

Annan, Russians Scramble To Avoid New Aggressive War

by Nancy Spannaus

July 10—With the image of the barbaric murder of Muammar Qaddafi, and perhaps even of a Cuban Missile-style thermonuclear showdown in mind, the Russian government—buttressed by UN-Arab League Envoy Kofi Annan—is currently in a diplomatic scramble to try to avoid a new Hitlerian aggressive war from being launched against Syria.

From the side of the British Empire faction, determined to eliminate the institution of the independent nation-state, which they consider an obstacle to their total rule, the pressure against Russia and China is being ramped up every day, with lies, threats, and increasing political and physical support for the violent opposition within Syria. Increasingly, leading the charge (conveniently for the British gamemasters) is Obama's Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who has hardly missed an opportunity to excoriate the Russians for not agreeing to force Syrian President Assad from office.

As Lyndon LaRouche has consistently emphasized, without the Russian hard line against the Empire's post-Qaddafi drive for new regime-change operations, and the opposition to that drive from top military circles in the United States, the world would already have been plunged into a new conflict, even potentially, a thermonuclear war. Thus it is particularly significant that, in the midst of the escalating push from the "West" to topple Assad, Russian Chief of Staff Gen. Nikolai Makarov is making a trip to meet with his counterpart,

Gen. Martin Dempsey, head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, this week. War avoidance will clearly be at the top of the agenda.

But as long as British puppet Barack Obama remains the Commander-in-Chief, and the British war faction is still running amok, the danger of a thermonuclear war still hangs over the planet.

Non-Stop Diplomacy

On June 30, Annan, with strong Russian backing, pulled together the first Action Group meeting on Syria in Geneva, in the hopes of moving forward a diplomatic solution to the crisis in the context of his ceasefire plan. Due to U.S. (and undoubtedly British) objections, the Iranians were not invited, and Saudi Arabia—heavily involved in funding the terrorist opposition—was not present. But a resolution was hammered out which did *not* set the removal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as a precondition for talks, and laid out a path forward.

Immediately, British Foreign Minister William Hague, Secretary of State Clinton, and others proclaimed that the resolution *did* demand Assad's removal, provoking an angry response from the Russian side.

In a statement to Itar-Tass July 1, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, "The document [the Action Group plan] will not require the resignation" of Assad.

“In the initial version there was a phrase saying that people who prevent peace should be excluded,” he said, but “this runs counter to the principle of an inclusive political dialogue in Syria and the UN Charter principle on the non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign states. This runs counter to the logic saying Syrians themselves should decide their fate.... That is why a thesis saying it is necessary to exclude anyone from the peace process was taken off at our insistence.” Lavrov also stressed in other press remarks that countries that are encouraging, funding, or arming opposition terrorists or fighters must *stop* and force their groups to enter into peace negotiations.

Lavrov was echoed by China’s Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, and, more importantly, by the document itself.

However, the British and Obama Administration kept up the clamor, and, after the convening of a new “Friends of Syria” meeting in Paris July 6 (a meeting oriented to funding and arming the “opposition”), Hillary Clinton upped the ante, and attacked both Russia and China, saying: “I will tell you frankly, I do not think Moscow or Beijing believe they are paying any price at all for standing up on behalf of the regime. The only way that will change is if every nation represented here directly and urgently makes it clear that *Russia and China will pay a price* (emphasis added). They are holding up progress, blockading it. That is no longer tolerable.”

Meetings in Moscow

The Russian government refuses to be intimidated, where world peace is at stake.

On July 9, Moscow began to host several delegations of Syrian oppositionists, and Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the issue again, in blunt terms, in his address to a meeting of Russian diplomats in Moscow.

“The tragic events in Libya are for all to see; we can’t allow this scenario to be repeated in other countries, such as Syria,” Putin said. “We need to do everything to force the conflicting sides to achieve peaceful political solutions to all disputed issues,” reported Bloomberg/Business Week.

Putin also denounced Western nations’ operations to expand their influence through “so-called humanitarian operations, from exports of the ‘missile-bomb’ democracy and intervention in internal conflicts....”

At the same time, Lavrov was meeting with an im-

portant delegation of the Syrian opposition from *inside* Syria, headed by Michel Kilo, a leader of the National Committee for Democratic Change, a grouping of secular nationalists, Marxists, independents, and Kurdish and other minorities.

Lavrov told the delegation, “Russia is one of the countries that actively works with the Syrian government and different opposition forces, in order to implement the Kofi Annan Plan,” reported *Russia Today*. “This will become an important chance to carry out the agreements which were reached in Geneva.”

Lavrov reiterated Moscow’s firm stance in the communiqué on the conflict, reached at the Geneva June 30 meeting organized by Annan, to stop all the violence and start a political process that will allow the parties to decide on a political transition. He also told Kilo, “I hope that your assessments will be useful for us.”

Kilo, who has refused to attend Syrian National Council (SNC) opposition meetings outside Syria because they were sponsored by Qatar and Turkey, and were geared to bring about foreign military intervention, told Lavrov that Syria had become “an arena for an international conflict,” and that he holds out hope that Russia, together with the opposing sides, will be able to “stabilize the situation in the country.”

The opposition leader said that “the regime does not satisfy our demands and it says we do not represent the Syrian people,” but added that his grouping is willing to negotiate with the Assad government.

According to Voice of Russia July 9, the SNC was also in Moscow for meetings with Lavrov. In a first-ever interview with Voice of Russia, SNC leader Abdelbasset Sida, who headed the delegation, said the SNC “would like to understand what Russia’s position on the situation in Syria is,” at which point the SNC will “answer them.”

Sida insisted that “similar to Moscow ... we at the Syrian National Council do not want any foreign military interference.” However, he also said that, contrary to the Geneva statement, “The Syrian problem will start to be solved only when Bashar al-Assad leaves office. If this does not happen, all other proposals, including, for example, formation of an interim coalition government, will make no sense.”

Annan on the Move

While these meetings were ongoing, Annan was also busy. On July 9, he met with President Assad, after which he declared that they had come to an agreement

for a phased de-escalation of the violence in the country. He then proceeded to Tehran, stating that Iran's involvement was essential to peace in the region. From there, he went on to Iraq.

Annan's haste is in part dictated by the fact that his UN mandate is scheduled to run out on July 30, and that his monitoring team, which has been essentially confined to barracks over the past month, is scheduled to report back to the UN Security Council on July 11. It is no secret that those nations, like Obama's U.S., Britain, and France, that have wanted to kill the mission, will be utilizing the ongoing violence, fed by their support for arming the terrorist part of the opposition, to try to remove its mandate.

A Shift in the West?

While the shift of a British oligarchical faction toward Glass-Steagall may well lessen the drive for war confrontation, it is a good sign that initiatives in the direction of preventing a "new Libya" are emerging.

Most significant was a carefully crafted interview with Syrian President Assad broadcast June 8 on the first national TV channel ARD in Germany, conducted by renowned Afghanistan and Syria expert, former CDU member of the Bundestag Jürgen Todenhöfer. Todenhöfer visited Assad in Damascus for the interview, and the full text in English was posted on the ARD website, from which it was picked up in hundreds of Middle Eastern and international publications, including the *New York Times*.

While all this international coverage is peppered with the usual denunciations of Assad, the story has nonetheless gotten out that Assad says he is willing to negotiate with opposition members who are not carrying out violence. It is also significant that a major German TV station interviewed the Syrian President.

In the interview, Assad stressed the importance of the Annan plan, attacking Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United States for sabotaging it. He identified al-Qaeda and other terrorist bands from Tunisia and Libya, and also mentioned the role of drug running in supporting the terrorist opposition. Assad also insisted that the main victims of the fighting were security and army personnel, and pro-government people in the population, with the terrorists appearing in army uniforms, to put the responsibility on the government.

Assad underlined that he still enjoys the support of the population, and that he is ready to work with all non-violent opposition forces.