

Putin Delivers Reality Shock At Munich Conference

by Rainer Apel

Something special happened this year at the 43rd Munich International Security Conference, held Feb. 9-11. For the past ten years, there have been Russian officials at the annual event, formerly known as the Wehrkunde conference, but this was the first to be addressed by a Russian President. From the moment Vladimir Putin took the rostrum and, with an ironical smile flitting across his lips, announced that he would speak without any diplomatic niceties, he made sure that what he was going to say would be at the center of debates at the conference itself, and in the international media thereafter.

With its 250 politicians and defense experts from about 40 nations, most of them NATO members, the Munich meeting provided an ideal audience for the Russian leader to respond to the many provocations coming from the Bush-Cheney Administration against Russia. And although a harshly worded speech could have been expected, Putin's bluntness apparently took the Americans, who accounted for about one-third of the attendance, by surprise. The stony faces of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.), Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), and Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.), as well as of former Ambassadors John Kornblum, Richard Burt, and Richard Holbrooke, provided eloquent testimony that the Russian President had dealt them quite a shock.

"I have been waiting for this speech from a Russian leader, since the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999!" exclaimed one of *EIR*'s readers in the Russian emigré community.

And yet, while the Western media jumped all over Putin's speech as his biggest attack yet against the United States, even a "new Cold War," the coverage universally blacked out the fact that the Russian President started with a carefully chosen quotation from Franklin Delano Roosevelt. "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger," Putin quoted FDR, from the American President's Fireside Chat of Sept. 3, 1939, two days after the Nazi invasion of Poland, that marked the outbreak of World War II.

Not an Attack on the United States

As these remarks show, Putin's speech was not an attack on the United States at all. It was an attack on the perversion of American policy by traitors to the real identity of the U.S.A.—by Mrs. and Mr. Dick Cheney, George Shultz, Dr. Bernard Lewis, Henry A. Kissinger, et al. It was equally striking, that Putin also stated at the outset, his understanding of economic policy as the heart of security: "It is well known, that international security comprises much more than issues relating to military and political stability. It involves the stability of the global economy, overcoming poverty, economic security, and developing a dialogue among civilizations." Later on, Putin expressed disgust at the cynical profiteering by international financial interests, under the banner of free trade and "equal opportunity," as Russia itself has witnessed during its prolonged negotiations over joining the World Trade Organization.

Putin went on not only to bluntly attack the policies of the Bush-Cheney Administration, but he also warned of the strategic disaster these would lead to, for the United States itself, should the Americans continue to isolate themselves internationally and expose themselves to a new era of confrontation with Russia, China, India, and other up-and-coming nations. The planned stationing of U.S. missile defense systems in eastern Europe, close to the Russian border, would be a step into a new such era of confrontation, because Russia would be forced to respond to that with "asymmetric means," Putin warned. Coming only weeks after the Chinese demonstrated their advanced defense capabilities, by downing their own satellite with the aid of laser technology, Putin's reference to "asymmetric" means implied similar options, research and development work on which is already being pursued in Russia—although the emphasis on arms control is still prevalent in official Russian diplomacy.

The largely neo-con American conference delegation,



Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin's quotes from President Franklin Roosevelt, in his address to the Munich Conference on Security Feb. 10 (shown here), were blacked out of the Western media.

Presidential Press and Information Office

which evidently had expected to be able to use the Munich meeting as a tribunal for denunciations of Iran and Russia, responded to Putin with a retreat to backroom discussions. Reportedly Senator McCain, who would be the first prominent American to speak after President Putin, came under pressure to lash back strongly. But McCain opted for a lowest-common-denominator approach of downplaying Putin's speech. So did Secretary Gates, glossing the Russian President's words as those of "an old spy," just like himself.

The result was only a greater loss of confidence, among Europeans, in the Bush-Cheney team. This was particularly true of the German delegation in Munich, who, across the entire political spectrum, stated that what Putin had said about the U.S. policy disaster was true and understandable, in view of the provocative American posture toward Russia. The Germans expressed the view that, even if there were opposition to Putin, Bush has earned less confidence.

U.S. Neo-Cons: The Same Old Song

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, in his speech on Feb. 11, spoke of "old music boxes that play the same song again and again," in an apparent mockery of the style of debate typical of the U.S. neo-cons. The Russian Defense Minister also moved to outflank the Bush-Cheney plan for stationing U.S. missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, reiterating a proposal made several years ago, for European-Russian cooperation in the development of a joint missile defense system. To this, Andreas Schockenhoff (Christian Democrat), chairman of the German-Russian Group of Parliament Members, responded with a call for a dialogue between Europe and Russia about ways to reflect

each side's security interests in a future missile defense system. Remarks by Rainer Arnold, the defense policy spokesman of the Social Democrats, went in the same direction.

If done well, such a Munich initiative may contribute to the start of a strategic dialogue between the U.S.A. and Russia, of the kind Lyndon LaRouche called for nearly 25 years ago, in his revolutionary Strategic Defense Initiative proposal. Adopted by President Ronald Reagan in March 1983, the proposal received strong support in Europe. Assessing the nature of the recent successful Chinese anti-satellite test, LaRouche has called for a revival of the SDI thrust, and he has especially urged the Russians to share it this time, as they refused to do in 1983.

The bluntness of Putin's Munich speech delivered the clear message to those Europeans not totally blinded by neo-con ideology, that future security for Europe lies neither in anti-Russian, nor anti-American scenarios, but rather in U.S.-Russian cooperation in the tradition of FDR. It is all too evident that not only should the Europeans, Chinese, and Indians be part of this cooperation, but also the Iranians, whose chief negotiator on the nuclear issue, Ali Larijani, in his Feb. 11 speech to the Munich conference, renewed Tehran's offer to Washington, to begin direct talks on all controversial points, on the basis of mutual respect.

Because the full content of Putin's Munich speech has been blacked out in the Western media, we are providing a full translation of it in this issue of *EIR*, along with a report, with documentation, on the astonishing efflorescence of discussion in Russia, about the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.