

a torpedo attack. The force of the collision was registered by Norwegian seismologists. The *Kursk* lost power, and with the flooding of its forward compartments, fell rapidly to the bottom, causing catastrophic destruction and a second explosion.

John Helmer article on the near-outbreak of war between Russia, and the United States and NATO, cited above, is published in the Singapore *Straits Times*.

The Internet news-site Pravda.ru publishes an article, "World War III Could Have Begun on Saturday," reporting that the *Kursk* incident "nearly led to the outbreak of full-scale combat—a third world war." The dispatch says: "For several days, the world hung by a thread, and one false political move could have led to an exchange of nuclear strikes." *Pravda* says that an agreement was reached to resolve the matter peacefully, in discussions between President Putin and U.S. President Clinton.

Wednesday, August 23: President Putin addresses the Russian nation, taking personal responsibility for the tragedy, and saying that the tragedy will unite people, rather than divide them, and that he will *not* accept the letters of resignation that were offered by the Defense leadership. "Our country has survived a lot. Our country has surmounted other catastrophes. The events we are going through today are very painful, but I am absolutely convinced that events of this kind do not divide society, but unite it," he says.

"Those who are in the front ranks of the sailors' defenders, they have turned out to be those people who in their time promoted the breakdown of the army, navy, and the state," Putin says.

"I am with the army, the fleet, and the people, together we will restore the army, the fleet, and the state," he says. "I don't like talk that the dignity of the state sank with the *Kursk*. . . . Our country has lived through far more serious catastrophes. We have survived them."

Documentation

A 'Pearl Harbor' Reaction

Putin: 'Rebuild The Army, Navy, and State'

Russian President Vladimir Putin was interviewed by RTR-TV on Aug. 23 (translation from Russian website *Gazeta.ru*).

No words are enough, it's difficult to find them and I want to wail. At last night's meeting [with the families of the *Kursk*'s crew], one of those present said, "It was only recently that you took up the post, just over 100 days ago, but you took that cross upon yourself and now you must



Russian President Vladimir Putin

bear it." That person was right because, despite the fact that I've been at the post in the Kremlin for just over 100 days, I feel absolutely responsible and feel I am guilty for this tragedy.

I feel bitter that over the last few days some have been attempting to use this disaster, what's more in a very unscrupulous way, to puff up their political gills, in order to gain political capital or sort out the interests of some groups. It's exactly those people who are the first to say they are the defenders of the sailors, but it turns out that they are the ones who over a long period of time have caused the breakdown of the army and the state. Some of them have already raised a million. Better they should sell their villas on the Mediterranean in France and Spain. But then they would have to explain why all that property is registered in the names of commercial companies, and we would ask where that money came from. But God will judge them. . . .

The day before yesterday, the Minister of Defense Igor Sergeyev and yesterday the Chief Commander of the Navy [Vladimir Kuroyedov] and the Commander of the Northern Fleet [Vyecheslav Popov] offered their resignations. However, their resignations won't be accepted and will not be accepted until there is a full understanding of what happened, why it happened, and whether anybody is to blame—really to blame—or, if it was just a coincidence of tragic circumstances, a tragedy. There will be no hasty and unfounded punishments, under the influence of emotional outbursts. . . .

I shall stand with the Army, I shall stand with the Navy,



Former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov

and I shall stand with the people. Together we shall rebuild the Army and the Navy and the country. I have no doubt about this. It troubles me a great deal that the thesis has emerged that together with the *Kursk*, the Navy's honor and the country's pride have also drowned. Our country has seen worse times of troubles than we have lived through over the past few years. We and our ancestors have faced worse tragedies, yet we have survived them all. Russia has always had a future. What we are living through now is a very hard to bear, but I'm absolutely convinced that this sort of tragedy must not divide, but unite society and unite the people. I'm convinced that together, not only shall we overcome the natural, social and technological disasters that we have come up against in recent years, but we shall overcome them and rebuild the army, the navy and the state. . . .

You know the relatives of the crew of the *Kursk* sub are a match for their husbands, brothers and sons. They are courageous people, and they are bearing with fortitude the tragedy that we all feel deeply, but they are most affected by the tragedy. I think the state they are in—I wouldn't wish it on anyone—but still, I had the impression that we understood each other. . . .

I walked the streets of the town [Vidyayevo] and I was in the submarine commander's flat—I myself used to live in such flats. There was nothing unexpected or surprising [about the conditions]. It is a great misfortune, that our military, and even the elite of the army and navy, live in such conditions. But if you think it was a discovery for me,

you are wrong. The question is, how can we get out of this humiliating situation. There is only one possible answer—our military forces must on the one hand meet the requirements, and on the other hand the possibilities of the state.

The Army must be compact, but modern and well paid. This will take a certain amount of time and this was what the last session of the Security Council was devoted to; the size of the army and navy, their armaments, and the material allowances for servicemen. . . . I think that we have every reason to hope that in implementing the recent Security Council decisions, we will finally meet the requirements behind these decisions. What we need are not hopes and promises, but concrete actions, actions that people can actually feel. We must stop talking and start acting. . . .

On behalf of the Fatherland-All Russia faction in the State Duma, former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov on Aug. 23 called for increased spending on the military, and other measures to strengthen Russia's sovereignty.

We will consider it to be our sacred duty to seek the clarification of all the circumstances and causes of what happened in the Barents Sea, however bitter the truth may be.

But this is not the only reason why the faction is issuing this statement. The tragedy of the submarine, like a flash of lightning, has illuminated the situation in the country, the state of our Armed Forces and the situation in the Navy. There is no point in recounting what every conscious citizen of Russia knows already. It is necessary to draw concrete conclusions from what we have just felt and experienced. . . .

Beginning already this year, it is necessary to draft the national budget in such a way that the Armed Forces get all they need not only in wartime, but also for peacetime service. . . . Yes, missiles with nuclear warheads provide reliable protection for us. But this need not make us turn a blind eye to the fact that we have no modern equipment for the rescue of submariners in distress, that because of lack of fuel the necessary exercises are not carried out, that the Armed Forces are not getting enough modern armaments, that those who, in the ranks of the Armed Forces, often at the risk of their lives protect the territorial integrity of Russia, and its interests, and ensure the country's defenses, get pitifully small salaries.

The Russian Army and Navy should be provided with state-of-the-art hardware. Russia with its huge intellectual and technological potential in the defense industry is capable of accomplishing this. . . .

It is necessary to put an end to the practice of using the services of middlemen, which has been imposed on the Defense Ministry and results in the enrichment of businessmen and corrupt officials. The military reform should be brought to its completion, because without this any attempts to reverse the present grave situation in the Armed Forces are doomed to failure. . . .

Global Showdown Leaked in Russian and Other Press

“Killer Sub,” *Segodnya*, Aug. 21. *The Russian daily followed up its two earlier reports on the evidence of a collision with an American or a British sub (Aug. 18 and 19, respectively):*

According to *Segodnya*'s sources, several scenarios of the *Kursk* accident have been modelled. Here is one of them. On the evening of Aug. 12, the plan of the maneuvers called for the *Kursk* to carry out a night-time torpedo attack on a practice target, from periscope depth. At a depth of 20-25 meters, most likely at the moment of preparations to surface, when the *Kursk* was moving slowly (around 5-6 knots), there was a collision with a heavy tonnage underwater object of some 6,000 to 8,000 tons, which was moving faster, and at the same depth or slightly higher. So far, this underwater object is identified as “a multipurpose nuclear submarine of a foreign state.”

The approaching ships evidently were aware of each other, but could not “hear” at that precise moment. This has to do with the hydrology of the relevant region of the Barents Sea, as well as the fact that both objects were in the area near the surface, where the layers of water are highly turbulent. Under certain circumstances, this negatively affects the quality of hydroacoustical contacts.

According to the preliminary scenario, the two submarines hit on the starboard side of each, at an angle of 20 to 30 degrees. It is not excluded, that the killer submarine attempted to turn away to the left at the last moment, simultaneously diving. Therefore, it probably struck the *Kursk* on the starboard side, moving with a slight trim to the bow. Presumably, this was the “blast”—actually a dynamic blow—equivalent to 100-150 kg of TNT, which was recorded by Norwegian seismologists. The vector of the blow ran tangent to the starboard side of the submarine, approximately at the base of the guardrail of the conning tower. This is where a large dent is supposedly visible, running to the hole in the hull, the margins of which are bent inwards. . . .

Meanwhile, the destruction of the *Kursk* continued. The force of the collision changed the course of the killer submarine, which was now moving very tightly towards the *Kursk*. The right horizontal stabilizer of the foreign submarine acted like a can-opener, ripping the outer shell of the *Kursk* up to about the sixth compartment, and the hull to the third compartment or even the fourth. The submarines then moved apart, continuing in opposite directions. The *Kursk* was in a desperate situation. Water had immediately flooded the first compartment, including the battery wells. . . . The defense system on the reactor worked, shutting it off. The submarine lost power to move. From the rapid flooding

of the forward compartments, the *Kursk* acquired negative buoyancy and began to sink with (as much as 45 degrees) trim to the bow. . . .

The submarine fell for about 120 seconds. At high speed and at a significant angle of attack the *Kursk* slammed into the sea bottom at a depth of 108 meters. Probably, the weapons in the bow detonated on impact (this was the second blast, several kilotons in magnitude, recorded by seismologists). Then the stern of the submarine hit the bottom. There was catastrophic destruction. From the blow against the sea bottom and from the explosion, probably, the hull cracked from the third to the sixth compartment. Two-thirds of the submarine was flooded.

What kind of damage did the killer submarine sustain? Specialists believe that it “just had to” have left some traces of its presence, at the scene. . . .

‘World War III Could Have Begun on Saturday’

Pravda.ru, Aug. 22. *The Russian-language website cited “Kremlin sources” on what happened during the first 48 hours after the Kursk sank. A subhead on Anton Ponomarev’s dispatch added, “It was a question of a possible exchange of nuclear strikes between Russia and the U.S.A.”*

On Saturday, Aug. 12, an incident occurred in the Barents Sea, where the Russian Federation’s Northern Fleet was conducting exercises, which nearly led to the outbreak of full-scale combat—a third world war. Pravda.ru has learned this from Kremlin sources. For several days, the world hung by a thread, and one false political move could have led to an exchange of nuclear strikes.

On Aug. 12, Northern Fleet hydroacoustical instruments on board Northern Fleet ships detected three powerful underwater explosions in the Barents Sea. Investigating the location of the explosions, the nuclear missile cruiser *Pyotr Veliky* discovered the nuclear submarine *Kursk*, lying on the bottom, as well as another submarine. Insofar as the dislocation of the submarines, taking part in the Northern Fleet exercises, was known, this object was identified as a foreign submarine, presumably American. The three explosions, registered by the hydroacoustical instruments, indicated the possibility that the *Kursk* had suffered a torpedo attack. . . .

In view of the seriousness of the situation (the sinking of a Russian nuclear submarine missile cruiser by a foreign submarine is a *casus belli*, the possibility of the President’s immediate return to Moscow, to the main command point, was considered. This option was rejected, however. The Head of State’s residence in Sochi is equipped as well as the Kremlin offices are, so Putin could run the country just as effectively from Sochi. Moreover, Putin’s appearance at the main command point in Moscow would have indicated explicit war preparations by Russia. Both Russia and the United States, were aware of the emergency nature of the

situation. Incidentally, it was for these same reasons, that Putin did not fly to Murmansk or Severomorsk during those first days.

Pravda.ru has not been able to ascertain why the American side initially came under suspicion — this can only be guessed. Evidently, there was some evidence, which will unlikely ever be made public. The mass media have to be content with indirect “evidence,” such as the report from Norwegian Intelligence, circulated today in the Western press, that the American nuclear submarine *USS Memphis* entered a Norwegian port for repairs. Happily, the incident in the Barents Sea was successfully resolved by political means. Agreement to “end the affair in peace” was reached during a telephone conversation between Vladimir Putin and Bill Clinton. The Presidents’ conversation lasted 25 minutes, and nothing of its content was reported in the mass media. . . .

On Aug. 20, American journalist **John Helmer** circulated his article, “*Russian Sub Drama Looked Like War at the Start*,” which was published two days later in the *Singapore Straits Times*.

If you were the ruler of Russia, and you were told late one night that one of your most powerful and secret submarine weapons had been hit by a mysterious explosion, and sent to the bottom without word from the crew, would it be prudent for you to suspect an attack? An attack by a nuclear superpower and old rival?

And if it is your sworn duty to defend your country from attack, would it be reasonable for you to determine whether there was a cause of war, or an accident?

And finally, is 48 hours too long or too short a time, from your point of view, and for the rest of the mankind, to decide whether Russia should go to war with the United States and NATO; or cooperate in a peaceful rescue mission?

Those Russian and western critics of President Vladimir Putin’s performance since the *Kursk* submarine crisis began haven’t considered those questions. The rest of the world should.

The Kremlin is not saying publicly that it withheld the first news of the *Kursk* submarine disaster, until the Russian Navy could report to Putin the vessel had not been attacked by a foreign power, but that is what caused the delay in releasing the first news, sources close to the drama now believe.

Russian naval sources said the acoustic recordings available to the Fleet command showed two loud noises or explosions. One occurred at 7:30:42 on Saturday evening. It was relatively small. The second occurred at 7:32:57, 135 seconds later. It was at least four times more powerful. The details have been confirmed by a seismic center in Norway which initially did not connect its recordings to the *Kursk*, because reports of the loss of the submarine did appear until later.

Popov said there are still too many details lacking to



Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev

form a clear picture of the cause of the crash. Asked to say what he thought caused the sinking, he said there were two versions of the sequence. In the first, the admiral said the submarine hit a foreign object, registering the first acoustic signal, and then exploded internally. . . .

Some Russian officials, including Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeev, have continued to imply that a foreign, presumably American submarine may have been in the area, and that a collision underwater is what caused the first recorded sound, triggering the internal explosion that wrecked the *Kursk*.

U.S. officials have denied this; they have admitted there were two U.S. submarines in the area, which picked up the sonar signals of two explosions inside the vessel. Russian officials are reported as saying they know of no surface vessel in the vicinity of the *Kursk*’s position at the time of the incident.

A Kremlin source says that although the picture looks clearer now, “at the time last Saturday, the command had to deal with the possibility there had been an attack on the *Kursk*. There was no way that could have been released to the press.” When critics of the Russian leadership’s handling of the crisis jump to the conclusion that Putin should have acted differently, and faster, they ignore the much greater danger if Putin and his military advisors had jumped to any conclusion too quickly, at the start of the crisis. . . .

From the Russian Military

On Saturday, Aug. 19, at 17:00 Moscow Time, the **Russian Northern Fleet's Chief of Staff, Vice Adm. Mikhail Motsak**, appeared on RTR television with an official statement. Calling the sinking of the *Kursk* the most serious accident in the history of the submarine fleet, Motsak confirmed that the forward sections of the ship were destroyed, and that the members of the crew who were in those sections evidently died within minutes. He elaborated his analysis the next day at a press conference, given in Murmansk together with **Deputy Premier Ilya Klebanov**.

Admiral Motsak: "At this time, we are 80-90% sure that all the scenarios come down to two, with possible sub-scenarios and with some interconnection between these main two.

"The first, is that it is highly likely that the initial cause of the submarine accident was a powerful dynamic blow. There could have been several reasons, in turn, for such a powerful dynamic blow. The first is a collision with some object, and on this we are investigating various possibilities. The second would have been an explosion inside a compartment of the submarine. . . . The third is a World War II mine."

The Fleet investigators believe that one of these causes drove the *Kursk* to crash into the sea bottom, whereupon some of its torpedoes exploded, Motsak said. "That covers 80-90% of the versions of the possible cause of this catastrophe. But, I stress that there are scenarios we have not yet worked through, also sub-scenarios, versions and sub-versions, which we will also investigate."

Admiral Motsak also specified, "There were three foreign submarines in the vicinity, one of which could have been British, since the Barents Sea is a traditional area of operations for British Naval intelligence. . . .

Marshal Igor Sergeev, Defense Minister of Russia, spoke in an interview with *ORT television's Vremya program*, on the evening of Aug. 21.

Q: . . . If it is not a military secret, can you say what assignment the submarine was fulfilling in the Barents Sea and how did it all happen?

Marshal Sergeev: The submarine was fulfilling its task as part of the exercise. Its objective was to launch a cruise missile, and then, in a certain area, to identify vessels and hit the main target with a torpedo salvo. The commander reported having fulfilled the first task and by 18:00 he was expected to report the fulfillment of the second task. At 18:00 the submarine failed to establish a communication link. Northern Fleet Commander Admiral Popov sent an order to the submarine to report on its location and its actions. According to regulations, the submarine was to report back within four hours. But it did not. The submarine did not respond.

So, beginning from 18:00 the Commander of the Fleet put

on alert the search and rescue forces. So, work began on Aug. 12 after 18:00 when the submarine was supposed to report. Preliminary orders were issued by that time to heighten the alert of staffs, command points and to start deploying the search forces. On the 13th, as early as the 13th the location of the submarine was detected, initially as an unidentified object, and by its side was a second object. The identification occurred at 18:40 on the 13th. . . .

Q: What was the object near our submarine? Could it have been the cause of the disaster?

Marshal Sergeev: We have not been able to identify it. . . . But, . . . indeed, the commission is inclined to credit the version that the accident was caused by a collision. And what we see on the bottom, the submarine, is a consequence of the collision involving the submarine. There are other suggested causes, but in the opinion of the commission and of experienced sailors they are less probable. . . .

Q: Have you identified it?

Marshal Sergeev: Not yet. But I am sure that when we search more thoroughly we will find something on the spot, either to confirm or deny it. We have requested through our representative to NATO to provide us with information as to whether any vessel was present in the area of the disaster. And we were told that no NATO vessels were in the area. But they added, rather oddly, but this was not told to us, it was said in Brussels that even if the incident had occurred, "we would never have admitted it."

Q: There were reports of two explosions registered by Norwegian seismic services. Did our services register the explosions?

Marshal Sergeev: Yes, our services too registered the explosions—the *Pyotr Veliky* and a submarine. It is another matter that a third explosion was registered at 11:44. It was registered by our submarine.

Q: What could it have been?

Marshal Sergeev: Further investigation is needed. . . .

Anglo-American Signals of Intent to Break Russia

Jim Hoagland, "The Concorde and the Kursk," the *Washington Post*, Aug. 20.

Britain, France and Russia simultaneously confronted last week the costs of maintaining an inflated and obsolete sense of national grandeur based on technological overreach. . . .

In Russia, the grim fate of the *Kursk* will play into an even sharper debate about national resources and national pride. Whatever the specific causes, the disaster illuminates the difficulties of trying to maintain a great-power military machine on a small-power military budget. . . .

While wishing no more atrocities on the Chechens, Americans have a horse in this race and it is [Chief of Staff Gen. Anatoli] Kvashnin. [General Kvashnin is reported to

have argued for relatively more spending on conventional forces—ed.] Russia’s conventional forces will present no threats to NATO for decades to come. The rusting rockets Sergeyev clings to can still destroy the world.

American politicians should be doing everything they can to encourage the devaluing of nuclear weapons as national status symbols and to lessen Russian fears that the Pentagon seeks a “first-strike” ability. . . .

The Clintonites also cling to outmoded arms control negotiations that reinforce Moscow’s pretensions to military superpower status. Despite some promising beginnings, George W. Bush has yet to show how he would change U.S. strategic forces to spur Russia to live down to its foundering technological base.

Helping Russia understand how to make that adjustment should be a high-priority U.S. political objective. Grandeur through unneeded and expensive technology is a bad investment in a world where even nationalism must pay its own way or yield.

Marilyn Rauber, “Arctic Tag ‘Game’ Is Cold War Throwback,” *New York Post*, Aug. 15.

Lawrence Korb, former Reagan assistant secretary of defense, and Brookings Institution military analyst Michael O’Hanlon strongly attack the continuing U.S. and NATO practice of stalking Russian naval maneuvers as a dangerous throwback to the bad old days of the Cold War. “The Cold War has ended. . . . Why the heck are we still doing this?” Korb commented.

O’Hanlon warned that such tailing of Russian subs could trigger a bloody incident. “The Navy acts like the undersea areas are its own universe, and I think their attitude is dangerous. . . . It’s provocative.” He warned, “Russia says to itself, if the Americans are coming after us and our nuclear forces early on in any crisis, we can’t afford to let down our guard, and that raises all your ‘Red October’ scenarios.” He continued, “This sort of behavior reinforces Russian paranoia, and therefore makes us less secure, because it makes the Russians more likely to launch.” The *Post* reported that, at any given time, the United States has around four nuclear submarines near Russia, and many more scouring the waters for Chinese subs.

The New Storm over Russia, and LaRouche’s August 1999 Forecast

On Aug. 22, the truth began to penetrate the Western media’s “soap opera” concerning the supposed “human tragedy” of the *Kursk* submarine. Pravda.ru headlined, “The Saturday World War III Almost Broke Out.”

That same day, the Singapore *Straits Times* published an article acknowledging what Russian President Vladimir Putin had actually been doing during five critical days, Aug. 12-16, when supposedly “extending his vacation”: Putin had been talking to President Bill Clinton, and other leaders, seeking to ascertain, and to decide, whether world war had already begun.

Do not leap to the comforting conclusion, that that was the case then, but that now war has been averted. Rather, read the forecast published in *EIR* just one year ago by Lyndon LaRouche, “Is World War III Coming?,” which we reprint below.

“For maniacs such as Blair, Brzezinski, and Albright, the orchestration of the recent war against Yugoslavia was only the prelude to a nuclear confrontation with Russia,” wrote LaRouche. The same is true in spades for the George W. Bush foreign policy team, “The Vulcans,” as *EIR* demonstrated in last week’s *Feature*. The escalating path of that nuclear confrontation—the *confrontation over whether NATO can force Russia to cease to be a nuclear superpower*—has led to a potential trigger for war, in the sinking of the *Kursk*. The strategic implications of the presently unfolding global financial crisis, in which the Russian economy has been looted and destroyed by Western financial speculators, are tilting the path sharply downward.

Escalating Toward Confrontation with Russia

LaRouche’s August 1999 strategic statement was issued five months after his U.S. Presidential campaign committee had circulated a mass leaflet on the danger of war. That leaflet warned Americans that Gore’s foreign-policy team had used the impeachment threat to overrule President Clinton and plan a new NATO war against Iraq, to be followed by more direct threats against Russia. From that March 1999 leaflet until LaRouche’s August warning, these events, steps on that downward path toward war driven by global financial desperation, occurred:

- In March 1999, the bombing of Iraq was intensified, reaching the war-level of 100 sorties daily.
- In April, the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia began, accompanied by shrill British demands for a NATO ground-force invasion of Yugoslavia through the Czech Republic and Hungary. The NATO bombing was ineffective against the Yugoslav Army and military police, and could only be ended after Russia intervened to get Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic to pull out of Kosovo.
- Russia responded to the NATO war on Yugoslavia, by holding “all-ocean” naval maneuvers, including nuclear naval missile launches, involving three of the four Russian fleets. These “all-ocean” maneuvers *had not been held since the breakup of the Soviet Union*.
- In April, NATO held its 50th Anniversary meeting in Washington, D.C. Though President Clinton rejected British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s public demands for a ground invasion of Yugoslavia, NATO shifted to a new war doctrine,