

Cohen and Hoon pursue policy of strategic confrontation

by Rainer Apel

The 36th annual Conference on Security Policy, known as the Wehrkunde conference, was held in Munich, Germany on Feb. 5-6, and featured a sharp contrast between the outlook of the insane British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) policy grouping, against most of the rest of the world. Traditionally a gathering of the Western military-industrial sector and defense experts, the meeting this year also included representatives from Japan, Russia, China, and India. Speaking on behalf of the BAC, U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen and British Defense Secretary Geoffrey Hoon beat the drums for confrontation with what they chose to brand as “rogue nations.”

By contrast, the representatives from China and India, in particular, addressed urgent concerns about the world economic and financial crisis, and the need for changing the “rules of the game” by which international politics is played.

Cohen, in his keynote speech to the conference, rattled his saber at such “rogue nations” as Iraq, Iran, Libya and, notably, North Korea. The assumed missile “threat” from these nations, Cohen argued, justifies current U.S. plans for a National Missile Defense (NMD) program. Cohen’s view received open, aggressive support from numerous British participants in the conference, against a more reserved attitude by other participants from the European continent.

Cohen’s speech continues the theme he struck in his keynote address to the conference last year, which dealt prominently with Serbia and its Milosevic regime. A few days later, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made sure that the Rambouillet talks on Kosovo collapsed, providing the needed pretext for the 11-week air war of NATO against Serbia.

It is quite clear, however, that the so-called “rogue” nations are not the real issue, but the sovereignty of Russia,

China, and India—the rising powers of Asia and the Pacific region—is.

The strategic tinderbox

What the BAC grouping is pursuing, is the very same policy that has, over the last year, spawned a series of dangerous little wars, which could easily spin out of control. One of the major cockpits is the eastern European region, from the Balkans to Central Asia, where the combination of the International Monetary Fund “liberalization” policies, and the thrust toward continued NATO expansion, has created a cauldron of tensions that many are saying will erupt into new conflicts. Just over the last weeks, the revelation of support for the Chechen rebels by Polish parliamentarians, and the announcement by NATO Secretary General Lord Geoffrey Robinson that NATO would train Ukrainian forces, have further inflamed the tensions which NATO created with the Kosovo war.

Some high-level Western circles are already sounding alarm bells on the dangers accumulating on this Eastern “fault line.” This includes an editorial in the *Times* of London Feb. 7, by Lord William Rees-Mogg, known to speak for a faction of the British establishment. Rees-Mogg warned that “NATO must beware of repeating the Vietnam catastrophe,” which could occur if NATO overextends itself in pursuit of a new “Great Game” into the Caspian and Central Asian regions.

But, there was no such sense of caution reflected by the leading British and American speakers at Wehrkunde.

Portents of conflict

Gen. Leonid Ivashov, of the Russian General Staff, responded angrily to Cohen’s remarks on “rogue” nations, saying with some irony that people in the West seem to neglect



U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen (left) with British Secretary of State for Defense Geoffrey Hoon, at the Pentagon on Jan. 26. In their speeches to the Wehrkunde meeting in Munich, they raved about “rogue nations” and the alleged “success” of the NATO war against Serbia, while ignoring the vital issues raised by other conference participants.

the simple fact that in order to develop a real threatening potential of intercontinental ballistic missiles, one needs a specific level of economic development. North Korea, for sure, does not have that kind of economy, Ivashov said, adding that the only conclusion to be drawn is that Cohen’s warnings are actually aimed against Russia and China.

Another bone of contention was the Taiwan issue, which was discussed as a potential point of conflict between the United States and China.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. National Security Adviser under President Jimmy Carter, who is still devoting his energies to geopolitical schemes to carve up Russia, raised the question of Taiwan in his presentation to the conference. Brzezinski, who is always playing one “card” against another, chose in this instance to present himself as a defender of U.S.-Chinese friendship. He said that he “fears” the Taiwan issue will become a hot foreign policy item in this year’s U.S. Presidential election campaign, and that populist excesses in the United States as a result of that would be detrimental to U.S.-Chinese relations.

Wang Guangyan, China’s Deputy Foreign Minister, responded to that by stating that leaders in Beijing are well aware of that danger, but that China, for its part, is committed to do its very best not to allow such a development to cause any lasting damage to relations with the United States. As long as America and Taiwan respect the One China policy, every problem can be solved peacefully, in the course of time, he said; but if American weapons are shipped to Taiwan as part of a provocation scenario against mainland China, things would turn complicated, Wang warned. He added that he

hopes that reason will prevail on the American side during the Presidential election campaign.

The toll of war

The morning session on the first day was dominated by Cohen’s assessment (which must be the product of delusion, or an outright lie) that the Kosovo War had been a very successful one for NATO and the West. The British representatives wanted Cohen to go further, however, and voiced their anger about the fact that the Americans had made too many concessions to their continental European allies.

Cohen was not very enthusiastic about these complaints from the British, but he also disliked an intervention by Indian Gen. Satish Nambiar, who served as the first commander of the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) in Bosnia (1995-96). Nambiar said that he knows from the inside, during the Dayton talks on Bosnia, the Kosovo issue was separated out, which laid the seeds for future conflict, and that everybody in his right mind should have known that. War in Kosovo could have been prevented, but it wasn’t, and appropriate lessons should be drawn. The “sophisticated” air force and its technology, which Cohen had praised in his keynote address, did, after all, kill many innocent civilians, and destroyed a great deal of civilian infrastructure in Serbia and Kosovo, Nambiar charged.

The concerns expressed by Nambiar were also reflected in the speech given by Brajeesh Mishra, India’s National Security Adviser, who said that politics in the 21st century should not be a continuation of the politics which, in the 20th century, caused many wars, particularly at the cost of civilian

lives. While during the first 50 years of the 20th century, 50% of all wartime casualties were civilians, during the last decade of the century (the Kosovo War included), civilians accounted for fully 80% of all casualties, Mishra said.

Mishra continued: "The fact that Russia, China, and India have each expressed disquiet over certain U.S. policies, has led Cold War theorists to visualize a strategic alliance among these nations. Such perceptions reflect arcane thinking. Concerns of Russia, China, and India relate primarily to apprehensions that the post-Cold War period is witnessing a sense of triumphalism and disdain for rules and norms of international behavior. Such concerns have been echoed in Europe, too, including in France and Germany. For China and Russia, these apprehensions are further aggravated by the expansion of NATO and unilateral pursuit by the U.S.A. of its antiballistic-missile capabilities."

The economic crisis is a threat to peace

China's Wang Guangyan, in his speech, had voiced concerns similar to those of India and Russia. He also addressed the need for a profound reform of the existing world economic and financial structures: "Today, the global economy is increasingly becoming a closely linked and inseparable whole. However, at the same time, the gap between the North and South is widening, as is the disparity in wealth. This not only does disservice to developing countries, but also impairs international peace and security.

"China stands for the reform of the existing international economic and financial systems in such a manner as to fully reflect the legitimate concerns and reasonable demands of the developing countries and effectively safeguard their rights and interests. The developing countries should have the right to participate as equal players in the global economic decision-making and in the formulation of the relevant game rules, while developed countries should undertake greater obligations.

"No country should be allowed to undermine the economic security and development of other countries by virtue of its economic, technological, and financial superiority. True global prosperity and stability won't be possible unless the developed and developing countries attain sustainable development together."

Wang's remarks were backed by India's Mishra, who said that in spite of widespread awareness of the problems that became evident in the Asian financial crisis of 1997, solutions are still "elusive" today.

None of the Western participants took up these interventions from China and India for serious debate. It seems that decadent Western strategists are so absorbed by the search for "rogues," that they have no energy left to take a look at the internal problems of their own globalized economic-financial system. The credit for addressing those problems, goes to the Chinese and Indians, but, without the Western nations coming to their senses, the fuse to further conflict is lit.

LaRouche's ideas are scrutinized in Russia

Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche's ideas continue to receive prominent attention in Russia. In a seminar in Moscow in early February, and in an interview reprinted in the Moscow weekly *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta* of Feb. 3, LaRouche's ideas were discussed in detail. The coverage came as a number of prominent Russians endorsed LaRouche's Presidential campaign (see *National*, p. 53).

"The Social and Political Situation in Russia" was the theme of a three-hour methodological seminar held during the first week of February at the Institute of Physics of the Russian Academy of Sciences. More than 100 scientists and staff members from institutes of the Academy and independent, public institutes, including the Schiller Institute for Science and Culture, participated in the event.

There were three keynote reports: "The Results of the Dec. 19 State Duma Elections and Subsequent Political Decisions," by Prof. Dmitri S. Chernavsky; "The Wrong Orientation Toward Globalization and 'Liberal Values,'" by Prof. Taras V. Muranivsky; and "The Importance of the Ideas of American Economist and Political Figure Lyndon LaRouche for an Evaluation of the Situation in Russia," by Karl-Michael Vitt, a leader of the Schiller Institute in Germany.

Professor Chernavsky assessed the resignation of Boris Yeltsin as President of Russia, the appointment of Vladimir Putin as Acting President, the conflict in the State Duma (lower house of parliament), and related events, as simply the consequences of the impressive results achieved by the "Unity" bloc in the Dec. 19 State Duma elections. Ten million voters cast their ballots for a bloc which has no clear program, and calls for neither capitalism nor communism, nor private property, nor democracy. The leaders of "Unity" campaigned on slogans for a "Great Russia," for conducting relations with the West "from a position of strength," for bringing order to the country, for defeating corruption, and so forth. Chernavsky called the alliance of "Unity" and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in the State Duma, "a patriotic bloc." Their slogans coincide, and together they represent a sort of "national idea," whose leader and purveyor is Putin. Chernavsky considers a stronger role for the state in domestic and foreign policy to be good, but doubts that it will be possible to defeat corruption and other evils in a short period of time. It is evident that far from democratic methods of struggle lie ahead.

Professor Muranivsky, who is president of the Schiller Institute for Science and Culture (Moscow), harshly criticized