

Amid policy debacles, the West 'rediscovers' Russia

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

Faced with the multiple strategic disasters wrought by NATO's insane Brzezinskian "flight forward" in the Balkans and elsewhere under the auspices of Britain's Blair government and the Albright-Cohen-Gore grouping in the United States, and with the prospect of a gigantic financial crash of Wall Street looming on the horizon, Western elites have suddenly discovered that, after all, they need Russia.

Thereby, the world has in a sense come full-circle, back to the point, a year ago, when the United States and other leading nations faced a clear strategic choice: Either to adopt LaRouche's New Bretton Woods policy for multipolar cooperation among sovereign nations, to create a new world financial and economic order; or, to yield to the insane push from the Wall Street-London financial crowd, to try to save their hopelessly bankrupt system by imposing a "unipolar" dictatorship upon the world at all costs, including a possible World War III at some point down the road.

In the weeks leading up to March 24, 1999, U.S. Secretary of State "Mad Madeleine" Albright, together with Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry Shelton, and Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, deliberately blocked the efforts to resolve the Kosovo crisis through cooperation with the Yevgeni Primakov government of Russia, setting the world on course for war. Now, a year later, leading establishment spokesmen are voicing open disgust, at the incredible strategic disaster that Albright's bungling, including her obsessive hatred of Russia, has brought down on the Western nations themselves.

As one leading European analyst commented to *EIR*, "NATO has hit a wall. . . . Russian cooperation is now needed. . . . Fences with the Russians must be mended, at a time when the world is going out of control." Not only does the West

face a nearly hopeless mess in Kosovo and the Balkans generally, but also an entire array of explosive conflicts and potential wars, ranging from the Middle East, to India-Pakistan, to a new Taiwan crisis, among others. "The fact is, there *must* be active participation from the Russian side, if we are going to avoid disaster on numerous fronts," the analyst said. Therefore, the "stupid policy" of marginalizing Russia must be ended. Similar views are being sounded on both sides of the Atlantic, including leading voices within the British establishment.

The two weeks in mid-February have indeed witnessed a rapid series of breakthroughs in Moscow's relations with Washington, NATO, and Russia's creditors—relations which had been virtually "on ice" since the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia began nearly a year ago. It is worth reviewing these developments in some detail.

Chronology of recent developments

On Feb. 11, the London Club of creditors reached a preliminary agreement with Russia, to write off \$10.6 billion of the outstanding \$32 billion in Soviet-era debt, and to extend repayment of most of the remainder over 30 years. Although the agreement by no means resolves the Russian debt problem in general, it comes after a long period of deadlock, and dispels the immediate threat of a near-term default.

Then, on Feb. 14, President Clinton, in a prominent interview with CNN, gave a clear signal to Moscow. Commenting on his view of Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin, Clinton stated: "I think the United States can do business with this man. . . . We don't agree with him on everything, but what I have seen of him so far indicates to me that he is capable of being a very strong and effective and straightforward leader." Clinton also conceded that "Russia has a right to take on

the paramilitary forces [in Chechnya] who are practicing terrorist tactics.”

The Russian Foreign Ministry promptly welcomed Clinton’s “constructive statements.” “The Russian leadership shares the U.S. President’s expressed wish to activate bilateral dialogue, particularly in the fields of security and disarmament, to overcome the noted, dangerous standstill. We also note confirmation from the U.S. leadership of the importance of decisive steps taken against international terrorism,” a spokesman said.

On the same day as Clinton’s statements, Putin announced the decision, that the visit of NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson to Moscow, which some Russian military circles were indicating might be put off, would go ahead on schedule. In the context of Robertson’s visit on Feb. 16, Putin agreed to revive the official relations between Russia and NATO, which had been cut off last March as a result of the Balkan war.

After meeting with Putin, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Defense Minister Igor Sergeev, Robertson stated at a joint press conference with Ivanov, that Feb. 16 had been “a very important day for relations between East and West. . . . Mr. Putin is the Acting President of Russia, and he made it clear that the resumption of the relationship between Russia and NATO was very much a decision of his.”

An official joint statement was issued, which declared in part, that “NATO and Russia are fully determined to contribute to building a stable and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples. In this context, they affirm that they will observe in good faith their obligations under international law, including the UN Charter.” Was NATO implicitly admitting its own, massive violations of the UN Charter during the bombardment of Yugoslavia?

Ivanov visits Washington

On the same day, the Secretary of the Russian National Security Committee, Sergei Ivanov, began a Feb. 16-19 visit to Washington at the invitation of Clinton’s National Security Adviser Samuel Berger. An official commentary by the Russian Security Council, issued following the trip, described Ivanov’s visit as “short in time but full of substance” and an “activation of the U.S.-Russia dialogue.” Ivanov met with President Clinton, Albright, as well as the heads of the CIA and FBI and other U.S. government officials. The release quoted Ivanov stating that “relations with the U.S. are a priority for Russia.” Ivanov referred to “unfortunate irritations” which had interfered with the dialogue, but in spite of this, “we succeeded in maintaining the most important thing: understanding of the strategic importance of cooperation for the



Russian Acting President Valentin Putin (right) with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. The main motivation for the sudden Western interest in cooperation with Moscow, lies in the naked bankruptcy of the Anglo-American policy for a NATO-enforced “unipolar” world order.

future of the world in the 21st century.”

Ivanov delivered to Clinton a personal message from Putin, which, according to Ivanov, “will give a new impulse to the Russian-U.S. partnership.” According to the release from the Russian Security Council, Putin declared in the note to Clinton that, “in a broad sense, the strategic aims of Russia and the United States coincide.” Those aims, the release stated, include global security and stability, disarmament, the strengthening of “zones of non-proliferation,” the fight against “transnational terrorism and organized crime,” and “activation of mutually advantageous economic ties.” Interestingly, the release did not mention one of the main points of irritation between the two sides, namely the U.S. plan to develop a national anti-missile defense system.

Finally, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook eagerly hurried to Moscow, emerging from a meeting with Putin to praise the “frank dialogue.”

A year of NATO-led disasters

Skeptical observers are asking, what the sudden East-West thaw really signifies, given that Russia’s interests and its global role have been systematically ignored for more than a year as “irrelevant” or even “nonexistent” by leading figures in the Anglo-American foreign policy establishment. Certainly, the change in attitude cannot be ascribed simply to the personality of Russia’s new Acting President Putin—who, admittedly, is a much more substantial discussion partner than his labile, alcoholic predecessor. More to the point is the circumstance, that, as we have written (see “Russia Draws the Line Against Strategic Insanity,” *EIR*, Dec. 10, 1999), West-

ern geopolitical maneuvers, seen in Russia as threatening the very survival of the nation, have called forth a powerful consensus among its leading institutions, that a line must finally be drawn against the further “rolling back” of Russia’s strategic position in the world. This consensus is reflected by not only by the “hard line” in Chechnya, but also by the shifts in Russia’s defense and security doctrine (see *EIR*, Jan. 28, 2000, p. 44), and not least of all by the growing military and strategic cooperation with China (“Russia, China Counter Threat to World Security,” *EIR*, Dec. 24, 1999).

But, as insiders on both sides of the Atlantic are freely admitting, the main motivation for the sudden interest in cooperation with Moscow, lies not some sudden strengthening of Russia, but rather in the naked bankruptcy of the Anglo-American policy for a NATO-enforced “unipolar” world order, proclaimed less than a year ago. That failure has given way to faction fights among various groupings inside the establishment, seeking to position themselves anew in a period of unprecedented crisis.

It is most enlightening to look back briefly on the process which has brought us now full circle.

A year ago, the potential for a New Bretton Woods lay within immediate reach, thanks in great part to the emergence of what Lyndon LaRouche called the “Survivors’ Club”—a developing process involving Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad’s Malaysia, Russia, China, India, and other nations, seeking a way out of the world strategic and financial crisis on the basis of a community of principle among sovereign nations. If the United States had supported and joined with that effort, in the way Lyndon LaRouche proposed, the world today would look very different, and much better, than the mess that confronts us now.

Following Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s notable address at the “Science City” in Novosibirsk on Nov. 24, 1998 (see “Jiang in Russia: A Speech that Can Change History,” *EIR*, Dec. 4, 1998), calling for joint launching of a new era of scientific and technological progress, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov put forward, during a Dec. 21-22, 1999 visit to India, the idea of a “strategic triangle” between Russia, India, and China. With the subsequent visit of Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji to Russia and the breakthrough of “bus diplomacy” between India and Pakistan in late February 1999, the model successes of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir’s capital controls policy against the International Monetary Fund, and related developments, the “Survivors’ Club” tendency accelerated markedly. Alarm bells rang in London and among the Anglophile establishment in the United States. Exactly the sort of triangular cooperation, taking shape between Russia, India, and China, was what Zbigniew Brzezinski and other British-style geopoliticians identified as the “greatest possible strategic threat.”

The geopoliticians’ answer was the mad push for “NATO globalization” by Blair and the Albright-Gore-Cohen-Shelton “Gang of Four” in the United States. A NATO, constantly

expanding into the East, was to launch a great moral crusade to defend “human rights” around the world, to eliminate the threat of “rogue states” wielding “weapons of mass destruction.” The first show of strength of the “new NATO” was launched just in time for its 50-year celebration in April 1999: the war against Yugoslavia. A scandal-weakened U.S. President Clinton, who resisted the war push and had tried to pursue a policy course of cooperation with Russia and China, was bullied and out-manuevered.

After the shameful orchestration of the Rambouillet debacle by Albright and Cook, the last opportunity to head off the war was direct talks between Russian Prime Minister Primakov and U.S. President Clinton. But Primakov’s visit was sabotaged only hours before his scheduled landing in Washington, as Primakov was told, by Vice President Gore personally, that the U.S. government was not prepared to guarantee that NATO bombing Yugoslavia would not start *during* Primakov’s stay in Washington. Refusing to give such a guarantee made it politically impossible for Primakov to go through with the trip. His plane made a 180-degree turn and headed back to Moscow. Before he had landed, NATO bombs were already falling on Belgrade.

But after 78 days of relentless bombardment of Yugoslavia by the entire available inventory of NATO “smart weapons,” and after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7 had practically destroyed what was positive in Clinton’s China policy in a single blow, what did NATO have to show for its “triumph of the will”? The bombing campaign, supposedly intended to paralyze and destroy the Serbian forces in Kosovo, was militarily a total failure. The “success” of the bombing was to destroy a large part of Yugoslavia’s civilian infrastructure and industry, and indirectly to collapse the economies of all the nations in the region. At the zenith of its supposed irresistible power, the “new NATO” was powerless to end the conflict by itself. It was only with the help of *Russia*, that NATO could finally extricate itself, leaving the Balkans a bleeding sore which has become continuously worse ever since.

Rather than stop the cooperation among Russia, China, and India, the NATO “flight-forward” policy simply hardened it, pushing these and other nations into a reluctant, but increasingly adversarial position in defense of their own national sovereignty. Perhaps the most revealing evidence of this is the rapidly developing Russian-Chinese military and advanced-technology cooperation, and the principled, common position against the “unipolar” policy, voiced in the joint Russian-Chinese declaration of December last year.

Voice of opposition

On this background, it is not surprising that the newly found Western interest in a strategic partnership with Russia should be accompanied by a growing chorus of Western establishment voices, sharply criticizing the Kosovo war and NATO’s eastern push.

On Feb. 8, for example, the U.S. television program “60 Minutes” documented how the U.S.-U.K. bombing of Iraq in December 1998, and the launching of the NATO war against Yugoslavia in March 1999, had destroyed any possibility for ratification of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) by the Russian State Duma (lower house of Parliament). On the program, U.S. four-star Gen. Eugene Habiger openly criticized the policy of marginalizing and provoking Russia. “We are doing a heck of a harm . . . by continuing to poke this NATO stick into Russia’s eyes,” he said.

In its January issue, *International Affairs*, the journal of the Royal Institute for International Affairs, the leading British foreign policy institute, published a blistering condemnation of NATO’s Kosovo debacle, authored by senior British Royal Navy officer Michael MccGwire, entitled “Why Did We Bomb Belgrade?” The Kosovo war, which MccGwire called a “pet project” of Albright, could only be compared to the Suez misadventure of 1956. The bombing of Belgrade, had only made the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo much worse, declared MccGwire.

On Feb. 10, Boris Johnson, editor of the *Spectator*, wrote a commentary in the British *Daily Telegraph* condemning the role of the Blair government in pushing the war against Yugoslavia. The war, he wrote, “was the first assertion of the New World Order, in which liberal values could be imposed in spite of such figments as international law or national sover-

eignty. . . . How did this disaster occur? Through straightforward diplomatic error by Cook and Albright,” who had insisted on the Rambouillet policy which led to the war.

Similarly, Lord William Rees-Mogg, spokesman for an influential faction of the British establishment, warned in an editorial in the London *Times* that “NATO must beware of repeating the Vietnam catastrophe in Central Asia. . . . The expansion of NATO further into the far Balkans, into the Black Sea, into the Caspian area, could not reliably be sustained either in terms of politics or defense. . . . Overexpansion would be bad for NATO, for the security of oil supplies and for the unity of the West.” The West should stop “pouring oil on the flames.”

Many other examples could be given. But these establishment voices, while signalling a break from the Brzezinskian “flight-forward” policy pursued by Blair, Albright, et al., in no way offer any real solution to the strategic crisis. The key, of course, lies in a United States now in the midst of a historically decisive Presidential campaign, where the only actual *ideas*—including how to develop a real partnership with Russia—are coming from a single candidate: Lyndon LaRouche.

A senior Central European diplomat characterized the dilemma as follows: “LaRouche looks like our only hope. With Clinton at least you could discuss. But with Bush or Gore, there is no brain to talk to.”

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