

Energy Geopolitics: Putin Gets Mugged in Finland

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Most people won't pay any attention to this week's energy summit in Lahti, Finland, but they should. It is particularly instructive for anyone who is interested in the latest developments in the global resource war.

The purpose of the meeting was to work out the nettlesome issues of energy policy, but the hidden agenda was to pressure Russian President Putin into signing away the control of his country's critical assets to the big-players in the world energy cartel. The proposed "Energy Charter Treaty" is designed to tie up Russia's resources through legal obligations which serve the overall interests of the energy giants. The treaty is no different than the EU Constitution which was voted down last year when the "informed" European public realized that it was just another boondoggle set up by big business to override national sovereignty, environmental safety, and civil liberties. The Energy Charter Treaty and the EU Constitution focus on the very same objectives, that is, establishing the legal framework for placing the world and its dwindling resources in the hands of a small cadre of obscenely-wealthy western plutocrats.

Western elites have been waging an intensive public relations campaign against Putin since he nationalized Yukos Oil and put it under control of Gazprom. Gazprom is quickly growing into the world's largest oil corporation and will probably achieve that goal within the decade.

Putin's move to nationalize the industry has been popular at home (his personal approval rating is consistently over 70%) and has had a profound effect on stabilizing the ruble and raising the standard of living. Most Russians still remember the country's bleak experiment with "free market" capitalism during the 1990s when the ruble fell through the floor and Russia's national assets were raffled off by the chronically-inebriated Yeltsin (under the supervision of western advisors). "The Oligarchs", as they were known, contributed significantly to Russia's economic decline as well as its loss of prestige in the world. Putin has restored national pride, fueled the new prosperity, and is quickly rebuilding Russia into a world power. If energy prices continue to soar, as they undoubtedly will, Russia will be a force to reckon with throughout the 21st century.

American politicians and corporatists are concerned about Russia's meteoric rise and are developing strategies to undermine its progress. The ultimate goal is to integrate Russia's prodigious natural resources into the global system, which is another way of saying that a plan is being devised to assert direct-control over Russian oil and natural gas.

Since greed is inexhaustible, it is not likely that this battle will end anytime soon.

Putin's name already features prominently in the register of American enemies, which now includes, Ahmadinejad, Chavez, Morales, Castro, Kim Jung-Il, al Assad, Haniyeh, and

Muqtada al Sadr. Anyone who defends their national interests over the prevailing system of global feudalism can expect to find themselves in Washington's crosshairs and to be duly demonized in the American media.

The Energy Charter Treaty

According to the BBC, the proposed Energy Charter Treaty would create a "trade partnership" which would make it easier for companies to invest in the Russian energy sector, and use Russian pipelines to export the oil and gas they produce. The pact would also be designed to ensure that Russia treated all European countries equally, and lay the basis for a long-term trade partnership."

Why?

Why should Putin allow foreign companies to share in Russia's wealth? Putin is not running a "charity". He is expected to use his nation's resources to improve things for the Russian people, which is exactly what he is doing. The insistence that he do otherwise by entering into a "trade partnership" violates the central tenet of capitalism; the right to private property. These are Russian resources. They do not belong to the extended family of predatory corporatists.

The meeting in Finland has nothing to do with any principled appreciation of capitalism or "fair play" or anything else for that matter. It's just more-of-the-same extortion and coercion masquerading as "multilateral negotiations." It's all baloney.

Putin has been criticized for using oil and natural gas to send a message to rivals in Georgia and Ukraine. Vice President Cheney has called this "blackmail". In reality, it is an effective and peaceful way to send a message to provocateurs that there are limits to one's patience. It is unwise to tweak the nose of the man who is heating your house and powering your vehicle.

Besides, Cheney is the last one who should be talking about "energy blackmail". Can anyone forget the extortion-racket that Enron conducted against the American people; bilking them of tens of billions of dollars while the Federal Energy Commission (FEC) breezily looked the other way? Or the skyrocketing gas prices (which created unprecedented profits for the oil giants) which have mysteriously plummeted at the pump just weeks before the mid-term elections?

Putin is no tyrant and the media's spurious attacks on him are ludicrous at best.

Is it mere coincidence that America's stooge in Georgia, Mikail Saakashvili, arrested 4 Russian officials inciting a furious response from Moscow, just weeks after American elites decided to take a "tougher approach" with Putin? Or is it beyond the realm of imagination to think that the Bush administration would engineer a crisis just to provoke Russia?

And, what about the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya?

The western press seems to have found Putin guilty already without any evidence whatsoever. Thumbing through the 1,400 articles written about the incident, one would believe that they found Putin's bloody fingerprints all over the corpse, but, of course, that is not true.

Consider this absurd piece in the New York Times 10-22-06 edition by Thom Shanker: "Ms. Politkovskaya, shot to death this month in what appeared to be a professional killing, had made a name for herself with tough reporting on the war in Chechnya, and was a fierce critic of the administration of President Vladimir Putin."

Therefore Putin killed her?!?

If Putin were involved in Politkovskaya's death then he is guilty of a heinous crime for which there is no defense. But was he? The journalist's death may seem familiar to readers who followed the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The American-backed investigation produced no solid evidence of Syrian involvement, but the damage from the slanted coverage in the media forced Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. This, in turn, paved the way for an attack by Israel just months later.

Another coincidence?

It is unfortunate that the media hasn't taken a similar interest in the 130 journalists who've been killed in Iraq as they have in Politkovskaya's death. In the most recent case, that of Terry Lloyd, the coroner ruled that he was "unlawfully killed" when he came under fire by American troops. Andrew Walker, the assistant deputy coroner of Oxfordshire said, "Having carefully taken into account all the evidence I am satisfied so that I am sure that had this killing taken place under English Law it would have constituted unlawful homicide."

"Homicide?"

How did that escape the attention of the EU? Or is their indignation as selective as that of the American media, which chooses its heroes and villains according to a script that is written in Washington?

As for the EU and the western media's sudden interest in Putin's "rollback of democracy in Russia"; we've heard no similar complaints about the flurry of repressive legislation passed by George Bush in the USA; including the Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act of 2006 which repeals the 800 year old right to habeas corpus. Nor has the EU shown any particular interest in the proliferation of American gulags, like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, which are now spread across the globe like grains of sand tossed in the wind. The bogus claims of "anti-democratic behavior" are naturally limited to the adversaries of the Bush team.

Putin is a fierce nationalist. He's doing his best to raise Russia's standard of living while making the necessary compromises with the global energy giants. According to the Russian News Agency Novosti, Putin said:

"Draft laws are being considered by the Duma aimed at securing foreign and other investments into Russia's economy, guaranteeing owner's rights, and minimizing the number of spheres where foreign investment cannot be used."

"These spheres," Putin added, "will mainly be restricted by security issues, and will also include the largest and most unique deposits to be found in the world and Russia. These can be counted on one hand. All the rest will be accessible."

Putin is opening Russia's markets and looking for ways to satisfy the major oil corporations

while growing the Russian economy at the same time. He believes that “mutual dependence strengthens the energy security of the European continent and creates good prerequisites for further rapprochement in other fields.”

He’s right, but he’s also tragically naïve. Has he taken a look at Iraq lately?

Entire civilizations are being pummeled into rubble to satisfy the world’s lust for oil. Why would Russia be spared?

We should expect more violence in Chechnya and Georgia as well as a steady stream of abuse in the western press.

Putin is moving up on Washington’s target-list. He is the new Hitler; we just didn’t realize it before.

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