

International Briefs

Putin: Real Purpose of the Phony Ukraine Crisis Is To Destroy Russia's Economy

In a press conference after his meeting with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Feb. 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin identified the underlying motive for the U.S. and NATO effort to draw Russia into an attack on Ukraine or a broader war:

"I still believe the United States is not that concerned about Ukraine's security, though they may think about it on the sidelines. Its main goal is to contain Russia's development. This is the whole point. In this sense, Ukraine is simply a tool to reach this goal. This can be done in different ways: by drawing us into some armed conflict, or compelling its allies in Europe to impose tough sanctions on us like the U.S. is talking about today, or by drawing Ukraine into NATO, deploying attack weapons there, and encouraging some Banderites [the followers of Hitler's Ukrainian partner Stepan Bandera] to resolve the issues of Donbas or Crimea by force. In this way, we could be drawn into an armed conflict regardless."

Croatian President on War Danger: It's the British, Stupid!

Croatian President Zoran Milanović has identified the true culprit in the drive for war against Russia: Her Majesty's Government in London. In statements reported by *Euractiv* Feb. 2, Milanović argued that there is no European or EU stability without Russia: "Russia is a factor in that equation, and we should have an agreement with

Russia," he said. Milanović accused Britain of "inciting," and believes that pushing Ukraine towards confrontation with Russia is "irresponsible."

Milanović snubbed UK Secretary of State for Defense Ben Wallace when he stopped in Zagreb Feb. 1. When asked why, the President told journalists he does not meet with defense ministers: "I don't even know the name of this one. I meet possibly with those of foreign affairs, possibly Russia, America. I have nothing to talk about with the ministers, especially the United Kingdom. I do not meet with the defense ministers except the superpowers. The UK has left the EU, and this gives it less importance."

Milanović concluded by accusing Britain of "misleading Ukraine, inciting it, and holding it hostage to the relationship between London, which has become a second-order power, and Washington."

Polyanskiy Asserts, 'We Don't Trust British Diplomacy'

Russia's First Deputy Representative to the UN, Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy, bluntly told Britain's *Sky News* TV Feb. 1 that Russia had few expectations of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's planned call with Russian President Vladimir Putin:

"There is always room for diplomacy, but frankly, we don't trust British diplomacy. I think in recent years, British diplomacy has shown that it is absolutely worthless. I really don't want to offend anybody, especially my good friends, British diplomats, but really, the results are nothing to boast about."

With his customary irony, Ambassador Polyanskiy remarked on the latest

scare-talk about Russian troops allegedly massed along Ukraine's border:

"Now it's already 130,000. I see that inflation is very high these days; it was 100,000 yesterday. I don't know where they take these figures from, and we have absolutely no trust in the intelligence data from the U.S. and from the UK. I think this is the same intelligence that claims that Saddam Hussein possesses the weapons of mass destruction. The hysteria doesn't stop, it's absolutely happening in the heads of Western politicians and not really on the ground."

U.S. Congress Receives IG Report on Afghan Children Dying of Starvation

The U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported to Congress on Feb. 3 that the drastic forecasts made in September for this winter in Afghanistan are coming true. The report describes a "tsunami of hunger" for more than half of the country. It verifies the magnitude of the crisis along the lines of the UN World Food Program's numbers. "Record drought, rising food prices, internal displacement" add to the economic breakdown and the collapse of public services.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 22.8 million Afghans would be at "potentially life-threatening levels of hunger" this winter, with 9.7 million of them in "near-famine conditions." Around 3.2 million children under the age of five would experience acute malnutrition conditions, and approximately 1 million were at risk of dying. Even though the Taliban in December banned forced marriages, requiring women to

consent to marriage, the savaging of the economy and the starvation conditions have forced many families to sell their daughters. However, opium production in the country for 2021 boomed, hitting the third highest amount in the last 28 years.

Iran's Raisi in Moscow Presents Proposal for 20-Year Strategic Cooperation

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, following a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Jan. 19, said:

“We have had very good experience in cooperating with the Russian Federation in Syria. We were fighting terrorism in the region, in the Syrian Arab Republic, through a concerted effort. We can use this positive experience in many other areas. We have a document on bilateral strategic cooperation, which may determine our future relations for the next 20 years.... Our ties are very deep. I think we can deepen them even further and take productive steps to promote our cooperation in this regard. I think that in these conditions we can launch new cooperation in the economy, politics, culture, science, technology, the defense and military areas, security, and aviation and space, to name a few.”

Argentine and Russian Presidents Forge Closer Partnership in Moscow

Argentine President Alberto Fernández and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a very cordial three-hour meeting at the Kremlin on Feb. 3, followed by a working luncheon. Putin, in a joint press conference, said:

“The exchange of views on global and regional problems showed that Russia and Argentina hold similar or identical positions on many issues. Our countries firmly uphold the principles

of the supremacy of international law, sovereignty, independence and non-interference in the domestic affairs of foreign states. We agreed to continue coordinating our efforts on key multilateral issues at international venues, including the UN. [Argentina] is one of our key partners in Latin America.”

They discussed cooperation in oil and gas infrastructure, railroad construction, nuclear energy, aerospace, vaccine production, expansion of trade and investment, and technology transfer.

In remarks that must have caused heartburn in Washington and London, Fernández referred to the need to end Argentina's dependence on the United States and the IMF, and “open the way to other locations.” In this context, he said, “Russia holds a very important place” in the building of “a new multilateralism.”

Putin in Dialogue with Italian and German Industry Leaders

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by videoconference to a delegation of the Italy-Russia Chamber of Commerce (IRCC) on Jan. 26. The meeting was promoted by the chairman of the IRCC, Vincenzo Trani, “for the purpose of better stimulating business relations among our associates and institutions of the Russian Federation and supporting economic and trade exchanges between our two countries,” an IRCC release says. The last such meeting took place in 2018.

According to the Kremlin transcript, Putin stressed:

“[Italy is] Russia's third largest trade partner in the EU.... There are some 500 Italian companies in Russia. The range of industries where they operate is truly impressive: power generation, steel, oil and gas, petrochemical industries, helicopter manufacturing, high technologies, agribusiness, transport infrastructure, banking, insurance and many other sectors.

In particular, the Russian govern-

ment is satisfied with cooperation in “large-scale energy projects, such as Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG 2, in which over 60 Italian companies are involved,” and in oil projects in Krasnoyarsk Krai (territory) in the north.

Top managers of German business are also planning a videoconference with President Putin. The virtual meeting is to be organized by the German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations, which includes major firms such as Allianz, SAP, Siemens, Volkswagen and BASF, and employ a total of 280,000 in Russia. The organization says it is aiming for March 3, but the date could change.

Top Medical Policy Adviser Ezekiel Emanuel Promotes Surrender to COVID Virus

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the leadership of countries and found them woefully lacking. In the United States, President Trump had an “Apollo-style” crash program to develop therapeutics and vaccines in record time, but turned to jingoistic attacks on China during an election year. President Biden took a “me-first” approach on the vaccine rollout, and watched helplessly as Delta and Omicron shredded his approach, with variants arising from pockets of the world denied access to minimal vaccine coverage.

Now, in an actual promotion of despair, Ezekiel (aka “EZ-Kill”) Emanuel, a “bioethicist” at the Center for American Progress who was a key architect of Obamacare, issued “A National Strategy for the ‘New Normal’ of Life with COVID,” offering his terms of surrender to the killer virus. Ostensibly to preempt any more mismanagement from politicians, he proposes to redefine COVID as simply one among several “respiratory infections,” notably including flu. Then, report the statistics of such “respiratory” hospitalizations, deaths, etc., as a group, including COVID.