

Europeans fear new matrix of conflicts in Eurasia

by Mark Burdman

The evaluation of leading European strategists is that Europe, or more broadly Eurasia, stands on the brink of a significant new period of military-political conflicts, perhaps worse than what we have witnessed in Yugoslavia-Kosovo and Chechnya since spring-summer 1999. Special concern is focussed on the Balkans, the Caucasus-Transcaucasus region, and the Baltics, as likely points of strategic confrontation, in the months ahead.

EIR's assessment of the view of European strategic analysts, emerges from attendance at two high-level policy seminars, near the cities of Vienna, Austria and Hanover, Germany, since mid-March, as well as from discussions with well-placed sources in London, Moscow, Paris, and Rome.

In the minds of the majority of the relevant think-tankers, military planners, and political advisers in Europe, two considerations repeatedly emerge as uppermost, forming the context for their view of the potential conflict matrix in Eurasia.

First, is the general acknowledgment, expressed in one way or another, that Lyndon LaRouche has been essentially correct, in his diagnosis of the plagues confronting the world financial system. There is little doubt, in the relevant circles, that we are in a period of significant, and ever worsening financial and market turbulence, and that this will have an increasing effect in worsening the overall strategic climate, making the likelihood of conflicts all the greater.

This is not to say, it should be stressed, that these European figures, and the institutions they represent, have come up with workable solutions to the financial collapse, or are supporters of the "New Bretton Woods" perspective elaborated by LaRouche. It is also the case, as evidenced at the policy seminars near Vienna and Hanover, that informed individuals are

much more willing, and even eager, to discuss the financial situation in private. A too-public discussion of this matter, it is obviously felt, would overturn the "normal" way in which strategic matters are discussed, and would require an overturning of the parameters of strategic discourse.

A second crucial issue, is that most informed Europeans are extremely nervous, and often angry about the United States. For the most part, these are not supporters or co-thinkers of LaRouche, and they don't comprehend the full extent of the police-state brutality being used by elements in the American political establishment, even if many Europeans will willingly agree—in private—that the current "Bush vs. Gore electoral process" is a "fix," with "big money" and brutal methods being used to exclude alternative candidates. Additionally, the relevant Europeans do perceive a number of troubling signs, both within the United States, and in respect to U.S. foreign policy and attitudes toward Europe.

There is great unease about the widespread use of the death penalty in the United States, and about the growing patterns of youth violence. The latter reality was brought home to Germans in early March, when three American youths were apprehended in the city of Darmstadt, after they had killed two people, and wounded several others, by throwing rocks from a highway overpass onto cars underneath.

In respect to foreign policy, there is alarm about the arrogant belief that the United States can do whatever it wants in the world, expressed by many American officials; about U.S. intentions to build a National Missile Defense program, and the apparent willingness, thereby, to worsen already fragile relations with Russia and China; and about the pattern of "Anglo-American unilateralism," overturning previous

United Nations Security Council and other international arrangements, as evidenced in the continuing bombings of Iraq and in the NATO war against Yugoslavia.

However, what emerges clearly from our discussions, is that the Europeans have absolutely not developed a *coherent strategic alternative and effective independent military or strategic policy*. Hence, the general line one hears repeatedly, is that, "In the end, we have no choice but to cooperate with the United States," or, "In times of crisis, we have to depend on the United States for help."

As one Paris-based influential who had just spent several days in discussions with leading policymakers in Brussels, said during a private discussion on April 5: "We all know that the Kosovo war was imposed on Europe by the Americans. Be that as it may, no one in Europe can conceive of ending collaboration with the Americans. There is a deep unhappiness about this situation, but frankly, we don't know what else to do. I sense a total impotence in Europe, to act independently, to change the course of events."

Unless this attitude changes, or until there is a change in the United States in the direction that LaRouche has been insisting on, the danger of war in Eurasia remains paramount.

Explosive revelations about the Kosovo war

Perhaps the most explosive tinderbox, European experts assert, is the Balkans, more than one year after NATO began bombing Serbia. As one northern European expert told *EIR* on April 1, "It's now a war of nerves, of everybody against everybody else, and all that is needed is one or more provocations, and things can blow up."

The greatest fear is of a new eruption centered on Montenegro, one of the two components, with Serbia, of rump Yugoslavia; a Paris-based Balkans expert is convinced that Montenegro will blow up "within three months." There are also concerns about a blow-up involving Albania and Macedonia, or perhaps an explosion in southern Serbia. We refrain here from going into all the details of how each of these potential conflicts can be set going, only to stress, that there is a common denominator in all of them: a witches' brew of obvious pressures from the NATO side, combined with intrigues and provocations by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and the danger that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic finds it necessary to engineer a new crisis to maintain his hold on power (see *EIR*, April 1).

Another factor feeding into the war dynamic, is that the entire region is suffering from economic collapse, especially after the devastation caused by the March-June 1999 NATO war in Kosovo. In Montenegro, for example, with a population of 640,000, there is 80% unemployment.

The Europeans have failed to put forward a comprehensive reconstruction plan for the Balkans. The March 29-30 Stability Pact meeting in Brussels, nominally called to work out economic aid for the Balkans, was little more than a joke.

Under such conditions, certain Europeans have taken the

initiative to expose crucial features of how the 1999 NATO war in Kosovo was set up, seeing this as a crucial "flank" that might brake the momentum toward new conflicts.

At a March 31-April 2 policy gathering near Hanover, a northern European expert on the Balkans detailed how the global hysteria about an alleged massacre in the Kosovo village of Racak, in January 1999, was used, by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her Anglo-American friends, to set the war into motion.

This individual, while agreeing with other speakers that there were crimes committed by Milosevic prior to 1999, said that, nonetheless, the circumstances leading up to the March 1999 launching of the war were very suspicious. Key in this, was the January 1999 incident in the village of Racak, when 44 bodies were found slaughtered, and American, British, German, and other officials started waving the bloody shirt about a "Serbian massacre of innocent Albanians."

According to this individual, the "massacre," as it was reported around the world, never occurred. There were, indeed, 44 Albanians killed, including innocent women and children, but there were also KLA combatants among the dead, a fact kept hidden from the public. Furthermore, there were also Serbian fighters killed. As he stressed, the deaths resulted from a *KLA-Serbian clash*, but this fact was kept hidden as well.

Soon after the January incident, he noted, the head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Kosovo, the American William Walker, made solemn pronouncements about a "massacre," before any investigation was carried out as to what had happened. Walker's contention was publicized around the world, together with pictures of the bodies. An OSCE report was subsequently put together on the Racak events, but that report *has never been made public*, and the authors of it have never been identified. As one of Europe's journalist experts on the Balkans pointed out, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who received a copy of the OSCE report (because Germany was then occupying the presidency of the European Union), has refused, to the present day, to release the report. The journalist demanded to know why. No one in attendance could provide an answer.

The northern European think-tanker insists that Walker's behavior was almost certainly an indication of an effort by Albright and friends to create the preconditions for the NATO war that was launched soon thereafter. This hypothesis was bolstered by a later investigation by a team of Finnish doctors, which disputed Walker's view. As the think-tanker noted, the "Racak massacre" hysteria was soon followed by Albright's so-called diplomacy in Rambouillet, France, an event which was obviously used to make a war in Kosovo inevitable. This strategist told the conference, that what especially worries him, is a growing tendency toward "gunboat diplomacy" by the Anglo-Americans, noting that prior to the Kosovo war, there was the second war against Iraq in the Gulf.

‘Operation Horseshoe’

At the conference near Hanover, speakers called attention to a new book by German Brig. Gen. Heinz Loquai (ret.), which contains startling allegations against two Kosovo war “hawks” in Germany, Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping and Foreign Minister Fischer. Loquai, who now works for the OSCE, charges that both men essentially invented a supposed Serbian “ethnic cleansing” grand design called “Operation Horseshoe.” Their claims against Serbia were based on a vague Bulgarian secret service report, and then involved obvious fraudulent manipulations of its content. But based on this essentially ridiculous concoction, Fischer went public with alarming revelations about “Operation Horseshoe” on April 6, 1999, in an effort to swing over German public sentiment, which was then wavering, respecting German Luftwaffe air force participation in the NATO war.

Loquai’s book is published by Nomos Publishers, which is German government-owned, which means that certain individuals in the government have rushed to print something which can badly damage Fischer and Scharping.

Similarly alarming allegations were made in an interview with the early-April edition of the weekly *Deutsche Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt*, a publication linked to the German Protestant (Evangelical) Church, by former Assistant Defense Minister Willy Wimmer, now vice president of the OSCE parliamentary assembly. While not holding back from criticizing Milosevic, Wimmer alleged that “the German government, particularly [Chancellor] Gerhard Schröder, Joschka Fischer, and Rudolf Scharping have done a lot of dubious things, to drum up support for this war.”

Wimmer asked: “Why has the German government taken part in such things as the talks of Rambouillet, where all diplomatic rules were pushed aside? To this date, the exact circumstances of the massacre at Racak are not known. . . . Keeping in mind the influence Racak had on the start of the war, I can only say: The fact that we still do not have a final report on Racak, puts blame on the then-president of the European Union Council and current German Foreign Minister Fischer. But Racak pulled us into the war. Then, Mr. Scharping talked about a *Serbian concentration camp* in the Pristina stadium. There is no evidence of that. All of that must urgently be looked into, and a fact-oriented investigation has not taken place.” He also blasted Scharping’s propaganda manipulations around the phony “Operation Horseshoe.”

Wimmer charged that “such a scope of weird arguments as during the Kosovo War, the parliamentary democracy in Germany has seen never before. The German Bundestag [parliament] now must get answers.” He insisted that the previous government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl never would have allowed Germany to get sucked into such a military intervention.

Wimmer warned: “A year after this war, we are probably heading for an armed conflict, again. . . . The likelihood of NATO getting drawn into a new war, cannot be denied. This

one, however, would be a ground war.” He said that this danger, made it all the more urgent, that the truth be discovered, of how last year’s war was initiated.

Caucasus: general war in the region?

Another area of deep concern to the European strategic analysts, is the Caucasus. Here, the issues go far beyond the vastly publicized matter of “Russian human rights violations in Chechnya.” What worries informed Europeans, is that the conflict now focussed on Chechnya, could quickly spread to Georgia, and maybe Azerbaijan and other countries as well.

In the Caucasus, there is a witches’ brew of factors that could rapidly blow things up. On one side, worried Europeans point to a strategy, by Anglo-Americans typified by former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and elements in the British policy structure linked to Prime Minister Tony Blair, to use conflicts in the Caucasus to destabilize Russia. An element of this, is to “secure” the region for the flow of oil, circumventing routes that include Russia. One European, on April 5, denounced “those in the U.S. and part of the West, who are insisting on building pipelines that would go around Russia. This can be a *casus belli* for the Russians, at any moment.”

The Russians are also unhappy about efforts by Albright, to cultivate the effective integration into NATO structures, of the so-called “GUUAM” (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) group. Leaders of these five countries were hosted by Albright in Washington in April 1999, in the margins of the NATO 50th anniversary conference, as the NATO war in Kosovo was raging, and soon after NATO was formally expanded, to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

On the other side, there is little question that the Russians have a brutal perspective, already on display in Chechnya, with the razing to the ground of the capital Grozny, and other unconscionable acts. It must be kept in mind that, official Russian propaganda notwithstanding, the war in Chechnya is *not* going favorably for the Russians and for President Vladimir Putin, and informed experts are convinced that the Chechen rebels will mount a major “spring counteroffensive.”

On April 1, *EIR* received a sobering briefing from a senior Georgian Foreign Ministry figure. He stressed that President Eduard Shevardnadze is now playing a delicate balancing game, between Moscow and Washington-NATO. There are many inside Georgia who would like to join NATO, while Shevardnadze has mooted an application to join NATO in 2005 or so. At the same time, the British are active in Georgia, having been granted oversight of all customs duties along the country’s coast.

But the immediate threat comes from a different direction, this source stressed. While, on the one hand, Shevardnadze seems to have formed a good relationship with Russian President Putin, when the two met during the Commonwealth of

Independent States summit in late January, there are increasing threats in some of the Russia press that the Russian military will soon be actively intervening into Georgia. The argument in such articles is that, as spring begins, the snow will melt in the mountains in Chechnya, and many Chechen fighters will move across the border and establish a base of operations in Georgia, to escape Russian attacks. Under these conditions, the Georgians will either be unable or unwilling to crack down on this infiltration, and the Russians will “have no choice” but to do so. In the Georgian official’s account, the argument goes like this: “If Turkey can carry out hot pursuit against the Kurds in northern Iraq, if the United States and Britain can bomb Iraq, and if NATO can do what it did in Kosovo, why can’t Russia act inside Georgia against the Chechens?”

This is all made more complicated, he stressed, by the fact that there are *already* 9,000 Russian troops stationed inside Georgia, including in such hotly contested regions as Abkhazia. The Russians, it is feared, can play upon ethnic tensions in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and perhaps elsewhere, to put added pressure on the Shevardnadze government.

Of course, the more pressure from the Russians, the greater the pressure from inside Georgia for the country to seek help from NATO and the West. It all becomes a vicious circle. Notably, both Brzezinski and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have recently been in Georgia, the Georgian official stressed.

Georgia’s vulnerability is all the greater, this official said, because of the economic situation in the country. Workers throughout the country have not been paid for six months. (He himself receives a monthly salary equivalent to \$20.) There is talk of the necessity of opening up the printing presses, to pay arrears. “This would bring about hyperinflation,” he said. Meanwhile, more and more Georgians are involved in desperate day-to-day efforts to survive. The overlap of economic collapse and ethnic tensions is bringing the country to the brink of a “big social-economic crisis,” he warned.

The Latvian flashpoint

In the Baltics as well, a crisis could erupt at any moment. There, too, there is a complex of causal factors. Albright, Brzezinski, and others are determined to bring Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia into NATO, as soon as that can be arranged. NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson was in Latvia during the week of April 3, much to the displeasure of Russian officials. A Rome-based strategist told *EIR* that this would be a “red line” for the Russians, and they would never allow it.

But the Russians also have their options. Some experts fear that Putin will play the “Great Russian” card to the maximum, all the more so if he feels under pressure from Chechnya, and from internal Russian economic problems. He would portray himself as “defending ethnic Russians abroad,” particularly in Latvia, where ethnic Russians are a significant percentage of the population.

The most immediate regional flashpoint is Latvia. As of this writing, it is still unclear if the Russian State Duma (lower house of parliament) will decide to impose draconian economic sanctions against Latvia (a bill for imposing sanctions has twice been approved, but under Russian law, three readings are required for it to become law, and the third reading is anticipated for the first half of April). Nominally, this would be in retaliation for the fact that the Latvian government gave approval to Latvian Waffen SS veterans to hold a demonstration in Riga on March 16. That was a provocation, but it is intentionally being blown out of proportion by certain leading Russians (in fact, the march this year was downgraded, relative to previous years). But, certain Russians in leading positions are determined to use the matter as a pretext for a “patriotic mobilization,” especially leading up to the 55th anniversary of the victory in the war in Europe on May 8, a day when there will be, for the first time in some years, a military parade in Red Square, and related manifestations.

The more the Russians pressure the Baltic states, the greater the tendency on their part to run to NATO for help, and the greater the tendency by the Brzezinski types in the West to rush them into NATO. Once again, it is a vicious circle, in a world situation that is rapidly becoming more unpredictable and dangerous.

The Way Out of The Crisis



A 90-minute video of highlights from *EIR*'s April 21, 1999 seminar in Bonn, Germany.

Lyndon LaRouche was the keynote speaker, in a dialogue with distinguished international panelists: **Wilhelm Hankel**, professor of economics and a former banker from Germany; **Stanislav Menshikov**, a Russian economist and journalist; Schiller Institute founder **Helga Zepp-LaRouche** from Germany; **Devendra Kaushik**, professor of Central Asian Studies from India; **Qian Jing**, international affairs analyst from China; **Natalya Vitrenko**, economist and parliamentarian from Ukraine.



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