

# 'Anti-War Three' Hold St. Petersburg Meetings

by Rainer Apel

Not yet at the pace this turbulent global situation requires, but step by step, the trans-continental alliance of economic and political cooperation between France, Germany and Russia—with extensions into China and India—is making progress. This was illustrated by the April 11-12 meetings in St. Petersburg of French President Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Visible on the horizon is the kind of Eurasian alliance which Anglo-American geopoliticians have tried to prevent or destroy for more than 100 years.

Ironically, the insane Iraq war drive of the Bush Administration, assisted (at least so far) by the British government of Tony Blair, has contributed to the acceleration of consultations among the “Anti-War Three” during the past two months. They have withstood blackmail, slanders and other coercive tactics from the pro-war cabal, and although unable to stop the war, have increased their strength through cooperation.

Whereas the “no” of the three to the war has been the catalyst of the talks, their basic conflict with the war party is an economic one: It is over the issue of whether Eurasian countries have an inalienable right to economic, technological and political development, alternate to the system of the monetaristic circles that run the inner core of the Bush Administration.

## Geopoliticians Are Unhappy

The St. Petersburg event actually comprised five related, though separate events: 1) the third session of the “St. Petersburg Dialogue,” which is an annually-convened forum of senior figures of the political, military, and economic elites of Germany and Russia; 2) the official celebration of the German Siemens company’s presence in Russia; 3) the granting of an honorary doctoral degree of St. Petersburg University to Schröder; 4) a bilateral meeting between Schröder and Putin; and 5) a trilateral summit between these two and Chirac. Though the first three were long-planned and unrelated to the war issue, St. Petersburg nonetheless saw a highly unusual combination of events.

Western geopoliticians dislike what they have termed the “Axis Paris-Berlin-Moscow.” But the more propaganda certain western mass media have been launching against that “axis” over recent weeks, the more institutionalized the contacts among Paris, Berlin, and Moscow; their intensity means



*A continental cooperation alliance among France, Germany, and Russia was taking shape, as (from left) French President Chirac, Russian President Putin, and German Chancellor Schröder held two days of meetings in St. Petersburg.*

they cannot be easily be undone or sabotaged any longer. At a press conference in St. Petersburg on April 12, the Russian President commented that one should not make the mistake of viewing the consultations France-Germany-Russia as an ad hoc affair linked to the Iraq issue as such. Putin said the cooperation between the three states had a longterm character and was proceeding on a broader base, with respect to stability and peace in Europe and globally.

The project of a modernization of the United Nations structure, which Putin said he discussed with Schröder and Chirac the day before, is part of that longterm cooperation perspective, he added. He called on the international media to note that this specific event in St. Petersburg was already the third based on the "St. Petersburg Dialogue" initiative of 2001 by the Germans and Russians, which he said was open to other states. Putin also stressed that other leaders, including Britain's Blair, had been invited to St. Petersburg, but had not come; and that this tripartite meeting was not meant to remain exclusive, but would be kept open for "a much broader kind of cooperation."

The pro-development terms of that cooperation, Putin hinted, would, however, not be very attractive to strict monetarists with their interest in control of raw materials and in generation of rapid capital revenues. At the "Siemens-150th" conference, Putin stressed the historical fact that when Siemens began laying overland telegraph cables in Russia in 1853, it made a genuine, important contribution to the modernization and economic development of the Russian nation. In return, the project in Russia was also important for the development of Siemens into a leading industrial corporation

on a world scale. Likewise, the Russian President hinted, expanded cooperation between German and Russian companies today, would allow both nations to benefit again.

The "St. Petersburg Dialogue" forum resolved on intensified scientific and cultural cooperation, and a new project of youth exchange programs—which would deal with the problematic period of two world wars in the 20th Century, but also cover the otherwise positive history of German-Russian relations over more than 300 years.

### **Geneva Convention Held Up to Occupiers**

Concerning the Iraq issue, Putin stressed in his meetings, speeches and press statements that the tripartite summit with Schröder and Chirac was not designed to "split the international community," but to "seek mutually acceptable solutions." Putin said that the three leaders did not convene for the purpose of criticizing "the actions of the occupying powers" in Iraq, but that "nonetheless, ac-

cording to the Geneva Convention, it is the coalition forces that bear the responsibility for dealing with humanitarian questions." Putin said that the UN-sponsored leadership selection process in Afghanistan, subsequently confirmed by elections, was a precedent for Iraq. International inspectors should return to the country; otherwise, alleged discoveries of weapons of mass destruction cannot be legitimate. "Only one task, the disarmament of Iraq, justified the war," said Putin. "But WMD have not been found in Iraq, raising the question of what goals the anti-Iraq coalition did pursue."

Schröder said at the press conference on April 11 that he fully agreed with Putin's call "to preserve a stable, international law-based system, resting on the primacy of the UN." Chirac added a call for a new, UN-centered "international system in which law prevails over force," saying that only this, were an appropriate approach for the situation of mankind in the 21st Century.

Schröder and Chirac vehemently rejected the war cabal's idea of regime change in Syria, as detrimental not only to Syria and the Mideast region, but even for longer-term "U.S. political ambitions." The German Chancellor added that if the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime was to mean any good, it should be turned "into a victory for the Iraqi people, as well as for the other peoples in the region."

"Wolfowitzers" may continue not to listen to the "Anti-War Three," whose views will, however, be paid the more attention in other parts of the world, where an alternative to the Bush Administration's destructive new world disorder is desired.