

## British target U.S., Germany in Russian power struggle

by Konstantin George and Gabriele Liebig

The Russian Security Council has denounced an article, based on an "interview" with National Security adviser Aleksandr Lebed, appearing in the Sept. 24 London *Daily Telegraph*, as a "fraud" and a "provocation." Lebed had been quoted in the British paper attacking the United States and Germany as the main culprits for the NATO expansion policy, threatening both countries with economic countermeasures and slandering Germany as the "Fourth Reich."

The next day's *Daily Telegraph* had to report: "The Security Council, which General Lebed heads, issued a statement saying that the interview was a 'provocation.'" They quote from the statement: "General Lebed gave no interview to this lady. The quotations attributed to him have nothing in common with what A.I. Lebed has ever said to journalists." The Danish paper *Politiken* cited another passage of the same statement: "The Russian Security Council looks at this fraud as an attempt to create a confrontation with the NATO countries to provoke foreign investments to flee the country, and to create a wave of dissatisfaction in Russia." In the meantime, according to the news agency Interfax, the director of the *Daily Telegraph*'s Moscow office has also distanced himself from the interview in question.

The fraudulent Lebed interview was already the second case of "fireworks" concerning a British daily and the Russian authorities. On Sept. 23, the London *Financial Times* ran a front-page article claiming that President Boris Yeltsin had suffered another stroke, and was unable to work more than 15 minutes per day. Yeltsin's spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, denounced the report as "absolutely false," adding: "We can only guess why a newspaper with such a high reputation for objective journalism published such a questionable report, absolutely filled with unverified information, with reference to anonymous sources, which provoked a serious

drop in the price of Russian foreign debt in London markets." The next day, the collapse of Russian stock prices continued, with the leading Russian oil company, Lukoil, a lucrative target for foreign interests, losing 7.2% of its share values. Apparently, the British intention behind these endeavors is to increase the level of chaos in the Russian situation, and fuel the process of ongoing political civil wars in Russia.

The Russian denial is clear enough. Although it is impossible to determine whether the fraudulent "interview" is a total fabrication or a patchwork of real and false things pieced together in a purposeful fallacy of composition, the fraudulent text expresses, more than anything else, what certain people in London *would have liked* Lebed to say. The *Telegraph* reveals, in fact, a major British intelligence operation under way for some time, playing on Russian fears, and proclivities associated with the Russian historical matrix, to direct Russia's justified rage against Western policies, such as the eastward expansion of NATO, precisely into the wrong channels, i.e., against the United States and Germany.

### Lebed and Kohl

This is the backdrop for another intelligence operation directed against Lebed. On Sept. 21, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published alleged "extracts" from Chancellor Helmut Kohl's talk with President Yeltsin during their recent private meeting. Under the page-one headline "What Helmut Kohl Told 'Friend Boris' Without Witnesses," with the subtitle "In Zavidovo, the German Chancellor Defended Gen. Lebed with His Breast," Kohl is quoted as demanding in an arrogant tone, that Yeltsin's apparatus, the Russian government, and the media assist Lebed instead of attacking him, because "General Lebed is very popular in the West, and the further attacks against him could damage, primarily, your own authority, as we are sure

that you owe your election victory mostly to him.” Also, Kohl allegedly mentioned several times, what “our correspondents” or “our services” on the ground in Russia were telling him about secret things going on in Yeltsin’s own apparatus.

While the Bonn government indeed has shown a positive, or, rather, hopeful attitude toward Lebed, such quotes are certainly very damaging to both Lebed and the image of Germany in Russia. A spokesman for Kohl, on Sept. 25, denied the authenticity of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*’s quotes during an official press conference, saying that they “are false and without any foundation.” The common purpose of both the *Telegraph* and the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* operation is rather obvious.

### The real driving force behind NATO expansion

The *Daily Telegraph* put into Lebed’s mouth: “The German Defense Ministry, clearly determined to expand Germany’s sphere of influence into the East, has driven the expansion policy. With the enlargement of NATO and of the EU [European Union], the whole of central and eastern Europe will come under German economic and political domination. Is this the work of a new generation post-unification policy-makers, building a Fourth Reich? Is nobody in Bonn concerned about how sinister the current policy looks to foreign observers? We cannot forget history. The whole relationship between Germany and Russia, which has been successful in the recent past, will have to be reviewed if NATO enlargement proceeds.”

And for the United States, the paper has Lebed suggesting that Clinton is behind Poland’s entry into NATO for electoral reasons: “As we all know, we are in the middle of an American Presidential campaign. Clinton demonstrates cynically that the Polish vote in Chicago is worth more to him than the relationship with Russia for the next years.”

These quotes, and what followed, turn reality upside down, because Clinton and Kohl were the two heads of state who put off the issue of NATO expansion, at least till after the Russian power struggle has clarified itself. It was Kohl who met with the ailing Yeltsin outside Moscow on Sept. 7, and immediately telephoned Clinton upon his return to Bonn, to hurriedly reach a decision to postpone any concrete discussion, let alone decisions, on expanding NATO till 1997, so as not to provoke Russia at this most sensitive time. Prior to this Kohl-Clinton move, a NATO dominated politically by the British-French Entente Cordiale, had been committed to “settling” the concretes on expansion by December, soon after the U.S. elections.

Beyond that, the alleged Lebed statements ignore the string of “on the ground” provocations staged by Britain against Russia in eastern Europe during September. It was the British, not the Americans or the Germans, who staged the biggest armored forces military maneuvers since the Gulf War for three weeks in September on Polish soil. These involved 3,500 troops and 1,150 vehicles, including 350 tanks and armored vehicles from the British 7th Armored Brigade,

the “Desert Rats” of World War II El Alamein fame, based in Germany under NATO command.

Concerning Lebed’s alleged absurd charges on “provocative” Germany, it was Germany which rejected the original British request that these maneuvers be held in eastern Germany. The German government informed London that Germany would abide by the German unification “Two plus Four” agreements, which banned either stationing or deployment of non-German combat units on the territory of the former East Germany. The Kohl government was not just being “legalistic,” but made it clear that it had no intention of doing anything which Moscow might construe as a provocation.

Also in September, in a dangerous precedent by a NATO member, Britain concluded defense arrangements with both Poland and Ukraine. This was a “tripartite pact” of sorts, signed at a meeting of British Armed Forces Secretary Nicholas Soames, Polish Defense Minister Dobrzanski, and Ukrainian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Kuzmuk. Under the arrangement, Poland and Ukraine granted the British Armed Forces use of Polish and Ukrainian facilities. From the details known, this involved British Army use of Polish training and maneuver grounds, and Royal Air Force use of Ukrainian proving grounds for air-to-ground firing exercises.

Given these facts, which Lebed certainly is aware of, it is implausible that he would ignore all that and single out America and Germany for “punishment,” should NATO expand. The *Daily Telegraph* quoted Lebed: “We watch Germany pushing this policy, then Chancellor Kohl toning down the talk about enlargement while the President is ill. I am telling you that I will therefore have to reconsider the proper attitude to the U.S. and to Germany. Let there be no mistake, German and American industrial interests in Russia will suffer directly as a result of enlargement plans. We will find ways to hit proponents of this policy where it hurts. They both have huge interests here, but our market is exploding. There will be other investors. The future of Europe is being decided. Decisions taken now will haunt the continent for decades, if the arrogant and self-seeking policies currently being advanced carry the day.”

The good thing is that the *Daily Telegraph*’s dirty trick has been denounced by the Russian Security Council as such. The experience may now increase the Russian elite’s awareness of the bigger geopolitical game being played with them, by those who are out to sabotage the “Eurasian land-bridge” policy of economic construction and cooperation of all nations of the continent from the western shores of Europe to the eastern shores of China, with Russia being the crucial link in between. Looking ahead, the unfortunate probability is that the tempo of manipulation against the Russian elite will increase in the next months—due to Yeltsin’s illness and the economic collapse. If the Russian elite does not wake up to the fact that Russia is again being “had” by the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale, then, as so often in the past, the road to strategic calamities is unfortunately wide open.