

Atlantic Council Promotes World War

by William Jones

Feb. 3—Preparations are now underway in the Establishment boardrooms of Washington for transforming the current civil war in Ukraine into an all-out confrontation between East and West.

The latest drumbeat for war came from the Atlantic Council, not surprisingly, since they were the first to whole-heartedly embrace the U.S.-appointed Ukrainian regime of Arseniy Yatsenyuk after the U.S.-backed ouster of President Yanukovich, giving the “new team” a forum for their steady volleys against Russian President Vladimir Putin. The “atlanticist” Atlantic Council joined with the “liberal” Brookings Institution and the Chicago Council for Global Affairs to publish a report calling on the U.S. to give the embattled Ukrainian regime “lethal defense assistance.”

The widely pre-publicized report was authored by a gaggle of former diplomats and defense officials, who, in the last couple of months, had been conferring with NATO military officials in Brussels, and with the Ukrainian government in Kiev and its military command at Kramatorsk.

The Build-Up Event

The arms issue was first broached at a Jan. 30 Atlantic Council event, entitled “Toward a Transatlantic Strategy for Europe’s East,” whose ostensible topic was strategies for the upcoming EU Summit in Riga, Latvia. The real topic was Ukraine and the implementation of a new, more strident policy toward Russia.

It is obviously hoped by the organizers of this event that with Latvia sharing the chairmanship of the EU for the first part of this year, the EU may be, with U.S. assistance, provoked into implementing a tougher policy against Putin, in order to counter the opposition coming from Germany and France. Indeed, it was the Baltic States and the East European countries that lobbied hardest after the demise of the Warsaw Pact to keep NATO intact, rather than to form something more inclusive of Russia.

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics opened the event, saying that the upcoming summit “must reaffirm a strong Eastern commitment.” He called for a comprehensive aid package to Ukraine and urged the EU “to fight the Russian propaganda and help our East European partners.”

As one participant commented, the Baltic States wouldn’t take such an up-front position against Moscow without the U.S. behind them. And sure enough, Rinkevics was quickly supported by the comments of Cheneyite and Atlantic Council Board member Stephen Hadley. “We are living in a different space today,” Hadley said. “Putin wants a division of Europe and he wants to prove that Article V [which states that NATO will come to the defense of another member that has been attacked—ed.] does not apply to the Baltic States. . . . We have to take a more forceful and active role,” Hadley said. “We have to put Putin and his strategy at risk. And we have to do something now. . . . We must be more decisive, aggressive, and robust in order to convince Putin to change his policy and to accept a Ukraine solution without a division of the country.”

No doubt to the delight of the Latvian Foreign Minister, Hadley also called for “a permanent military deployment in the Baltics,” and urged “providing arms to Ukraine and to others.” “The Ukrainian forces will not be able to defeat Russia militarily,” he conceded, “but these weapons will raise the cost of the conflict for Russia.” Hadley claimed, however, that none of this would cause Russia to respond with stronger measures themselves, much less provoke nuclear war.

Division in the Ranks

Hadley had, by and large, set the tone for the event, with a number of Eastern European diplomats sounding the same alarm bells. Former Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski referred to Crimea joining the Russian Federation as an “Anschluss.” “Putin wants a situation where eastern Ukraine can decide the policy of all of Ukraine,” Sikorski said. “This would make the country ungovernable.” “And what can we do about it?” he asked. “No one in Eastern Europe will adopt a brave approach toward Russia without U.S. support.” But it was precisely such support that events like this were meant to engender.

The only opposing voices during the course of the day came from the Spanish representative, Ana Palacio, the former foreign minister, and Elmar Brok, the chair-

man of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. Brok, a member of the German Christian Democratic Union, and the only German to speak during the proceedings, was a particular target of the hawks arrayed against him. But he held his own. He warned against any attempt to enlarge the European Union in the next five years, as some of the speakers had suggested, noting that none of the countries were prepared for this economically.

Brok was also extremely irate at the Russia sanctions. “The U.S. calls for more sanctions,” he said, “but these are borne by Bulgaria, and not by Texas.” He noted that the sanctions on Russia had forced Greece to shift its oil purchases from Russia to Iran, where they had to pay a much higher price.

On this point, he was backed by Palacio, who also urged that the EU should cooperate with the Eurasian Economic Union (which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia, with Kyrgyzstan to join soon). She also warned against raising any false hopes in the rabid anti-Russian regimes of Eastern Europe.

A Blueprint for Escalation

On Feb. 2, the Atlantic Council provided the venue for the presentation of a report entitled “Preserving Ukraine’s Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do.” It called on the U.S. government to begin providing lethal aid to Ukraine. The signators of the document included Brookings’ Strobe Talbott; former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst; Amb. Steve Pifer (also a former ambassador to Ukraine); Amb. Ivo Daalder, the former U.S. permanent representative to NATO; Adm. James Stavridis (ret.), former SACEUR commander; former Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy; former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Jan Lodal; and Gen. Charles Wald (ret.), former commander of the U.S. European Command.

The document starts off with a lying chronology which omits the reality of the Ukrainian coup, and blames Russia for the escalation. It then lays out a fairy-tale scenario of behavior modification to change Russia’s posture. “Maintaining Western sanctions are [sic] critical but not by themselves sufficient. The West needs to bolster deterrence in Ukraine by raising the risks and costs to Russia of any renewed major offensive.

“That requires providing direct military assistance

in far larger amounts than provided to date including lethal defensive arms.” The signers propose that Ukraine be provided with \$1 billion worth of such aid in 2015, and again in 2016 and 2017. The equipment they call for includes: counter-battery radars, medium-altitude UAVs, electronic counter-measures against opposing UAVs, secure communications facilities, armored humvees, and light anti-armor tank missiles.

In presenting the report, the speakers mirrored the views (with only subtle shadings of emphasis) stated by Stephen Hadley a few days before. Some of them had recently visited NATO headquarters, where they were briefed on Ukraine, and traveled to Kiev and Kramatorsk, the “counter-terrorism” headquarters of the Ukrainian Army.

Talbott kept venting about how Putin had challenged the liberal world order with his “blatant invasion and occupation of portions of Ukraine.” Some in the audience asked whether these new measures might not lead to further escalation on the part of Russia. “While there is a danger of some degree of escalation here,” Talbot said, “Putin seems already bent on escalation.”

When one questioner asked whether these weapons would not end up in the hands of the renegade fascist bands running their own operations against the “insurgents” in the East, Pifer admitted that there were such “private armies,” but had been assured that the equipment would end up in government hands.

There was also a question raised as to whether *all* the NATO countries would accept such an escalation. The speakers agreed that would not be the case, which is why they were turning to the U.S. to act unilaterally. While they indicated that some, including Germany, would not agree to provide weapons themselves, Talbott felt that Chancellor Angela Merkel would not raise an objection to the United States doing so. Talbott praised Merkel’s stance, saying “she has been solid throughout.”

While the Brookings/Atlantic Council report does not officially represent the policy of the Obama Administration, clearly the hope of its authors is that the objections raised by Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey to such a provocative policy are being whittled away by the continued violence in Ukraine, and that this last bastion of resistance against the insane war policy will have been overcome.