

PREPARING FOR WAR WITH EUROPE

By Michael Ventura

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George W.'s acceptance speech contained only two sentences to interest and alarm those beyond our borders: "At the earliest possible date, my administration will deploy missile defenses to guard against attack and blackmail. Now is the time, not to defend outdated treaties, but to defend the American people." He's talking about the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which not only Russia and China but all our present European allies are anxious for us to uphold; and they are universally against a U.S. missile shield. Bush has said that as president he would break the treaty unilaterally; Clinton keeps looking for legal loopholes that will allow missile-shield research while hoping to renegotiate the treaty. Being a Republican, Bush wants a bigger and more expensive missile shield than Bill Clinton and Al Gore have proposed; yet what's striking is not only their basic agreement on the need for the shield, but that it's Clinton who revived the project. Bush is getting his information from his father and the military strategists of his father's circle, like Colin Powell and vice-presidential nominee Dick Cheney, as well as input from conservative think tanks; Clinton and Gore are getting their information from the Pentagon. Which means that there's a very strong push for a missile shield from all the overlapping inner circles of the American military. The question is: Why?

The official reason given is "rogue states" -- as though nations like Iraq, North Korea, and Iran, which are under constant U.S. satellite surveillance, could build intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), get them in place, and launch them, by surprise. This is improbable. ICBM sites are major structures and cannot be hidden from orbiting eyes. If we could bomb targets in Kosovo from airbases in Missouri, as we did in 1999, then we could surely knock out ICBM launch pads in "rogue" countries with these same conventional war planes while those sites were still in the building stages. Israel proved as much a decade or so ago when, no doubt with U.S. data and approval, Israeli jets knocked out nuclear testing facilities in Iraq. So why does the United States need a full-scale missile shield -- a notion first conceived by Reagan to defend against the entire Soviet Empire?

The answer is to be found in Europe.

The New York Times, Nov. 7, 1999: "France seized the moment this week to urge the European allies to develop a more independent defense and foreign policy. President Chirac ... warned that a world with only one superpower is not as secure and safe as a multipolar world in which Europe is one of the strongest poles." Chirac notes that the U.S. "too often gives into temptations of unilateralism." French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine firmly stated what's really on Europe's mind: "This question underlies the whole question of European common foreign and defense policy. We cannot accept either a politically unipolar world, nor a culturally uniform world, nor the unilateralism of a single hyperpower [i.e., the U.S.]." In other words: At present, American power is more or less benign; but Europe's history has taught it that no massive "unipower" stays benign for long; they don't trust us to refrain from using our might to dictate to them in the future. Further, they don't buy that the proposed missile shield is about a few little "rogue" states -- not when an effective U.S. shield, combined with our enormous military

resources, would give the U.S. decisive dictatorial powers over a United Europe. It is not China but a United Europe which happens to be our major cultural and economic rival. And the history of the world is that major cultural/economic rivals sooner or later go to war.

The *Times*, Dec. 13, 1999: "MILITARY POSTURE OF EUROPE TO TURN MORE INDEPENDENT ... The European Union aims to become a strategic power that the United States and other countries will have to reckon with." Meeting in Helsinki, and spurred by fears of a U.S. missile shield, the European Union agreed to begin building the foundations of a common military arm independent of NATO -- i.e., independent of U.S. influence, since the U.S. is the dominant force in NATO. Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schroder: "The Europe of the future must be able to defend its interests and values effectively worldwide." Read that sentence twice: Who would Europe need to defend itself against "worldwide"? At present there is only one worldwide power: the United States. Most remarkable about this Helsinki meeting is that America's traditional 20th-century ally, England, got onboard. English Prime Minister Tony Blair, "without whose support the plan would never have been conceived," made nice noises about how NATO would still be "the bedrock of European defense" -- but if he really felt that, why jump onboard at all? There's no reason to, unless he'd joined the inner circle of European strategists who believe that in the future the U.S. may not be trusted militarily.

Faced with this unexpected unity among Europeans, and the European Union's stated determination to develop a military power that would rival the United States, American strategists were confronted with an urgent new necessity: to keep Russia, under the new leadership of the clever and determined President Vladimir V. Putin, from an alliance with Europe. But Putin has already proved a formidable strategic adversary. On January 14, the *Times* reported Russia's new hair-trigger nuclear policy: to resort to nuclear weapons for any military threat its weakened conventional forces can't handle. Then on May 1, the *Times* reported an extraordinarily risky American counter-move: to agree to a Russian "launch on warning" system. That is: Russia wouldn't be threatened by our shield if they were prepared to launch their ICBMs as soon as they detected an American launch -- rather than, as the policy in both countries has been, when an attack was definitely confirmed by the first hits. "John D. Steinbruner, a nuclear expert at the University of Maryland, said the Clinton administration's tacit endorsement of launch-on-warning was 'pretty bizarre' because 'we know their warning system is full of holes.'" For instance, in 1995 "the Russians misread the launching of an American weather rocket from Norway as a surprise nuclear attack. If not caught by vigilant humans, such false alerts can start an accidental exchange of nuclear missiles." Note: That didn't happen during the Cold War; it happened just five years ago.

On May 26, the *Times* reported George W.'s strategy to defuse European and Russian responses to our shield: The missile defense would also protect our European allies and even "perhaps one day" Russia and China. Of course, then they'd have to trust us to protect them. And, as we've seen, they don't. As an inducement, and to his credit, Bush is proposing a unilateral reduction in American nukes. But this won't mean much to the Europeans, Russians, and Chinese, because if we manage to create an effective shield then we won't *need* as many nukes. The balance would still be heavily in America's favor.

On June 1, Clinton went to Germany hoping to cool things down, but he was met with a European outcry against the U.S. shield. June 2's *Times* carried as overt a statement as could be imagined: "German officials warned that the missile defense shield would weaken military ties between the United States and its European allies. And they

have accused the United States of overstating the threat [of rogue states]." I.e.: the Europeans are threatening *not* to remain our allies -- which is to be our rivals, if not our adversaries; and they're openly skeptical that "rogue states" are the real reason for the shield.

How suspicious has Europe become of American intentions? The *Times*, June 4: Someone identified only as "a senior Polish official" was quoted as saying, "We have been told [by the European Union], 'you have to make a choice -- be with the U.S. or with us if you want to be Europeans.'" The report went on: "Poland feels that it has been frozen out of the planning for this European military arm ... [because] France believes Poland will act as a 'Trojan horse' for American preferences inside the new grouping." Poland's negotiator, Jan Kulakowski: "We're asked, 'Are you for America or Europe?'"

Hard lines are clearly being drawn.

In June, Russia's Putin made successful diplomatic overtures to Germany, the European Union, and even North Korea! Unlike Clinton, he was warmly received. The *Times*, June 17, reported "cautious German backing for a Russian plan to involve itself in the defense of Europe against missile attack." Read between the lines of that extraordinary statement: Given that the European Union and Russia have already poo-pooed the threat posed by "rogue states," where would they suspect a nuclear threat if not from America?

There's lots of talk about global corporations dwarfing the power of nations -- but corporations don't have armies and guided missiles. The United States and Europe are preparing for a very risky, and possibly horrifying, 21st century.

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