

International Intelligence

Russia-Belarus union: a 'Maastricht East'?

Not very propitiously, Moscow is portraying the Russia-Belarus "Treaty of Union" to be signed in Moscow, April 2, as a type of "Maastricht East" agreement. That bodes ill for the two States, given the widespread suffering and social unrest which have been provoked by efforts to comply with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty for a single market in western Europe.

Russian Presidential spokesman Sergei Medvedev, after the March 23 meeting among Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, and Russia's President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin that set the date for the pact, said that the treaty "does not mean the creation of a new State." One can compare the "new creation" with the "European Union," having its own hymn, flag, and budget. Lukashenko said the treaty will create a "unified entity, where each will keep its full sovereignty." Most important of all, as confirmed by both sides, the "new creation" will be run by supranational organs, where Moscow will call the shots, using the same fiction of "sovereignty" as used in Europe under the Brussels arrangements.

To be created are a joint "Supreme Council," consisting of the Presidents, prime ministers, and parliament chairmen of each country, as well as a Russia-Belarus "Inter-Parliamentary Congress," with each state supplying the same number of deputies to it, and a common budget. As Lukashenko announced, the treaty establishes a two-year transition to work out a "single currency" and a "common constitution."

The March 23 announcement provoked mass protests on the anniversary of the first Belorussian republic, March 24, 1918, in the Belarus capital of Minsk against the union with Russia. About 30,000 demonstrators took part, with slogans like "Independence," "Down with Lukashenko" and "Long Live Belarus." However, it is all but impossible that such protests will be able to derail the fast track to union established by Yeltsin and Lukashenko. In Belarus, the regime, parlia-

ment, and security forces are all solidly for union with Russia, as are probably most of the population, in vivid contrast to other republics such as Ukraine.

Not only the overall acceleration, but the exact April 2 timing of the Russia-Belarus Treaty is not accidental. Moscow is expecting to gain from this added leverage for Yeltsin's still scheduled visit to the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, April 3-5, in pushing for "closer integration" between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine however, is not in favor of joining a "Maastricht East."

Two years later, Colosio murder still unsolved

The continuing failure of the Mexican government to clarify the March 23, 1994 assassination of Presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, has led to loud protests in Mexico that the government lacks the will, or the power, to take on the perpetrators. At the center of the popular outcry is the Harvard-trained ex-President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, a board member of the corporation that owns the *Wall Street Journal* and an avid "free trader"; Salinas is currently the guest of Fidel Castro in Havana.

Colosio was the candidate anointed by the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) to succeed Salinas.

The Mexican attorney general issued a completely contentless statement on the status of his investigation into Colosio's murder, which was published in every Mexican newspaper on March 22. Santiago Onate, national chairman of the PRI, responded that he was "disillusioned, disenchanted, and disappointed," and announced that the PRI Executive Committee would meet to review the attorney general's report, and to decide on action.

El Universal published a poll on March 22, which claimed 93.2% of Mexicans believe the murder was a conspiracy, and 85.8% believe that former President Salinas was somehow involved, with 62.9% convinced he was the mastermind. Colosio's personal secretary, Alfonso Durazo, told

Proceso magazine that any serious investigation requires that Carlos Salinas and his top aide, José Córdoba Montayo, be called in for questioning. The magazine *Siempre* ran an editorial which accused the attorney general of protecting Salinas and Córdoba. Days later, Mexican papers reported that Salinas's lawyer is being called in for questioning, likely in preparation for a subpoena to Salinas himself.

El Financiero political columnist Fausto Fernández Ponte wrote that, according to CIA documents, the murder was committed by "Murder, Inc.," that is, "a specialized organization which is dedicated to committing assassinations without leaving . . . leads which identify or implicate the intellectual authors or the true material authors."

SPD suffers heavy state election losses

Considerable losses for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) are the main result in the March 24 elections for state parliaments in Schleswig-Holstein, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Baden-Württemberg. As compared to the vote in 1992, the SPD lost 6.2, 4.7, and 4.1% in the respective states. The results were a boost for the national ruling coalition, of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP).

The CDU, the party of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, which ought to have benefitted from the SPD's internal crisis and bad reputation, did not really capitalize on its rivals' weakness; the relatively meager results for the CDU, which gained 3.3, 0.6, and 4% in the three respective states, also have to do with the traditional swing-vote, which the CDU directed toward its coalition partner, the (pro-British) liberal Free Democratic Party.

The FDP, which has been in a profound crisis and lost its standing in 11 of Germany's 16 state parliaments since 1992, and whose return to parliaments in this election was far from assured, only managed to secure its seats in the three state parliaments

with 5.7%, 9.1%, and 9.5%, thanks to the swing-vote. Moreover, the Kohl government also made modifications in the tax and labor legislation policy, which were interpreted as a gesture to the FDP constituency.

The fact that the CDU-FDP coalition in Bonn feels its policies "fully confirmed" by the March 24 vote, should not make them complacent: The government in Bonn is not stable, because the economic, social, and strategic situation isn't. The first post-election statements from Bonn indicated that the coalition feels encouraged to go ahead with its planned new rounds of fiscal austerity and other atrocities, which are not very likely to make the government and its coalition partners more popular.

U.S. defends 'free trade' dogma at Americas summit

The British model of "free trade" piracy, not American System economics, was what 1,000 businessmen from across the Americas heard U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown defend on March 19 at their gathering in Cartagena, Colombia. He called the creation of a pan-American free trade zone "a Clinton administration commitment." "We made it, we intend to keep it," said Brown. Brown scored what he described as disturbing protectionist rhetoric "from the political left and from the political right coming out of Washington, and insisted that "one would think it would hardly be necessary to elaborate on the benefits of free trade."

He said that "pressures for protectionist actions" posed a threat to hemispheric integration. In this context, Brown also defended NAFTA, the Bush administration-initiated North American Free Trade Agreement, which *EIR* has exposed as an attack on the sovereignty of the United States, Mexico and Canada.

It is ironic that the meeting, followed by a two-day gathering of trade ministers from across the continent, was being held in Colombia, whose government's embrace of the "free-market" drug trade won that

country denial of U.S. certification on March 1. Brown denied rumors that there had been any thought of cancelling the meeting, and said "our overall relationship with Colombia is a good one."

At the businessmen's meeting, former Colombian narco-President and current secretary general of the Organization of American States César Gaviria insisted that the continent was demanding more free trade: "Our people are not calling for a return to an economic model that is worn-out and which offers no perspective for prosperity." Arguing for privatizing everything, including the kitchen sink, Gaviria declared, "The State is too weak in its ability to deal with social problems . . . with few exceptions, it is still applying investment and social spending approaches that are outdated and inherited from the past."

Zapatistas choose Berlin for European confab

In its March 7 edition, one of the most important extremist papers in Germany, *AK*, ran a full-page article on the Mexican Zapatistas (EZLN), in which it is reported that 25 representatives of "Mexico Solidarity groups" met on Feb. 24-25, in Lugano, Switzerland, to discuss a European planning meeting, scheduled for May 30-June 2 in Berlin, for the "First Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and against Neo-Liberalism," which the EZLN is hosting in its home base of Chiapas, next July 27-Aug. 3.

According to *AK*, Subcommander Marcos chose Berlin as the site for the European pre-meeting, to which not only the usual Mexico solidarity groups will be invited, but the whole kit and caboodle of ostensibly anti-racist, ecological, and social activist groups in Europe. The profile of the groups invited, in the German case, smacks of the various operations deployed under the former East German communist party, now called PDS.

"Comrades" from France, Italy, Catalonia (Spain), Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, participated in the Lugano meeting.

THE SÃO PAULO Forum steering committee, which runs pro-terrorist operations out of Havana, is planning a continental meeting in San Salvador next July 27-29 to map campaigns against "neo-liberalism"; Forum patron Fidel Castro apparently sees no irony in simultaneously harboring the notorious Mexican neo-liberal Carlos Salinas in Cuba.

TAIWANESE President Lee Teng-hui, reelected by a wide majority in the March 23 elections, will "very quickly make a gesture to calm things down with Beijing," predicted the French daily *Le Figaro* in a signed editorial by Charles Lambroschini.

THE CISNEROS family, the financial moguls who have tried to muzzle *EIR* in Venezuela, are tied to one of four individuals arrested in Caracas for plotting the overthrow of President Rafael Caldera. Gustavo Lemoine is ex-head of security at the Cisneros family's Banco Latino. The four belong to former Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez's MBR-200 movement.

THABO MBEKI, Deputy President of South Africa, told a business gathering that included Asian leaders on March 26 that South Africa was committed to the same kind of "growth-creating policies that helped fuel success in ASEAN states like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand."

PROMINENT, prime-time coverage was given on Bosnia TV News March 28 to a meeting between spokesmen for Helga Zepp LaRouche's Schiller Institute and the foreign affairs committee of the Bosnian Parliament, to discuss "global reconstruction."

A SOUTH KOREAN journalist visiting the Bush-related Korea Society, admitted to *EIR* on March 25, "Regardless of who wins the parliamentary majority in the upcoming April 11 elections, it has come to the point that the South Korean government must, and will, take new measures on inter-Korean relations."