

Russia, pressed to the wall, moots use of nuclear weapons

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

Already last year, Lyndon LaRouche warned that the policies of the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) oligarchy toward Russia—including the collapse of Russia’s productive economy through so-called “liberal reforms,” as well as the orchestration of local wars and conflicts along Russia’s strategic periphery—were pushing a Russia deprived of in-depth war-fighting capabilities toward the use of *nuclear weapons* as its only remaining option. The correctness of LaRouche’s warnings on this matter has been massively confirmed by an increasing density of statements and reports coming from Russia itself over the last several months. Indicative, for example, is an interview granted to the Aug. 17 issue of the Russian military paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*) by the Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Rocket Corps, Gen. Col. Vladimir Yakovlev. Asked about the external strategic factors determining the future of Russia’s nuclear forces, Yakovlev enumerated:

“NATO’s continued expansion to the East. The affirmation of the U.S.A.’s world leadership by force. The reduction of the United Nations Organization’s influence on processes in the world. The attempt of the North Atlantic Alliance to ignore Russia’s national interests in the Balkans. The *expansion of the zones of instability in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation* [an obvious reference to the Caucasus conflict, the Central Asia situation, and others]. All of this . . . has brought about a *fundamental shift of emphasis*, with respect to the role and means of application of the various structures of our military organization. We have to say today, that while the probability of a large-scale war being launched against Russia has significantly declined, there has been a simultaneous abrupt increase of the threat of its being dragged into local

conflicts. [At the same time, however,] *Russia’s economic condition is not conducive to the development of the comprehensive forces, which are so very much needed in this situation. . .*” (emphasis added).

Doesn’t this mean that under current conditions, the importance of Russia’s nuclear weapons has increased? asked *Krasnaya Zvezda*. Yakovlev answered in the affirmative:

“This increase occurs in tandem with the shift of emphasis toward carrying out the political function of deterring possible aggressions *of any intensity*. . . . All the more so, if we understand that behind any military conflict, behind any infringement of the national interests of Russia, will be the leading world powers and, without a doubt, the U.S.A. In this situation, we shall hardly be able to achieve an adequate response, without demonstrating our nuclear deterrent capability.”

New types of nuclear weapons

These and similar recent statements coming from high-level Russian officials and experts, have to be gauged, among other things, in the light of numerous reports of a Russian decision to develop *new types and forms of nuclear weapons*. Already last June, the Chinese official *People’s Daily* reported, citing Russian military experts, that “after a recent meeting of the Russian national security council, Yeltsin signed an order for ‘non-strategic nuclear weapons.’”

People’s Daily continued: “Military experts announced that Yeltsin had signed a series of documents, and Yeltsin’s order to develop ‘non-strategic nuclear weapons’ was in reality the ‘Program for Developing a New Generation of Tactical

Nuclear Weapons,' which had been set forth by the former Minister of Atomic Energy, specialist on nuclear problems, Mikhailov. The goal is to prepare for carrying out a limited nuclear war. . . . According to reports, in order to match NATO, Russia is planning to produce 10,000 of these miniature and super-miniature nuclear weapons. According to the Russian Atomic Ministry, it is necessary to revise 'the concept that nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction'. . . . Russia is firmly opposing the expansion of NATO, and strongly opposes the U.S. use of force against Yugoslavia and Iraq. . . . Naturally it is clear to the main Western countries, that Russia still has the power to wipe out Europe and North America, but at the same time it is clear to them, that Russia could not accept the similar disaster which would result for itself. . . .

"Russia is really not ready to 'commit nuclear suicide' for the sake of Yugoslavia or Iraq, and can only watch helplessly, after having expended decades of painstaking efforts, expending incalculable financial resources to build up a nuclear arsenal that it cannot use, and which is now just like a pile of useless metal thrown aside. The plan by the Russian Atomic Ministry is intended to change this situation. The logic of the Atomic Ministry is: If we can greatly increase the real possibility of nuclear attack, we can renew the effect of nuclear deterrence; and maintaining the pressure of nuclear arms can become an effective policy. For this reason, Russia should have the possibility 'to use miniature and super-miniature nuclear warheads' to attack military targets at any point on the globe, while at the same time such a 'precision attack' would not trigger a large-scale nuclear war."

Secret projects under way

A number of more recent indications tend to back up the *People's Daily* report, while pointing to increasing uneasiness in the West on the same account. For example, the *International Herald Tribune* of Sept. 1 published a prominent article by David Hoffman on the occasion of an Aug. 29 meeting of veteran Russia nuclear weapons designers at the famous "closed city," Arzamas-16, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first Soviet atomic test. Western reporters permitted to attend the celebration, found the participants engaged in much more than mere sentimental reminiscences of the past. According to Hoffman, "Although details remain secret, there appears to be a drive among some weapons designers . . . to build a new generation of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons . . . which would be Russia's answer to its lack of high-precision conventional weapons" of the sort used by the United States against Iraq and Yugoslavia. Hoffman quoted former Atomic Minister V.N. Mikhailov, a major proponent of the new strategy, saying that the "new generation of low-yield nuclear weapons will have particular significance for the world. . . . These weapons can really be used in case of any large-scale military conflict."

The most far-reaching and most shockingly explicit statement, however, has now come from Mikhailov himself (see *Documentation*). Other relevant breaking developments will be covered in detail in the coming issue of *EIR*. To conclude this report, however, the following point should be emphasized: It would be a serious error to assume that Russia's projected new nuclear weapons development will be limited merely to tactical nuclear warheads in the conventional sense. One should remember, for example, that Arzamas-16 was a key center for Soviet research and development of "directed-energy weapons," including such novel things as nuclear-driven enhanced-radiation and electromagnetic pulse devices. Those who think that "smart" precision-guided weaponry is the "trump card" in military technology, may be in for some unpleasant surprises.

Documentation

The following is excerpted from an article by Academician and former Atomic Energy Minister V.N. Mikhailov, in the Aug. 20-26 issue of Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye (a military supplement to the daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta). It was translated by FBIS. All emphasis has been added by EIR.

The first half-century of existence of our nuclear weapons opened gloriously and worthily. The second half-century of their history begins in late August 1999, and we simply have no right to conceal from Russia that it is beginning with difficulty and ambiguity. On the one hand, new models of conventional precision weapons are being created. The NATO military-technical doctrine entered the stage of special standards of an expandable communications interface for creating ultra-precision weapons based on the ultra-high-capacity of on-board computer complexes (supercomputers), and mastery of nanotechnology in electronics and in the science of metals. *These weapons today are becoming weapons for punishing the disobedient, weapons of a 21st-century empire!*

On the other hand, not one nuclear state is giving up its arsenals. The United States and France have taken large-scale measures to modernize national nuclear weapons complexes. England is optimizing its forces and China is working actively in this sphere. New nuclear powers are appearing in the world and the political situation is fraught with new instability, since technologies are being created for developing and testing nuclear weapons based on scientific and technological progress: subcritical experiments at nuclear test sites; supercomputers for mathematical modeling of complex processes of the development and course of a nuclear and thermonuclear burst; and powerful laser, x-ray, and gamma units. All these are the foundations of 21st-century technology, including the striv-

ing to develop ultra-low-yield nuclear weapons for real use with high accuracy of delivering the warhead to the target.

Creators of the Homeland's nuclear defense shield are not in a very holiday mood today. Much is remembered, but when thoughts turn to the future, a feeling of concern and alarm arises both for conventional and for nuclear arms. This is because with all the obviousness of the conceptual side of the matter, the day-to-day practice of the life of the Russian military and nuclear weapons complex is very far from what the country needs for taking a quiet look at the planet's complicated future. In the past decade Russia has encountered a number of serious threats to the very existence of the people and state. Gross National Product has declined twofold. Science, education, and the most high-tech sectors of industry are in a deep decline. The policy of state atheism, followed over decades, and destruction of the system of Russia's traditional values led to loss of orientation, to a spiritual crisis, and to a decline of morality.

Today there are great threats of a non-military nature—economic, information, and cultural pressure. And NATO eastward enlargement and the situation in other regions contiguous with Russia and the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], generate deep concern in all of us. It is forecast that the 21st century will be one of struggle, not so much of ideological systems as of civilizations relying on the religious factor. The struggle is being exacerbated for our planet's limited resources. The crisis in which Russia now finds itself is deep, many-sided, and long-range in nature, and all this time there has to be reliable protection of Russia and the CIS against external threats.

Our Armed Forces have been weakened so much, that only the nuclear weapons already created by great labors and sacrifices of all the people, are the sole effective means of defense in the present situation, the guarantor of national security. They are capable of depreciating the combat characteristics of all modern conventional weapon systems.

It should be noted that in the critical situation of the U.S.-S.R.'s disintegration and formation of fundamentally new structures for managing Russia, we managed to preserve the nuclear weapons complex, to prevent any kind of emergency situations from appearing in it, and to ensure nuclear safety under conditions of the disappearance of old power structures. And today the Russian Federation possesses unique nuclear weapons collectives, technologies and industries. We can assert confidently that in terms of technical qualities our nuclear weapons system concedes nothing to anyone in the modern world.

At the present time our specialists are working under very difficult economic conditions to solve important problems of preserving and modernizing nuclear weapons to ensure Russia's security.

The creation of a new generation of ultra-low-yield nuclear weapons with little effect on the environment will be of great significance for the world. And there must be no

vagueness over the fact that such weapons actually may be used in any case of a large-scale military conflict involving conventional arms or weapons of mass destruction used to destroy the state or substantially deteriorate the conditions of life of its people. We must respond adequately to the challenges of such future technologies. It also is troubling that nuclear weapon problems often remain outside the bounds of public attention in Russia, appearing in the best case on its periphery. But Russian nuclear weapons deserve the most careful, interested, and constructive nationwide attitude.

Realization of the importance of the nuclear military-political aspect of ensuring Russian state interests must become that common platform which will not be rejected by a single responsible political figure. There is no militaristic nuance in this statement—it has all of Russia's geopolitical experience behind it. There could have been and were different and even antagonistic interests in different social layers of the population in different historical eras, but Russia's defense interest has been understood by everyone in our Homeland in the same way at all times.

Nuclear weapons are the only kind of arms which were only developed, but never employed again after August 1945. Henceforth, as well, they should not have the right to actually be used, in exchange, however, for the right of a deterrent presence in the world. For the sake of this, we preserved Russia's nuclear weapons complex and today have accepted the challenge to create new technologies of the 21st century. And only then will the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki be mankind's first and last nuclear attacks in the last global war in its history. Strictly speaking, it was for the sake of this, that our atomic problem was solved in a country covered by wounds of a great war. For the sake of this, collectives of many thousands and outstanding intellects lived and created. For the sake of this, the earth of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site trembled on an August morning in 1949.

Now we already are separated from that hour by a half-century, but those feelings and aspirations which moved the First Ones have not become obsolete and have not faded. They can be formulated simply: "Peace, tranquility, and prosperity for Russia and all peoples of the world."

Roman Popovich, chairman of the Russian Duma's commission on defense policy, gave a statement in Moscow on Sept. 8, quoted by Itar-Tass:

"Russia has the technologies and possibilities to launch production of missiles of a new class, with detachable warheads," he said.

"The U.S. has practically seceded from the ABM treaty of 1972," he said, and in his opinion, Russia should retaliate against the creation of a new anti-missile defense system in the States, by "developing an entirely new kind of offensive weapons."

"It will not be an intercontinental ballistic missile of the Topol-M class. . . . Let the U.S. waste money."