

Gore and Co. drag U.S. toward World War III

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In March, the same concert of forces behind the failed impeachment of President Bill Clinton, and the ongoing point-less military confrontation against Iraq, prevailed on the President to forgo his vital summit meeting with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, and thus set the world on a course that could lead to the early eruption of World War III, starting in the Balkans. Among the leading players in the latest treachery against the President, according to *EIR*'s ongoing investigation, were: Vice President Albert Gore, Jr.; Gore's national security adviser Leon Fuerth; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; British Prime Minister Tony Blair; the usual gaggle of Congressional Republican fanatics, led, this time, by House International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.); and Israeli warhawks Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon.

Unlike December 1998, when President Clinton was presented with a *fait accompli* to launch the bombing of Iraq by his so-called "Principals Committee" of national security advisers — while under the impeachment threat, and while he was away from Washington trying to revive the collapsed Middle East peace process — this time, on March 23, the phone calls by Vice President Gore to Prime Minister Primakov, which prompted the Russian leader to turn his plane around just hours before his scheduled arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, came after days of heated policy debate at the White House, over how to handle the imminent Serbian ethnic cleansing assault against Kosova, and what role Russia might play in averting more genocide in Europe.

However, several well-placed administration sources insist that the fateful "second call" from Gore to Primakov, on March 23, that prompted the cancellation of the Washington summit, occurred behind the back of the President, who was in crucial meetings with Congressional leaders, seeking their

support for whatever actions the administration was planning against Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

One thing is certain: In the days leading up to Primakov's cancellation of his Washington visit and the launching of NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia, a coalition of hard-core anti-Primakov zealots were vigorously trying to stop President Clinton from pursuing his stated policy of building a close working partnership with the Russian leader. Leading right-wing Congressional Republicans, who spewed wild slanders against the Russian leader, were joined by key "Gore, Inc." players, including former Central Intelligence Agency director James Woolsey and, according to Capitol Hill sources, Fuerth. In fact, a large number of Congressional aides have told *EIR* in the course of our investigation, that for months, Fuerth has been going around Capitol Hill, bad-mouthing Primakov, and holding *him* responsible for the fact that a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal for Russia had not been consolidated.

Furthermore, two of the Russian Prime Minister's leading political enemies inside Russia — former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Russian "tycoon" Boris Berezovsky, recently dumped as Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Independent States — showed up in Washington only days before Primakov's scheduled arrival, to further their factional war against Primakov. Chernomyrdin, whom *EIR* exposed last year as Gore's partner in crime, met with Gore during his March 1999 Washington visit, and, according to media accounts, waged his own campaign among U.S. politicians and Wall Street bankers, to urge Primakov's ouster and his own reinstatement in power in Moscow.

In an interview in Moscow with Agence France Presse (AFP) on March 18, Chernomyrdin indicated the message he had just delivered in Washington: "The dismissal of the

government in March last year was a mistake by the President," he said. "If the government had not been fired there would have been no Aug. 17, no earthquake, there would have been no ruble collapse." In other words, the Wall Street and London sharks, like George Soros, Maurice Greenberg, and David E. Shaw, who form the backbone of the Gore campaign finance machine, would not have lost their shirts in the Russian debt shakeout!

Although AFP claimed that Chernomyrdin had been dispatched to Washington by Primakov, to pave the way for his scheduled talks with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, Chernomyrdin assailed the Primakov government, demanding that "it must change its tone, not to mention a few of its members," if it wants to get money from the IMF. "They will not give it to savages who cannot speak in an acceptable language," Chernomyrdin railed.

After repeated efforts to get official confirmation, a spokesman for Vice President Gore, Tom Rosshirt, finally confirmed, on March 26, that, indeed, Gore had met with Chernomyrdin "sometime in the past two weeks," and that Chernomyrdin had "delivered a letter" from Primakov about the forthcoming visit. Chernomyrdin also met with Camdessus and World Bank president James Wolfensohn, another member of the "Gore, Inc." team.

The financial crisis is driving the BAC war frenzy

As *EIR* reported in our Jan. 22, 1999 issue (Jeffrey Steinberg and Michele Steinberg, "Will Al Gore Be Impeached?"), Gore has committed impeachable offenses in his zeal to reimpose Chernomyrdin in power in Moscow, following Russia's Aug. 17, 1998 near-sovereign default. In fact, it was the string of events triggered by the Russian moratorium on some of its debt payments, and its unilateral announcement that Russian bond settlements would have to be renegotiated, that sent the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) oligarchy into a flight-forward that has seen them provoke a string of military crises and "delightful little wars" all over the globe, leading into the present Balkan mess.

It can be said fairly that, following the Aug. 17 Russian crisis, which, with the Long Term Capital Management hedge fund bankruptcy, the crash of D.E. Shaw hedge fund, and other crises during September-October 1998, came close to triggering the crash of the global financial system, the BAC faction committed itself to overturn the global chessboard, to ensure that President Clinton did not adopt the survival strategy of Lyndon LaRouche—a strategy that *was* adopted by the governments of China, Russia, India, Malaysia, and others in the wake of Aug. 17, and in the wake of the insane reaction by the governments of the G-7, and the IMF, etc. to that crisis.

Specifically, the prospect of President Clinton finally meeting Primakov face to face just weeks before a scheduled summit with China's Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, was viewed as a *casus belli* by the BAC crowd.

The Israelis weigh in

In yet another bizarre twist, Primakov's arrival in Washington was delayed by a crucial 24 hours when, at the last moment, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu insisted that he and Foreign Minister Sharon had urgent business to take up with Primakov in Moscow. On March 22, Primakov met with the two Israeli officials, only to be confronted with phony charges that he was helping to secretly arm Iran with missiles and nuclear weapons. Simultaneously, British intelligence was peddling disinformation that Primakov had been "on the payroll" of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and providing Baghdad with similar "weapons of mass destruction" throughout the 1990s.

That bit of British war propaganda appeared in the April 6 issue of *New Yorker* magazine, in an article by Seymour Hersh, and fuelled the anti-Primakov mood in Washington. Hersh claimed that British signal intelligence had intercepted a wire transfer of \$800,000 from Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to a Primakov bank account in late 1997. Later in the article, Hersh admitted that the British intelligence story was highly dubious; however, the Hersh piece was picked up in Rupert Murdoch's London *Times*, and spread around the world by Reuters and other British propaganda channels.

The President speaks out

On March 19, President Clinton, in his first solo White House press conference in more than a year, strongly reiterated his commitment to pursue partnership relations with Russia and China, much to the chagrin of his BAC political enemies—in and out of his administration.

Asked whether he was concerned that the Primakov government was backing down on the "pace of market reforms," the President responded: "Well, first, let me say that Mr. Primakov is coming here at an important time. And I have urged all of us in the administration, our economic team and our political team, to be acutely aware of the fact that the first thing he had to do was to try to stabilize his own situation, when he took office. In terms of the economic reforms that he needs to pursue, he needs some help from the Duma [lower house of Parliament]. And I would be a poor person to be unsympathetic with a man who is having trouble getting a certain proposal through a Congress. But I think it is important, if we are going to help Russia—and we should; we should do everything we can—that we do things that are actually likely to make a difference, instead of things that will undermine confidence over the long run in Russia, and in the ability of others to invest there. . . . What we have to persuade the Russians of is that we're not trying to impose some economic theory on them. We're not trying to impose more—I don't mean just 'we,' the United States; I mean 'we,' the international financial institutions of which the United States is a part—and that we want to see the back wages paid. We want to see the standard of living of the Russian people rise.

We want to see more investment going in there.”

The President had scheduled two long, one-on-one sessions with Primakov, thus downgrading the role of Vice President Gore, who, from a protocol standpoint, would have been the principal administration official dealing with Primakov during his visit.

In the face of the wild flight-forward by some Congressional Republicans against China over alleged espionage at U.S. weapons labs, the President also forcefully reasserted his commitment to seek a strategic partnership with the leadership in Beijing. He had already upgraded the visit of Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, scheduled for April 6-10, into a state visit.

The President was also asked whether there was a deadline set on launching the bombing of Yugoslavia, if the final mediation efforts failed to bring Milosevic around on the Contact Group peace proposal. “I don’t want to discuss that,” the President said. “We’re working on that. I expect to be working on this all weekend.”

The Primakov flap

According to the March 26 *New York Times*, during those weekend deliberations, a fight broke out within the Clinton Cabinet over the Primakov visit. “The Primakov trip was important because initially the White House had thought it would delay military action against . . . Milosevic, until after the Russian leader’s trip,” Jane Perlez wrote. “But as the situation on the ground in Kosova deteriorated dramatically last Friday and Saturday, Vice President Al Gore, who was to be Mr. Primakov’s host, argued forcefully that the credibility of NATO was more important than ministering to the sensitivities of the Russians.” A senior Clinton administration official told Perlez that Gore “made the case that you do not want to subordinate NATO’s interest to Russia and give Milosevic another week to clean up.”

Earlier, on March 24, John Helmer had written in the *Journal of Commerce* that “there are administration officials who would do almost anything to get rid of Primakov.” Helmer asked: “Was the timing of the attack on Serbia a higher priority for the White House than dealing with Primakov? Would a delay of 48 hours in the air-strike plan have made such a difference [that] it was unthinkable to grant Primakov his request?” While Helmer did not mention Gore or Fuerth by name, he did note that Chernomyrdin had been in Washington recently, and had peddled himself as Russia’s savior.

Primakov’s plane makes a U-turn

The battle over the Clinton administration’s posture toward Primakov that raged throughout the weekend of March 20-21, had clearly remained unresolved as the week of the scheduled Primakov visit, and the last-ditch effort to achieve a peaceful solution to the Kosova crisis, began.

On the morning of March 23, Prime Minister Primakov’s

plane landed in Shannon, Ireland for a refuelling stop. There, Primakov received a phone call from Gore, informing him that the mission to Belgrade by U.S. emissary Richard Holbrooke had failed, and that the situation had taken a turn for the worse. Bombing might be imminent. Gore proposed that Primakov remain in Shannon, pending a final decision by the Clinton administration and its NATO allies about what to do next. Primakov rejected the Gore “suggestion,” preferring to fly on to Washington and to make the final decision on whether he would stay, later that day.

The Gore call came after the National Security Council had met at the White House, with President Clinton present. President Clinton then left to deliver a speech to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees legislative conference across town. There, the President was asked about the Primakov trip. He stated unambiguously that he considered the Primakov meeting “crucial” for both the Kosova situation, and a wide range of bilateral and global policy issues. Clearly, in the President’s mind, the Primakov visit was still on.

However, around 1 p.m., Gore made a second phone call to Primakov, as his plane was flying over Gander, Newfoundland, roughly two hours from Washington. President Clinton did not end his appearance at the AFSCME event until 1:09 p.m. By 1:53 p.m., Presidential press secretary Joe Lockhart had already been handed the text of a statement by Vice President Gore, “explaining” that Primakov had decided to postpone his Washington visit. The chronology suggests that White House reports that Gore had acted behind the President’s back, have verisimilitude.

There are conflicting accounts about what occurred in that second conversation, which prompted Primakov to order the plane to return to Moscow. The most benign version of the conversation, presented by Gore, is that he merely informed his “friend” Primakov that the bombing could not be delayed any longer, and that, as a courtesy, he was giving Primakov the option of making his own decision to not be in Washington when the bombing commenced.

Primakov had a very different version of what occurred, and he gave his report to the Russian press on March 24, shortly after he arrived back in Moscow. Primakov, in effect, accused Gore of trying to set him up. “Gore offered to sign a joint statement saying my visit had been postponed. I could not accept that, because it would have looked like my indirect confirmation we were taking part, together with the United States, in NATO action,” Primakov stated. He added that Gore did not argue when Primakov said the air strikes could damage Russian-American relations, European stability, and threaten further instability in Kosova. Mocking Gore, Primakov said that “the Vice President appeared to be reading from a statement,” adding, “I told him, think again Mr. Vice President, you are not analyzing all the consequences.”

Events of the past ten days have proven that Primakov’s assessment was right.