

Clinton undertakes to revamp NATO

by William Jones

Speaking at the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan in The Hague, the Netherlands on May 28, President William Clinton reiterated the commitment of the United States to an undivided Europe. "We must summon the spirit of the Marshall Plan for the next 50 years and beyond," the President said, "to build a Europe that is democratic, at peace, and undivided for the first time in history; a Europe that does not repeat the darkest moments of the 20th century, but instead fulfills the brightest promise of the 21st."

President Clinton had broached the subject earlier in the week at his annual Memorial Day speech at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery on May 26. "Now, at the end of the Cold War," he said, "when there appears to be no looming threat on the horizon, we must rise to Marshall's challenge in our day. We must remember the lessons of those who gave their lives in World War II and those who worked so hard to make sure that we would prevail in the Cold War and not have to go back to war again. . . . We must create the institutions and the understandings that will advance the security and prosperity of the American people for the next 50 years."

The President continued, "At the end of World War II, General Marshall could make that case to America. . . . We fought a bloody war because we did not assume that responsibility at the end of World War I," referring to the catastrophic Versailles Treaty, imposed on Germany by the British after World War I with the blessing of a sympathizer of the Confederacy, President Woodrow Wilson, which laid the seeds for a new war 20 years later.

During his trip to Europe, President Clinton also witnessed the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. This was the agreement which allowed Russian President Boris Yeltsin to accept the enlargement of NATO, scheduled to occur at the upcoming NATO summit in Madrid in July.

President Clinton agreed to go along with an enlargement of NATO when the countries of eastern Europe, which view NATO membership primarily as a form of security against possible Russian aggression, began agitating to be allowed to join. Russia, for its part, viewed NATO enlargement as a military threat and issued strong warnings against it.

However, President Clinton's idea of what NATO should

become in the 21st century involves a transformation from its traditional role as a bulwark against Soviet aggression. While preferring to maintain the organization of NATO in the new "security architecture" of the 21st century, Clinton intended to "pour new wine into old bottles." The internal changes in NATO, the new NATO-Russia relationship, as well as an enhanced role for the Partnership for Peace and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), both of which include Russia, are all meant to comprise this new "security architecture" for Europe.

A departure from geopolitics

Speaking to the London *Guardian's* Martin Walker prior to leaving for Europe, Clinton explained his vision. "It is a fundamental departure from the way geopolitics have been practiced by nation-states," he said. "We are trying to write a future for Europe that will be different from its past. . . . I have always felt that there are ways to preserve national sovereignty and national identity, and still draw closer economically, and still have closer political cooperation and strategic partnership. History is on our side in this."

It was largely due to President Clinton's close personal relationship with President Yeltsin, as well as the promise of increased Western aid and a major role for Russia in the Group of Eight, that convinced Yeltsin to agree to the Founding Act—but only after a lot of hard negotiating. Earlier in the year, in an attempt to convince the Russians that the NATO alliance no longer was aimed against them, NATO made clear assertions that it had "no reason, no plan, and no intention" to change current deployments of nuclear weapons or of new nuclear storage facilities. Nor would old nuclear storage facilities from the Warsaw Pact days be revived for that purpose. These statements were incorporated into the Founding Act. The Founding Act also expresses NATO's intention to "carry out its collective defense and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces"—also a demand that the Russians had been urging on NATO. As administration officials are quick to point out, the assurances in the Founding Act do not have the form of obligations, but express clearly the intent of the NATO leadership. In addition, NATO has assured the Russians that it is interested in pursuing the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement with Russia in order to achieve further reductions in military personnel.

More importantly, the Founding Act also calls for the creation of a Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council aimed at "increasing levels of trust, unity of purpose, and habits of consultation and cooperation between Russia and NATO." The council will also serve as a forum to discuss differences which may arise between Russia and NATO.

Russia will also establish a mission to NATO headed by a representative with the rank of ambassador. A senior military representative and his staff will be part of this mission for

the purposes of military cooperation. Clinton referenced the general goals of this new relationship at the Founding Act signing ceremony in Paris on May 27. "The fate of this continent, Europe, is far from easy," he said. "It is very easy to account of all the wars and skirmishes it has undergone. And each century brought with it new tests and new challenges, new wars to the soil of this continent. Several times attempts to stem this tragic chain of events have been made, but now our efforts can and should bear fruit."

Military cooperation

Administration officials have continually emphasized the need to engage Russia in ever-greater military cooperation. Russia's engagement in Bosnia has generally been the paradigm when administration officials describe the type of ongoing cooperation they hope to achieve with Russia. The Partnership for Peace, in which Russia also participates, will be expanded. As Assistant Secretary of Defense Franklin Kramer explained to the World Affairs Council on May 29, "The new security architecture of Europe includes NATO, but also PFP [Partnership for Peace] and the OSCE. . . . You can't take one without the other, or you're only seeing part of the elephant."

Speaking to the Atlantic Council in Washington on May 20, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, one of the architects of the policy and a key figure in the negotiations with the Russians, characterized the new NATO as "a catalyst for strengthening the values and institutions that the allies have in common—democracy, rule of law, respect for civil and human rights, tolerance of ethnic and religious differences, and civilian control of the military." Talbott underlined that "the enlargement of the alliance should enhance not only the security of its own members, current and new, but that it should also enhance the security of Europe as a whole, members and non-members alike."

Talbott also pointed to administration concerns that the Central and East European countries not "scramble to jury-rig security arrangements, no doubt often at each other's expense and to the detriment of the continent as a whole." Talbott noted that while NATO membership remains open to all who qualify, it's important that "no new lines" be drawn on the map. "That would be to betray the President's vision of an undivided, increasingly integrated Europe," he said.

Speaking to the press on May 27, Yeltsin reiterated Russian objections to NATO enlargement. "We have fully retained our negative attitude to the plans of NATO expansion," he said. At the same time the Russian President underlined that, because of the NATO-Russia agreement, "the negative consequences of NATO expansion will be minimized. . . . A mechanism of consultations and cooperation between Russia and the alliance is being created. . . . It will make it possible to discuss and solve European security issues on an equal basis."

Economic policy must be changed

Some of the basic problems, however, remain unresolved. U.S. acceptance of International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities for the former Soviet countries has undermined any enthusiasm that may have existed for "economic reform" in eastern Europe and, in Russia, they have created an ever more vociferous opposition to President Yeltsin and a growing anti-Western mood. Unless there is a change in this policy—in the concomitant growing suspicion that the West is determined to destroy Russia by means of the IMF policy—no amount of new "security architecture" is going to be of much help.

Clinton indicated an understanding of this situation, when he greeted Russian acceptance of the NATO-Russia agreement. It is, he said, "an agreement that proves that the relationship between NATO and Russia is not a zero-sum game, and that the 21st century does not have to be trapped in the same assessments of advantage and loss that brought death and destruction and heartbreak to so many for so long in the 20th century."

Ironically, the most obvious practical lessons of the Marshall Plan were drawn by Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok. Speaking at the celebrations in The Hague, Kok noted, "Assistance to these [East European] economies is needed on a massive scale. If we are prepared to shoulder this responsibility, we will all reap the benefits, as was the case in the Marshall Plan. The focus must be on infrastructure as the key to linking the peoples of Europe." Perhaps reflecting some of the discussion earlier of the Delors Plan for transportation infrastructure, and the "Productive Triangle" proposal put forward by physical economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche, Kok used the occasion to float this "trial balloon."

Whatever the motives, the economic aspect of the policy of the West toward eastern Europe and Russia remains fundamental. Continued support for the IMF austerity policies can only serve to undermine whatever confidence may be created by the new "security architecture." As underlined by LaRouche (*EIR*, May 9, "Miniver Cheevy on NATO"), one of the key threats that nations face today is that of economic collapse.

Eastern European nations in particular, having been subject to IMF "shock therapy" since the Berlin Wall fell, have seen their industrial infrastructure destroyed. Russia, once a major industrial power, has been reduced to the productive levels of a Third World country. This, more than any outmoded Cold War thinking, has fostered in eastern Europe and Russia an "enemy image" of those countries in the West that support those conditionalities. The contrast between Versailles and the Marshall Plan, alluded to by President Clinton in his Memorial Day speech, lies in the area of economics—an area which most clearly distinguishes between the devastation caused by Versailles and the prosperity sparked by the economic policy underlying the post-World War II revival of Europe.