yalta and Potsdam with the help of a truly peaceful option and to make people forget, over time, the huge loss of reputation suffered by the West, the U.N. and Europe, due to the relentless atrocities committed by the Serbians. Moreover, the fact that in Bosnia, the right to life of the only Muslim nation in Europe has been destroyed, will stir up the fundamentalists in the Near East, in the Middle East, and in North Africa, to try to force changes by terrorism with the help of Red Chinese weapons. The security policy perspectives of the pampered, fair-weather democracies of Europe don't look good. We need a moral rebirth.