

RUSSIA, THE “INDEPENDENT” OIL PRODUCER

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ABSTRACT

Russia is not a member of OPEC, but there have been specific months in which Russia was the Number One petroleum producer in the world. Even when it has indicated it was cooperating with OPEC, there have clearly been times when Russia was doing its own thing, and the Western world has been thankful for that. What is presented here is a greatly shortened version of the current paper.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENERGY

It is stating nothing startling to indicate that energy is extremely important to today’s world. Two decades ago, the futurist John Naisbitt predicted in 1982 that we’d have to come up with new ideas. Here’s what he saw in his crystal ball:

Hundreds of new energy devices will be commercialized and marketed extensively throughout the decade [the 1980’s]: new types of power plants; new automobile fuels; new uses for electricity, alcohol, flywheels, and fuel cells (Naisbitt, pp.73-74)

Two years earlier, Milton and Rose D. Friedman were saddened by our reliance on a single source of petroleum: “...as President Carter put it, ‘the danger of depending on a thin line of oil tankers stretching halfway around the world’” (Friedman, p. 210).

So, freeing ourselves of this dependence upon others for oil is important. Henry David Thoreau said it this way: “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured and far away!” (Thoreau, p. 111).

MEETINGS, STRATEGIES OF THE LEADERS

On March 15, 2002, OPEC would be holding a critical strategy session in Vienna. Even before the meeting started, OPEC made its plans clear. The Russian website Lenta.Ru had this report: “OPEC is attempting to persuade Russia to work together. This was announced by the Secretary-General of the Oil Producing and

Exporting Countries (OPEC) Ali Rodriguez, speaking in Auckland, New Zealand” (OPEC).

Well, is Russia going to “work together” with OPEC? At about the time of that OPEC meeting in Vienna, Yahoo! quoted a high Russian official: “Russian oil companies must be ready to supply ‘as much crude oil as possible’ to the world markets this year, said the Minister of Energy Igor Yusufov Friday, and he indicated that the oil export reduction, promised to OPEC, could be brief” (DJ Ministro).

Just to prove that Russia, and its very close neighbors, are indeed in the oil business to stay, Richard Butler, writing for a Brazilian newspaper, had these facts to reveal: “When the Soviet Union fell, it lost its southern provinces -- Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan. These states [or Republics] have deposits of petroleum and gas that, summed up, are believed to be equal to the reserves in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq...” (Butler).

A few paragraphs above, it was indicated that at least momentarily Russia is the world’s top oil producer. Here’s a specific from Pletnev Sergei in early 2002: “In February of this year, the volume [of crude oil, of course] extracted by Saudi Arabia amounted to 7.19 million barrels per day, and at the same time Russia was extracting 7.28 million barrels per day” (Sergei).

CONCLUSION

In the very short narration above, there has been an attempt to indicate that Russia under Vladimir Putin is willing to cooperate with OPEC in the questionable process of controlling the world’s oil supply. However, there has been no indication that Russia is willing to take orders from OPEC. The Western world can be indeed thankful for Russia’s current attitude on the matter.

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