

Putin Defies Britain, Pursues U.S. Ties

by EIR Staff

While official London fanned a crisis atmosphere around relations with Moscow, with diplomatic expulsions and allegations about near-violations of British air space by the Russian Air Force, and George W. Bush flipped into Dick Cheney's preferred confrontationist posture vis-à-vis Southwest Asia, senior Russian figures during July pushed ahead initiatives to stabilize Russian-American relations.

In order to keep focus, the Russians first have to deflect the assault initiated by the British government, which is intent on embroiling the United States and Western Europe into a new conflict with Russia. After a series of statements by other government officials, it was President Vladimir Putin himself who put the matter in its historical perspective.

President Putin denounced Britain for "colonial thinking"—in its demand that Russia extradite its citizen Andrei Lugovoy to stand trial in London for the murder of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko. "They are making proposals to change our Constitution, which are insulting for our nation and our people," Putin said July 24, alluding to the British Ambassador's latest interview. "It's their brains, not our Constitution, that need to be changed. What they are offering is a clear vestige of colonial thinking.... They must have forgotten that Britain is no longer a colonial power. There are no colonies left and, thank God, Russia has never been a British colony."

Putin's assertion of national sovereignty, and identification of the British imperial mentality, represents a degree of clarity about the current strategic situation generally unmatched by any other actors on the world stage, with the exception of U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche. Putin's understanding of the historical British role is obviously the standpoint from which Russia is continuing to pursue its common interests with the United States, despite the apparent Anglo-American alliance.

The Russia-U.S.A. Group

On July 13, Putin received the members of the new public dialogue group, "Russia-U.S.A.: Looking at the Future," chaired by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov. The group, which had just held its inaugural meeting, was announced on April 26, just after Putin met with U.S. ex-Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton in Moscow.

Members of the group are senior figures from the two countries, among them, Americans Thomas Graham (strategic arms negotiator in the Clinton Administration); former Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn; former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin; senior oligarchical figure George Shultz; Chevron CEO David O'Reilly; and Martin Feldstein, who headed the Council of Economic Advisors under President Ronald Reagan. The Russian participants include former strategic arms negotiator and Ambassador to the United States Yuli Vorontsov; deputy chairman of the electric power company UES, Leonid Drachevsky; Academician Yuri Izrael; deputy head of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute, Victor Kremenyuk; deputy chairman of Russian Aluminum, Alexander Livshits; and Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev, former Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also took part in the meeting with Putin at Novo Ogaryovo outside Moscow.

Congratulating the group on having formed itself so promptly, Putin noted that their discussions had covered "a geopolitical review focusing on relations between Russia and the United States, the world economy, non-proliferation, the energy sector, the future outlook, and common interests between Russia and the U.S.A." He said that these were the topic-areas of his own talks with President Bush, including at Kennebunkport on July 1-2, and that he hoped "that the proposals that emerge from your discussions will



Presidential Press and Information Office

Asserting Russian national sovereignty in the face of the British government's intention to foster a new conflict between the West and Russia, Putin said on July 24, that the British "must have forgotten that Britain is no longer a colonial power... Thank God, Russia has never been a British colony." Here, Putin (right), with then-British Finance Minister (now, Prime Minister) Gordon Brown, in Moscow in 2006.

... be viewed as material that can be used for developing practical policy."

Primakov: Cooperate on Hot Spots

Speaking to the press after the meeting, Primakov announced that the group's next conference would be in mid-December. He declined to reveal the content of the first discussion—saying "let us do our work"—but in the July 12 *Moscow News*, Primakov published an appeal to the United States, to formulate strategic policies in the U.S.A.'s own best interests, including cooperation with Russia, as well as China and India, aimed at resolving conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.

Primakov urged the U.S.A. to reconsider its international priorities. Currently, he said, the main issues dividing the United States and Russia are the U.S. plan to deploy an ABM system in Eastern Europe, and Washington's backing for *de jure* independence for Kosovo from Serbia. "None of these problems is vital for the United States," wrote Primakov, adding that, for Russia, they are. Yet, conflict over these issues has intensified, "at a time when, it would seem, Washington

has an objective interest in close cooperation with Moscow to resolve an array of conflicts, which are far more important for the United States and the international community as a whole." These are Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, as well as Palestinian-Israeli relations.

On crisis after crisis, Primakov sought to highlight every glimmer of a U.S. policy-turn away from global showdown. Primakov, who is famous as a specialist on Southwest Asia, described how the Bush Administration's "surge" policy has come to grief in Iraq. He cited Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, and also the Iraq Study Group ("Baker-Hamilton") report, prepared in the United States itself, at the end of last year, for having called for including Iran and Syria in attempts to resolve the Iraq crisis. "Iran and Syria are showing interest in contacts with the United States," Primakov said, "Russia, which has close ties with Syria and Iran, could be not entirely useless in overcoming the Iraqi crisis."

The publication of Primakov's view of such possible Russian-American cooperation on ending the war in Iraq, made a sharp contrast to the heavy coverage throughout the Russian media, of a London *Guardian* report about Cheney's renewed pressure on Bush to attack Iran.

Primakov suggested that Russia could play a role in Afghanistan, where the NATO operation "is evidently going nowhere." He also brought in the possibility of U.S. cooperation with all three members of the Eurasian Strategic Triangle (as he once named the combination of Russia, China, and India), concerning the "increasingly destabilizing situation" in nuclear-armed Pakistan. Washington's preoccupation with installing ABM systems in Europe, Primakov warned, could cause it to "miss the boat" in Pakistan. The prospect of internal conflict there, "eclipses the concern that Iran could, within a few years, acquire nuclear weapons in 'embryonic' form." Indeed, he added, recent "overtures toward cooperation," on the part of Iran, can be attributed to "a change in the U.S. position: At first, the United States threatened to use force against Iran, but then it made a U-turn and went along with Russia, which believes that the problem may only be resolved by political means. Is it not time for the U.S.A. to start consultations with Russia, India, and China on Pakistan?"

Lavrov Defends Sovereignty

Foreign Minister Lavrov also addressed U.S.-Russian relations, in a comprehensive article prepared for publication in the New York Council on Foreign Relations journal *Foreign Affairs*, but he withdrew it in view of unacceptable proposed cuts, and the addition of a subhead that would mention "a new Cold War." "They expected Lavrov to put his signature under the American vision of foreign strategies, which is rejected by Russia," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "In Moscow, we assume that no new Cold War is possible."

Indeed, writing in rebuttal to a *Foreign Affairs* article by Ukrainian politician Yulia Tymoshenko on "Containing Russia," Lavrov wrote, "The Cold War represented a step away

from the Westphalian standard of state sovereignty, which placed values beyond the scope of intergovernmental relations. A return to Cold War theories such as containment will only lead to confrontation.”

Lavrov posed President Putin’s Kennebunkport offer of broad Russian-American collaboration on missile defense, as “a brilliant opportunity to find a way out of the present situation, with the dignity of all parties intact. . . . U.S.-Russian relations still enjoy the stabilizing benefits of a close and honest working relationship between President Putin and President Bush. Both countries and both peoples share the memory of their joint victory over fascism, and their joint exit from the Cold War. . . . Both sides should demonstrate a broad-minded and unbiased vision, one that represents Russia and the United States as two branches of European civilization. . . . Russia and the United States have nothing to divide them; along with other partners, they share responsibility for the future of the world.”

Academician Sergei Rogov, director of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, likewise called for “strategic partnership,” not a “new Cold War,” in a commentary for RIA Novosti on July 23. This is more true than before, “after the two Presidents met in Kennebunkport,” said Rogov.

Among the areas for immediate cooperation, Rogov listed follow-up to the START agreement on nuclear arms limitation, finalization of the long-awaited agreement on Russian-American peaceful nuclear cooperation, and a gradual convergence of the two countries’ position on the issue of Iran. Rogov hinted at the possibility of creating a regional forum on Iran’s nuclear program, similar to the Six-Party Talks on North Korea.

Before the end of July, there will be a series of meetings between Russian and American technical experts on missile defense, to prepare for the “2+2” meeting of each country’s defense and foreign ministers, in September. These will be the venues for follow-up, or lack of it, to the talks held in Kennebunkport. While the nuclear cooperation agreement is moving forward, the jury is still out on whether or not the U.S. is prepared to change its plans for interceptor missiles in Poland, which Rogov called a real “deal-breaker.”

Also in July, the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mikhail Margelov of Russia’s Federation Council (upper house of the Federal Assembly), toured the United States under the auspices of the U.S.-Russia Business Council. He visited several cities in the Midwest, to promote bilateral economic ties. At the final stop, an appearance before the Foreign Affairs Council in San Francisco, Margelov responded enthusiastically to a written question from a member of the LaRouche Youth Movement, about the prospects for a Bering Strait tunnel crossing between Russia and Alaska. “I am very glad that you bring this up,” Margelov replied, “The ocean can unite, rather than divide us—being only about 55 miles wide.”