

Russian Ministry Holds Berlin-Paris-Moscow Meet

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

Much to the displeasure of American neo-conservative Richard Perle and his ilk, the initiatives among European and Asian nations to establish a global alternative to Washington's imperial insanity, continue to pick up steam. A week after Perle had lashed out in Germany against the rapidly-developing Franco-German alliance in Europe, an extraordinary "triangular colloquium" was held in Germany's capital, Nov. 27-28, to discuss coordination of economic, security, and foreign policy among France, Germany, and Russia.

"Berlin-Paris-Moscow—Locomotive for Strategic Cooperation between Russia and the European Union?" was organized under the auspices of the Russian Foreign Ministry, with cooperation of the German Council of Foreign Relations and other German, Russian, and French organizations. In many respects, it echoed the Eurasian strategy set forth by Lyndon LaRouche and propagated by his collaborators throughout the world. One thing, at least, became clear: The "triangle" Berlin-Paris-Moscow, which emerged in the effort to prevent a U.S. invasion of Iraq, is very much alive today.

'NATO Is Obsolete'

The Russian Ambassador to Berlin, Sergei Krylov, opened the colloquium with a series of provocative questions concerning the future of relations between Russia and the European Union: Russia's role in a potential partnership for European defense; the situation around Iraq, Iran, and Chechnya; and how to change what he characterized as "a false image of Russia" propagated by many Western media. Krylov declared that the present uncertain period in the world calls for "paradoxical, non-standard approaches." He pointedly asked the French and German representatives to comment on "very interesting" recent statements by French Prime Minister Pierre Raffarin, concerning a future "French-German Federation."

German Bundestag member Gerd Weiskirchen, foreign policy speaker for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) parliamentary faction, said a French-German union is "indeed a possibility," opened up by the new Constitutional Agreement. But like many of the other German representatives, Weiskirchen cautioned against the term "axis" to describe increased cooperation among Berlin-Paris-Moscow. Instead, he spoke of "a status of equality of interests," and "a common interest in strengthening multilateralism." We should especially keep the door open to the United States, he urged. Expressing the

hope that the "reality shock" of the mess in Iraq might lead to a rethinking of U.S. policy, Weiskirchen said "nothing would be more desirable for us, than if Washington would draw lessons from experience." Otherwise, "We will have to go through a difficult period, which could last several years."

The French speakers were much less cautious. Especially remarkable were statements by two senior military representatives, Gen. Bernard de Bressy de Guast, an expert on European defense, and Gen. Henri Paris, President of the Federation of Officers of the Republican Reserve. De Bressy began with a historical reference to the close ties between France and Russia, even into the Cold War period, when "French generals never accepted the idea that Russia was really an enemy." De Gaulle always insisted on a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals," he noted. In his view, Russia must be understood as a key element of a "Great Europe," extending across Eurasia, and interacting with the "Islamic World," the "Chinese World," the Americas, etc.

While France, the U.K., and Russia all possess nuclear weapons, de Bressy said, "The idea of a war occurring among the nations of Great Europe is absurd." At the same time, those nations face common dangers of terrorism and of unstable nations that might possess or come into possession of dangerous weapons. Besides coordination of intelligence and military measures, he recommended common efforts to eradicate the political and economic sources of these threats.

"NATO is obsolete," declared Gen. Henri Paris. "We need something completely new, such as an alliance of the Northern Hemisphere, that would associate the European Union and Russia with the U.S.A. in a new way." France's relations with the United States, while always those of an ally, he said, "have been very complicated." So also in Europe: "Already now, with 15 nations, it is difficult to reach any common decision; with 25, it will be impossible. . . . Deepening Europe is more important than expanding it," was his controversial conclusion.

That "deepening," Henri Paris made clear, is pivoted on the core roles of France, Germany, and Russia. The "strategic line" Paris-Berlin was created by de Gaulle and has continued, despite changes of government, and is expressed today concretely by the common stand of France and Germany vis-à-vis the EU bureaucracy in Brussels and the Maastricht agreements. And France has long pursued the concept of Russia as an ally in the East. On the other hand, "our view is not the same as that of the U.K." which under Blair helped the Bush Administration drive a wedge between the "New Europe" and an "Old Europe." Particularly significant, according to General Paris, is the establishment of a European military force of 60,000 men, under a separate European command and which is not subordinated to NATO.

Critical Response to 'Preventive War'

The development of an independent European security policy and military/police capability was presented by Gernot

Erler, deputy chairman of the SPD faction in the German parliament. He emphasized that this process has already advanced far beyond a mere “theoretical” stage, as evidenced by the Europe police operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, operations in Macedonia, the “Artemis” operation in the Congo, and the planned transfer of crucial responsibilities of the UN security force in Afghanistan, into European hands next year. Erler stressed the conceptual and methodological contrast, in the approach to security issues, between the Europeans and the present U.S. Administration. On the one side, Europe, and Germany in particular, insist on a “balance between civilian and military” components of security policy. This includes much stronger emphasis on “conflict prevention,” on multilateral approaches, on the role of the United Nations, and on the necessity for poverty alleviation and developing “strategies for regional stabilization,” as in the Balkan conflict.

These are all important elements in a new “truly European security strategy” which is being formulated as a conscious, critical response to the “new” National Security Strategy of the Bush Administration, and are contained in a draft document entitled “A More Secure Europe in a Better World” now under discussion for official adoption by the European Union. Erler stressed that the new European security strategy includes “a closer relationship with Russia,” which is seen as “sharing common values” with the EU.

Speakers from the Russian delegation included Vladimir Ivanov, head of the Information and Analysis Center of the Russian Foreign Ministry; Svetlana Shvetsova, Deputy Head of the Center for International Scientific and Cultural Affairs of the Russian Foreign Ministry; Prof. Sergei Bolshakov of the Diplomatic Academy of the Foreign Ministry; Prof. Sergei Silvestrov, Deputy Director of the Institute for World Economy and Politics (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences; and Maria Kutshchinskaya, Europe expert at the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies.

Ivanov emphasized the necessity of a “multipolar” world, opposed to the present “unilateralist” American Administration, but not to the United States *per se*. Ivanov, for example, spoke of the necessity of “cooperation among all civilized nations.” Despite the dreams of some for a “unipolar world,” reality is already moving in another direction, exemplified by the rise of influence of Europe, of China and India as major powers. It is important to realize, Ivanov emphasized, that the unilateralist policy is putting the United States into conflict with the entire rest of the world. Events have shown that mere military power does not guarantee security.

The Russian speakers all emphasized Russia’s identity as a European nation, while at the same time Russia for various reasons does not seek membership in the European Union. The Russian side clearly sees a strengthened, “triangular” relationship with Germany and France as key to outflanking what are seen as harmful and sometimes directly hostile policies from the EU. “Brussels does not understand Russia’s problems. We ask for more patience and support,” said Pro-

fessor Bolshakov. The Russians bitterly complained about what they saw as an anti-Russian attitude on the part of the EU concerning Chechnya, Moldova, the issue of transit to the Russian enclave in Kaliningrad, and a variety of economic issues. Kutshchinskaya spoke of a “crisis of identity” in the EU connected with “the inadequacy of present institutions.” She expressed the hope that the combined leadership of France and Germany would push through better policies over the heads of the “Eurocrats” in Brussels.

Development of Russian Rails

Lacking, in most of the presentations, was a clear strategy for the economic development of Eurasia, along the lines of the “Eurasian Land-Bridge.” In response to an intervention by this author, raising the Land-Bridge issue, the director of the Commission for the East (Ost-Ausschuss) of the Association of German Industry, Oliver Wieck, replied that transcontinental infrastructure development is now being “hotly discussed.” As an example, he mentioned that the German railroad company (Deutsche Bahn) had reached a memorandum of understanding for large-scale cooperation to modernize the Russian rail system. “This involves concrete projects and has enormous potential,” he said. Wieck had also stressed the key role of Germany as Russia’s closest economic partner in the EU, and the importance of the “Energy Alliance” of Europe with Russia.

Prof. Peter Schulze, former head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Russia, noted that the EU currently imports 70% of its total consumption of natural gas, and 30% of its oil consumption, from Russia. Another crucial dimension of European-Russian cooperation is in the area of advanced technology, including space. Both Russian and French representatives repeatedly referred to the recent agreement to provide for the launching of Russian Soyuz rockets from the European space base in Guyana.

In a closing statement, Russian Foreign Ministry representative Svetlana Shvetsova declared, “We are seeing the first outlines of a new Great Europe. Its principles include democracy, multilateralism, recognition of the key role of the UNO, and preventative diplomacy. . . . Russia is a key part of Europe, including in economic, security, scientific, and cultural terms.” She stressed that Russia would like to see a larger cooperative “triangle of Russia-EU-U.S.A.,” but said that this colloquium had established that “Berlin-Paris-Moscow is indeed the locomotive for strategic cooperation between Russia and the European Union.”

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