

Russian Tanks Signal a “New Energy War”

by Dennis T. Avery

“Russia’s adventure in Georgia has been described as a ‘warlet,’ a contained firing spree that wound up and down within a week. But to Europe’s energy markets, it was the equivalent of wide-scale carpet bombing,” writes Eric Reguly in Britain’s *Global and Mail* on August 15th. “Before the Georgian crisis, Europe seemed to be doing all the right things, with little Georgia at the centre of a sensible energy diversification plan. A column of Russian tanks wrecked that strategy in an instant . . . a new energy war is about to begin.”

Since the Russian tank attacks, Europe’s energy position is far worse than America’s. Europe’s North Sea oil and gas are waning, and its marginal coal mines have long been shut down. Europe’s been importing lots of gas, 40 percent of it from Russia. Georgia was threatening to allow another gas pipeline that Russia wouldn’t control—so Vlad the Assailer demonstrated that he can control Caspian-region gas exports whenever he chooses to send tanks.

Europe now urgently wants a long-term partnership with the big undeveloped oil and gas deposits in Libya, Tunisia and the rest of North Africa. Alarmingly, Russia’s Gazprom last month offered to buy all of Libya’s gas exports.

The U.S. is now trapped, however, in the crossfire between Russian military/economic aggression, Moslem extremism and European energy starvation. We will soon be enormously grateful for our opportunity to drill off our own coasts and in our own ANWR, to import our Alaskan gas through a new pipeline, to tap Appalachia’s big, tough gas deposits—and to add more of our own nuclear power. France, Finland and Eastern Europe are already building more nuclear plants, and Germany’s Angela Merkel may block the German nuclear phase-out.

Solar and wind power will be built too, but so far they’ve been expensive, erratic and severely disappointing. Biofuels actually aggravate both global food shortages and greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada’s Athabasca Tar Sands, one of the world’s largest petroleum reservoirs, got a visit last week from U.S. billionaires Bill Gates and Warren Buffett. The Athabasca is also in a strategically secure location for the U.S.—400 miles north of Montana. Eco-activists have lately campaigned against the tar sands, calling it “the worst project on earth” because of the CO₂ released as the heavy oil is produced. However, CO₂ has had a weak correlation with earth’s temperature changes—only 22 percent since 1860.

Fortunately, the earth’s temperatures are now continuing to decline; more and more clearly separating CO₂ emissions from climate change. The first five months of 2008 have been the coolest in at least five years, continuing the cooler trend of the past 18 months. The cooling was

predicted by a 2000 downturn in the sunspot index, which has a strong, ten-year-lagged correlation with our temperature history.

The Greens have recommended non-polluting tidal power, but are opposing one of the world's outstanding tidal-power opportunities on Britain's Severn River. The Severn has a 40-foot daily tide range. A ten-mile dam across the Bristol Channel would emit no CO₂ or radiation, while producing as much electricity as three nuclear power stations for the next 200 years. The eco-activists are unhappy about the loss of local mud flats which would force shore birds to relocate.

It now looks as though the West must choose between relocating some shore birds and seeing lots more Russian tanks monopolize the world's energy supplies.

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