

# Will Russian crisis shatter U.N.'s utopian global agenda?

by Mark Burdman

Attendees at a June 18-20 conference at the Evangelical Academy in Loccum, a town in the state of Lower Saxony in Germany, received a sobering assessment of the potential challenge to European security posed by the increasing influence in Russia of nationalist-conservative ideologues and demagogues. Tatyana Shakleina, a senior researcher at Moscow's U.S.A.-Canada Institute, warned in a paper submitted to the event: "The stability and integrity of the Russian Federation is the key question now for the future stability in the whole post-Soviet sphere, in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East as well. In case the tendencies for dissolution of the Russian Federation become dominant, the stability of Russia may be broken. . . . The growth of Russian nationalism may become one of the most serious problems for the European Community." According to Shakleina, popular support for Russian nationalists, up to now quite marginal, could grow rapidly, "in the atmosphere of deepening political and economic crisis" prevailing in the country.

In comments to the gathering, Shakleina admonished the think-tankers, diplomats, "peace researchers," and journalists from Germany and other European countries that the coming crisis could soon render irrelevant all their talk about institutionalizing a "right of intervention" into sovereign nation-states. She indicated that an intervention from the outside into the territories of the former Soviet Union, or even talk of such a "peacekeeping" action, could generate unpredictable and volatile counter-reactions in Russia, especially at a moment when Russian nationalist ideology, which is usually virulently anti-western, is assuming a greater place within Russian life. Said Shakleina: "We observe very strong tendencies toward disintegration of the Russian Federation. . . . Russia is a very unstable country. The talk of outside intervention concerns me greatly."

The overall conference theme was, "On the path toward global governance: From the principle of national sovereignty to the necessity of intervention." But the weekend's deliberations were dominated by utopian musings, almost always academic and removed from such realities as the war in former Yugoslavia or the building crises to the East, about what kinds of "institutions" and "structures" could be created to strengthen the capability of the United Nations and other

multilateral and supranational agencies to intervene into sovereign states. Even if the majority view among the predominantly German group was against military intervention, most participants seemed almost hypnotized by a future perspective in which issues such as the ecology and human rights would necessitate invoking the "right of intervention," including economic sanctions. The Loccum event, indeed, was conceived as a parallel event to the June 14-25 U.N. World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria.

In the discussion period, what Shakleina said was almost totally avoided by discussants. The exception to this was a question posed by this correspondent, on whether the involvement of the International Monetary Fund and speculators like George Soros in the Russian economy could be regarded as a form of outside, non-military intervention that has already taken place, with consequences just as devastating. Shakleina agreed that this "economic intervention" into Russia had worsened the problems of the economy, such as inflation and the dollar-ruble exchange rate. "This is a kind of intervention we don't need—and we already have it."

## Disintegration and backlash

Her essential point was that the situation in Russia has now entered a phase-change, because of the negotiations between President Boris Yeltsin and the heads of the Russian Federation's autonomous republics and regions (*oblasti*) over the drafting of a new constitution. Yeltsin made crucial concessions during the recent meetings of the Constituent Assembly, granting expanded powers to the republics and regions, in order to win their political support. Now, the heads of these republics and regions are insisting that Yeltsin make good on the promises, thereby worsening the centrifugal trends in Russia and also triggering a backlash in "core Russia," among the 90 million Russians who live neither in the "peripheral areas" (Siberia, etc.) nor in the autonomous republics, and who are angry about what they perceive as the destruction of the "Russian motherland." She said the emotional bitterness growing between Russians and non-Russians is becoming a key factor in life in the Russian Federation.

According to Shakleina, two ideas are circulating as a possible "solution" to the problem of Russian national identi-

ty. The first, "which is very dangerous," she said, is for the creation of an independent "Russian republic," that would be the *primus inter pares* among autonomous republics within the Russian Federation, but which would involve changing "borders and territories" as they currently exist within the Russian Federation. The other is for "the re-creation of Great Russia in its old borders, the ones that existed before the October [1917] Revolution, with no autonomies and no regions, just Russia and that is all. Nobody thinks in terms of restoring the Soviet Union, but this idea would mean the restoration of Great Russia. . . . This alternative may seem wiser than the first, but I don't see any way to achieve it."

In private comments, Shakleina said she feared that the disintegration in Russia, coupled with a parallel internal crisis in the other great power, the United States, over the coming years, are creating the preconditions for "a third world war" in the not-distant future.

### A 'possible second Karabakh'

In both her written paper and public comments, Shakleina warned of the conflict potential in northern Kazakhstan as paradigmatic of the future looming in the territory of the former Soviet Union. The problem there involves ethnic Russians, ethnic Kazakhs, and the Cossacks who live both in this region and across the border in Russia. This conflict could supersede in savagery the conflicts seen up to this time in the former U.S.S.R.

According to Shakleina, the 8 million ethnic Russians who live in northern Kazakhstan refuse to accept Kazakh citizenship, but want to "live in Russia, their historical motherland." There have been reports of severe restrictions placed on Russian-language television, Russian-language book distribution, and so on. Reportedly, 300,000 ethnic Russians are planning to leave Kazakhstan by the end of this year. Added to this are unresolved problems involving the Cossacks and Russian military officers. For all these reasons, "the 'Russian question' in Kazakhstan may become the source of instability and conflict. Some people already call it a 'possible second Karabakh,' " a reference to the bloody war between Armenians and Azeris over the Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The influence of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is a restraining factor, preventing the crisis from going over the edge. But, she said, there are growing internal challenges to Nazarbayev, and if something were to happen to him, the conflict could quickly be detonated. She stressed that the Kazakhstan situation was even more volatile than that in Ukraine, since in the case of Ukraine and Russia, "we are dealing with two Slavic peoples, that share a certain form of Christianity, and where there have been so many intermarriages between Ukrainians and Russians." She also warned of potential large-scale conflicts involving ethnic Russians and local populations in Tatarstan, Tuva, and other autonomous republics of the Russian Federation.

### Eurasians versus Atlanticists

Among the many strands of Russian national-conservative thought profiled in her paper on "Russian Nationalism: Source of Instability?" perhaps the most significant is the "geopolitical" line being put out by Aleksandr Dugyn, a prominent figure in the circles of the anti-Yeltsin National Salvation Front.

Dugyn has published a series of "detective story"-modeled articles on the theme of the coming "total war" between "Atlanticists" and "Eurasians."

In his writings, Dugyn favorably cites the 1920s-30s "conservative-revolution" German ideologue Carl Schmitt, on (in Shakleina's paraphrase) "the resistance and incompatibility of interests between continental and island empires." Dugyn claims that the Russian-Eurasian resistance to what he calls the "utopians and adherents of 'global values,' [who are] supported by the gigantic power potential of the United States," will lead to a situation in which, in his words, "the world may be dragged into the total war."

Dugyn represents the school of geopolitics, but as seen from a Russian-"continental" rather than British standpoint. His ideas exist in dangerous symbiosis with the 20th-century school of Britain's Sir Halford Mackinder, who wrote of an inevitable and never-ending battle between the "sea" or "rim" powers like Britain and the United States on the one side, and the nations of the "world island" (otherwise known as the "Eurasian landmass" or "heartland") on the other. Mackinder's dictum was that whoever controls the heartland, controls the world.

According to Shakleina, Dugyn is one among the several leading nationalist-conservative "opposition" thinkers who "are ready to struggle for the restoration of Russian geopolitical status, to stop the destruction of [Russia's] military might." They adhere to an idea of "Eurasian-Atlantic resistance" and "consider the pro-American orientation of Russian foreign policy [under Yeltsin] as contradicting the historical reality."

Another of the themes profiled by Shakleina is that of Col. E. Morozov, writing in the November 1992 *Nash Sovremennik* journal. In a piece entitled "Russia and the South: Geostrategic Problem," Morozov, Shakleina described, "elaborates on the question of Russian-Islamic alliance as a barrier to American expansion in the East. . . . By the way, he doesn't exclude the possibility of an American-Chinese war for influence in the Pacific."

All the variants and strains in the Russian national-conservative camp converge on supporting "the idea of reviving strong Great Russia with its former international status." Privately, Shakleina reported that Russian nationalist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is becoming very popular among Russian youth, and that certain observers think he could become a "Russian Hitler," whose support base could skyrocket as the internal economic and moral-cultural crisis deepens.