

Tensions grow along Europe's 'fault line'

by Mark Burdman

Over a period of 600 years, wars have often broken out, or started, in Europe, in that region which today comprises Russia, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic states. In the first quarter of the year 2000, that region has again become a theater of tensions, with the possibility, seen by several leading strategists, that it will descend into conflict and war.

It was not inevitable that this area of the world should again become a point of global conflict, but a policy for positive Russia-Poland relations—put forward by Lyndon LaRouche in a speech at Berlin's Kempinski Bristol Hotel on Oct. 12, 1988, and murdered German banker Alfred Herrhausen—was rejected by President George Bush, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and others, a rejection known as the “missed opportunity of 1989.”

The most telling sign of the current crisis, has been a deterioration in relations between Russia and Poland. Early in the year, each country expelled diplomats from the other on espionage charges. Then, in early March, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov suddenly cancelled a March 3 visit to Poland. The pretext, was an incident in the Polish city of Poznan, where a group of what are described as “nationalists,” attacked the Russian consulate, tore down the Russian flag, and painted a swastika on the building, in protest against Russian actions in Chechnya. Polish police stood by, and did nothing to impede the demonstrators. The Russian State Duma (lower House of Parliament) harshly criticized the police inaction, in the face of what it condemned as “an act of international terrorism.”

Some days following this incident, the Polish embassy and consulate were attacked in Moscow and St. Petersburg, drawing an angry protest from the Polish Foreign Ministry. On March 1, Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski declared that “Polish-Russian relations are very bad,” and criticized both Poland's center-right government, and the Russian regime, for failing to do anything to prevent a worsening of bilateral relations.

Polish and Russian sources have both stressed to *EIR* that the tensions are not, in reality, Polish-Russian in nature, but rather Russian-NATO, or Russian-U.S.A., with Poland being seen, and dismissed, in Russia, as “a willing pawn of the Americans,” as one very pro-Western Polish influential commented. A Russian strategist told *EIR* that there is anger in Moscow, that Poland is being used by Anglo-American interests, for what are seen as “anti-Russian” policies, vis-à-vis

Chechnya and on other fronts. Poland's image is tarnished in Russian eyes, by the activity of some persons of Polish origin in support of the Chechen insurgency—even if their political pedigree is strictly British. The notorious example is Maciej “Mansur” Jahimczyk, who collaborated with Chechen financier Hozhakhmed Nukhayev and Margaret Thatcher's long-time crony Lord McAlpine, to launch a scheme called the Caucasus Investment Fund and Caucasus Common Market. Jahimczyk comes from Poland, but, while a student in London, he converted to Sufism in preparation for his North Caucasus career.

The central consideration, of course, is that Poland is now a member of NATO, and represents the easternmost thrust of the NATO alliance.

‘The shield of our fatherland’

The reaction in Russia around such questions, is reflected by indications that the emerging Russia-Belarus State Union, will become a pivot for confronting NATO directly. Belarus has a long border with Poland. In mid-March, the Russian daily *Vremya* leaked a report, that Russian tactical nuclear weapons are being moved into the territory of Belarus, nominally in the context of the State Union. This would bring these weapons 500 kilometers west of where they are now, right to the border of Poland, i.e., NATO.

For previews and information on LaRouche publications:

Visit EIR's Internet Website!

- Highlights of current issues of EIR
- Pieces by Lyndon LaRouche
- Every week: transcript and audio of the latest **EIR Talks** radio interview.

<http://www.larouchepub.com>

e-mail: larouche@larouchepub.com

In late January, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenka told a visiting Russian delegation, that Belarus and Russia would form a military force, several hundred thousand strong, to defend their western frontier from NATO. He declared that this force would be armed with “the most modern weaponry,” and “will be the shield of our fatherland on the common western frontier,” used to counteract NATO expansion.

The Ukrainian flashpoint

In this overall Russia-Poland (NATO)-Belarus configuration, Ukraine remains a central flashpoint. Leading continental European strategists have denounced, as a “crazy provocation,” a conference held by NATO, in Kiev in the first days of March. This is the latest, in a number of moves by the NATO leadership, to woo Ukraine, at the same time that there are a growing number of Polish diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis Ukraine.

This can only cause great alarm and anger in Moscow, at a time when, for economic and other reasons, Ukraine is being drawn closer and closer to Russia. For weeks, there have been negotiations, with intense pressure from the Russian side, for Ukraine to provide the Russians with key state assets, as a means of paying back Ukraine’s debt to Russia for import of Russian oil and gas. This comes at a time when the Ukrainian economy is in free fall. The country must, this year, pay \$3 billion in debt service; its overall foreign debt is approximately \$12 billion. Already, the Ukrainian government has announced, that it cannot meet payment on a deutschemark-denominated Eurobond.

On March 15, reporting on negotiations for the overall restructuring of the Ukrainian debt, the London *Financial Times* likened Ukraine to Ecuador and Pakistan, two countries that are effectively in default, the economy of which have been taken over by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In Ukraine, political tensions remain high, between the apparatus of President Leonid Kuchma, who was recently reelected under highly dubious circumstances, and who assumes dictatorial powers, and patriots angered by what Kuchma’s IMF-mandated “reform” policies are doing to the economy.

Meanwhile, there are other unknowns in the region. The government of the Baltic nation of Latvia, for example, stands at the brink of a political precipice, following a bizarre series of “child sex abuse” scandals inculcating leading figures in the government. There are numerous underlying tensions between Russia and the Baltic countries, as the latter aspire to NATO membership.

Russian-Baltic tensions intensified during the week of March 13, with the announcement by the Russians that they have arrested a Russian citizen for spying for Great Britain, claiming that he was recruited in Tallinn, Estonia. In making the announcement, the Russians accused the Baltic secret services, in general, of cooperating with British intelligence.

First salvos fired in next German election

by Rainer Apel

The protracted paralysis—in terms of leadership as well as of programmatic capabilities—of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the larger of Germany’s two conservative parties, has accelerated the rise of Edmund Stoiber, chairman of the smaller, allied party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). The CSU dominates Bavaria, Germany’s second-largest state with a population of 14 million, and through its

command of an absolute majority of voters there, the party controls about 10% of the entire German electorate. Stoiber, who is also the Bavarian governor, has in recent weeks emerged as the leader of the national opposition to the Social Democratic-Green government in Berlin. Although the next national elections are not scheduled until the autumn of 2002, Stoiber is already acting as the main challenger of Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and angry remarks by the latter show that he has recognized Stoiber as his main rival for the chancellorship.

Schröder’s propitiation of the promoters of globalization in the banking sector, has offered Stoiber a unique chance to put himself forward as the defender of the “victims of globalization”—of the worker and engineer who loses his job because of mega-mergers, and of the smaller productive enterprises and the farmers that are suffering from a credit embargo imposed by the private banks. Stoiber has been sharply critical of the “Third Way” policy of Britain’s Tony Blair, saying things that one might expect, under normal circumstances, to be said by the left-wing Social Democrats, who have remained amazingly silent on this issue. Thus, the “Social” in the party name of the CSU is gaining importance for German politics, far beyond the boundaries of Bavaria.



Dr. Edmund Stoiber