

September Showdown: NATO Convenes, Congress Returns

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Sept. 1—The next week is showdown time for the Obama Administration and the British Empire on two strategic fronts. On Sept. 4, the heads of state of the NATO countries will convene in Cardiff, Wales, to consider further sanctions and military deployments targeted against Russia. And four days later, the U.S. Congress will return to Washington from its August recess to take up the issue of President Obama's latest illegal war—the deployment of over 1,000 U.S. troops, F-18 fighter jets, and B-1 bombers targeting the Islamic State jihadists in Iraq.

The big question going into the NATO summit is whether the U.S. and Britain will be successful in bullying Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Turkey into going along with another round of punitive sanctions against Russia, on the basis of claims that Russia is conducting an “invasion” of eastern Ukraine. Even the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors in the Russian-Ukrainian border have rejected the claims by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko that “hundreds” of Russian tanks have crossed the border to aid pro-Russian rebels. In a carefully worded statement late last week, the OSCE said that there is no Russian “invasion.” The OSCE acknowledged that there are Russian “volunteers” coming into eastern Ukraine to aid the pro-Moscow rebels, but this does not come close to being an invasion.

Nevertheless, President Obama continued through

the weekend to characterize the Russian actions as an “incursion,” and put pressure on continental European nations to go along with a new round of harsher sanctions. Obama has insisted that Russia is increasingly isolated, and British intelligence mouthpieces such as Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, Wolfgang Münchau, and Edward Lucas have continued to promote the idea that Russia can be brought to its knees by tighter sanctions, including a shutout of Russia from the SWIFT bank clearinghouse system. These propagandists have failed to acknowledge that Russia is moving rapidly to establish a new set of currency and economic relations with non-sanctioning states, starting with the four other BRICS nations, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa.

Obama Ridiculed

Obama returned to Washington on Aug. 28 from his two-week vacation on Martha's Vineyard, and was immediately greeted by a solid wall of media attacks. At a White House press conference on his return, the President told reporters that, even though he had effectively declared war against the Islamic State (IS), and had ordered more than 100 bombing sorties against IS positions in northern Iraq, he “had no strategy yet” for destroying the group. This was after his own Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and his Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey had told reporters a week earlier that IS posed a “strategic threat” to the United States and that the U.S. had to organize a com-



YouTube/RT

A meeting between Presidents Putin of Russia and Poroshenko of Ukraine, in Minsk last week, opened the prospect for a resolution of the conflict between the two countries; but Putin also cautioned that Ukraine was creating severe economic problems for both countries, by joining the EU Eastern Partnership program.

prehensive campaign, led by regional states, to wipe the group out before it succeeded in expanding its control.

Obama's "no strategy" statement was universally panned; he was even criticized for showing up at the White House wearing a casual Summer suit, which one reporter described as "more appropriate for attending a Bar Mitzvah in Miami Beach."

The most apt analysis came from Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who said Aug. 29: "If the President has no strategy, maybe it's time for a new President."

Obama's biggest problems will come up on Sept. 8 when the Congress returns to Washington. Last week, three members of Congress—Walter Jones (R-N.C.), Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), and Barbara Lee (D-Calif.)—wrote to Speaker of the House John Boehner, demanding that he convene hearings on Sept. 8 to force the Obama Administration to come to Congress to lay out the case for military action in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic State.

Lyndon LaRouche has fully endorsed General Dempsey's call for wiping out IS, but is also adamant, as is the general, that the President is obliged, under

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, and the War Powers Resolution, to come to Congress for explicit authorization to carry out further military actions. Jones, McGovern, and Lee were initiating sponsors of House Concurrent Resolution 105, which passed the House in July by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 370-40, demanding that the President get Congressional approval for further action in Iraq, in the form of a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF).

On Aug. 30, Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the House Minority Leader and former Speaker, gave her endorsement to the Jones-McGovern-Lee ini-

tiative, and urged Speaker Boehner to convene the debate to force the Administration to be transparent about its Iraq and Syria plans. Boehner's response has not been made public.

Alliances Needed

The *Independent* newspaper in London confirmed, along with several American publications, that the U.S. is already sharing military intelligence on IS with the Syrian and Iranian governments—in both instances, through intermediaries, such as the German BND (intelligence agency) and the Iraqi government. A Sept. 1 article in the *New York Times* mooted that the U.S. military is already coordinating with the Iranians, who are known to have forces on the ground.

Sane voices in the U.S. and Great Britain are pointing out the need for the U.S. to work with the Assad government against the Islamic State. Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations since 2003, and former Director of Policy Planning for the U.S. State Department under Colin Powell, in an article published in the London *Financial Times* Aug. 26,

wrote that it is necessary for the United States to look to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the ground forces to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and that it cannot be defeated by airstrikes alone.

Haass said, “The fact is that the world cannot defeat ISIS in Iraq, or limit its potential elsewhere, if it continues to enjoy sanctuary in Syria.” He then laid out four possible options—three of which he admits are out of the question. First, a ground invasion by the U.S., which, “given public attitudes, it is not going to happen.” The next option—an Arab expeditionary force—is something he and every other Middle Expert knows will never happen; and third, looking to the Syrian moderate opposition, which has been an utter failure since 2011.

“The fourth option is to turn to the regime of Mr Assad to take the lead in defeating ISIS. This would mean accepting for the foreseeable future a regime that has committed war crimes; that is supported by Iran and Russia, with which the west has considerable strategic differences; and that is opposed by countries, including Saudi Arabia, with which the U.S. has more often than not co-operated....

“The Assad government may be evil—but it is a lesser evil than ISIS, and a local one.”

On Aug. 29, the *Financial Times* weighed in again on the issue of working with Assad in an article by Hoover Institution expert Philip Bobbitt. After recounting compromises that states have made with former enemies ever since the 15th-Century Renaissance, including Henry Kissinger’s talks with Mao Zedong, Bobbitt quotes Haass’s Aug. 26 article, and endorses his fourth option.

Confronting Russia?

Obama’s inflammatory rhetoric against Russia is also blowing up in his face. While much of Congress is mindlessly jumping on board, on Aug. 31, Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), head of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, took the occasion of a Sunday talk show appearance to warn the President that he was on the wrong track. She said:

“I think there ought to be some direct discussions with Vladimir Putin. I think he is the singular figure in Russia. Russia is a huge country. Ukraine is a large country. The Crimea is gone. I think there ought to be steps taken to send people to talk with him; to have our

Secretary of State talk with him personally. I think this is deeply personal with him. I really do. And I think he’s calling the shots himself. And he’s enjoying intensely high favorability in his country.”

Feinstein continued, “People say, ‘Well, just wait until the sanctions bite and the economy slips.’ I don’t think so. I think if Russians follow him, and up to date, they are following him, the Russians are very brave and very long-suffering, and they will tough out any economic difficulty.”

Feinstein is right, and anyone with a reality orientation knows it.

On Aug. 29, addressing a youth camp outside of Moscow, President Putin denied that there was any Russian invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, he reminded the West that it would be a serious mistake to “mess with Russia,” which has one of the world’s largest nuclear weapons stockpiles (see box).

Putin had held a four-hour meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart, Petro Poroshenko, in Minsk, Belarus last week, which opened the prospect for a resolution of the conflict between the two nations; but in his public remarks, Putin cautioned Ukraine that it was creating severe economic problems for itself and for Russia, by signing onto the European Union Eastern Partnership program, which would allow European goods to be dumped on Ukrainian and Russian markets. Even as Poroshenko and Putin were opening a dialogue, Ukraine’s Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced that he planned to introduce legislation ending Ukraine’s status as a “non-bloc” nation, and pushing for early membership in NATO. Ukraine has already joined a joint military strike force with NATO countries Lithuania and Poland.

Last week, Poland refused to allow a Russian civilian plane carrying Defense Minister Sergei Shoighu, who was returning from a visit to Slovakia, to fly over its air space. This petty provocation is just the kind of thing that is driving a confrontation with Russia.

Ultimately, the British and their allies, including President Obama, are pushing a new Cold War, or worse, against Russia, as a first step toward trying to break up the BRICS alliance for a new world economic system. This new alliance is based on freeing the world from the vise grip of the imperial financial system that has dominated world affairs since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The post-Bretton Woods financial system, centered in the trans-Atlantic region, is

bankrupt beyond repair, and is on the edge of collapse.

It is that danger, as well as the emergence of a viable alternative in the nations aligning with the BRICS New Development Bank and related initiatives, that has the British in a state of desperate flight forward. That is

where the danger of war comes from, and the best way to end the danger is by pulling the plug on Obama, his Congressional protector Speaker Boehner, and the entire British financial system, by immediately reinstating Glass-Steagall in the U.S.

Putin: Attacks on Ethnic Russians Are Nazi-Like

Aug. 29—Speaking to the annual youth event at Lake Seliger in northern Russia, President Vladimir Putin compared the actions of the Ukrainian authorities against Russian ethnics to World War II Nazis.

In a very personal, several-hour session, Putin told the youth, “Sad as it might seem, this reminds me of the events of World War II, when the German Nazi troops surrounded our cities, like Leningrad, and directly shelled those cities and their residents,” reported *Russia Today*. “Why do they [the militias] call this operation military-humanitarian? Because here’s the sense of their actions today: to drive the artillery away from the major cities, so that they can’t kill people. And what do we hear from our Western partners in reply: that they can’t do that, that they should allow themselves to be torn to pieces and killed, and then they will be good guys? They [Kiev] should sit down at the negotiating table.”

‘We’re No Fools’

From the quotes in *Russia Today*, the Lake Seliger event was a frank, open discussion that went after the Anglo-American policies.

“We’re no fools,” Putin said. “We saw symbolic cookies handed out on the Maidan [by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland—ed.], information support, political support. What does that mean? A full involvement of the U.S. and European nations into the process of the power change: *a violent unconstitutional regime change* (emphasis added).

He added that “the part of the country that disagreed with that [coup] is being suppressed with the use of jets, artillery, multiple launch systems, and

tanks.... If these are today’s European values, I’m gravely disappointed.”

Putin wryly retold the old joke that in the U.S.S.R., everything made “turned into a Kalashnikov,” to say that “anything the U.S. touches turns into Libya or Iraq.”

But the issues addressed were deadly serious: He said that the Kiev massacres of citizens in “Donbass, Luhansk, Odessa,” make “clear to us what would have happened to Crimea” if Russia had not “taken measures to provide free expression” to the people of Crimea.

He also issued a warning about the nuclear threat, saying, “Our partners, whatever shape their countries are in, and whatever foreign policy concept they are following, should always understand that it’s better not to tangle with us, in terms of a possible armed conflict. But, thank God, I think it’s not occurring to anybody today to launch a major conflict with Russia.... Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear states. It’s not words, it is the reality.... We are strengthening our nuclear deterrence forces, we are strengthening our armed forces. We are beefing up our potential and will continue doing so.”

But, this is “not to threaten anyone, but to feel secure.”

Earlier today, Putin issued a statement calling on the militia groups of eastern Ukraine “to open a humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian service members who have been surrounded, so as to avoid any needless loss of life, giving them the opportunity to leave the combat area unimpeded, and be reunited with their families, returned to their mothers, wives, and children, and to quickly provide medical assistance to those who were injured in the course of the military operation.”

In the same statement, Putin commended the militia for “achieving a major success,” and called on Kiev’s putsch government, again, to stop military action, call a ceasefire, and sit down at the negotiating table.