

New Eurasian Policy Alliance Emerges

by Rainer Apel

The constellation that is shaping up among Paris, Berlin, and Moscow, resembles that of the turbulent period 1977-78, when France, Germany, and the Soviet Union responded to the policy disaster of the U.S. Carter Administration, by intensifying their own relations, particularly economic ones. Construction of several thousand miles of new transcontinental pipelines for western Europe's supply of oil and gas from Soviet resources was an important aspect of relations, then, among France, Germany, and the Soviet Union. The leaders of France and West Germany, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, respectively, decided to go ahead with plans for a European Monetary System (EMS) that would reduce dependency on monetary decisions taken in London or New York. In the Spring and Summer of 1978, Germany signed numerous economic cooperation agreements with Soviet Russia, and the EMS went into effect in February 1979. The basic outline for this perspective of transcontinental cooperation did not originate in the respective governments, however, but was formulated already in the Spring of 1975, by Lyndon LaRouche, whose political movement in Europe campaigned around it intensely for several years. In the Autumn of 1977, the elites of France and Germany finally seized on the ideas of far-reaching cooperation with the Soviets and of monetary sovereignty from the Anglo-American bankers' set.

Now, the global financial and economic system is in much worse shape than 22 years ago, and may collapse in the very near future. There is an awareness of this among elites in France, Germany, and Russia, and this is the background to the intensified diplomatic activities during the last week of September and the first weeks of October. Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the German Chancellor for four hours in Moscow on Sept. 25, received the French Foreign Minister the next day, dispatched Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko to the European Union headquarters in Brussels on Sept. 27, and had a telephone discussion with EU Commission President Romano Prodi the same day. And on Oct. 3, Putin called French President Jacques Chirac, from India, where he was signing a package of Russian-Indian cooperation agreements.

Energy Partnership

Little was made known about these Russian-European contacts, initially, and it was not until Oct. 6, that more light

was shed on the scope of these talks: Voice of Russia radio said that Putin was preparing for the EU-Russia Summit in Paris on Oct. 30, and that two cooperation agreements were being negotiated between the EU and Russia: 1) the establishment of a regular strategic dialogue on crisis spots, particularly those that were threatening Russia and Europe; and 2) a long-term strategic energy partnership.

The Russian radio commentary detailed that this dialogue would deal with "very great danger of local conflicts on the continent" and "the threat of international terrorism spreading to various regions of Europe." The commentary then stated that "Russia and the 15 member-countries of the European Union have a very great potential and can, of course, block any intention to upset stability in Europe—if agreement is reached on that score." It was also noted that, with the French takeover of the rotating EU half-year presidency in July, "the ban was lifted on technical assistance to Russia this year," indicating that the remaining European-Russian controversy over Moscow's policy in Chechnya no longer stood in the way of cooperation.

As far as the energy partnership is concerned, the commentary reported on the "Prodi Plan," the EU offer to Russia of oil-for-technology cooperation over the next 20 years: "The leadership of the European Union is now considering the possibility of opening wide its market to Russian oil, gas, and electricity. It is planned to double the import of gas under a planned 20-year agreement. There will appear opportunities for building new oil and gas pipelines and also power transmission lines." The Prodi Plan was first presented to Putin by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, in Moscow on Sept. 25.

The timetable of EU-Russian talks until the Paris summit on Oct. 30 included a meeting between EU envoys and the Russian government on Oct. 12. On the same day, the newly created State Council of Russia was to have its first official working session, including discussion about the economic priorities in domestic and foreign affairs in the next two five-year plans. The results of the EU-Russia meeting in Moscow were scheduled to be taken up at the EU summit in Biarritz, France, on Oct. 13-14.

A reflection of this diplomatic activity was also apparent in a Moscow conference on Oct. 8, of more than 200 European and Russian industrial companies, whose representatives discussed making Russia the "energy bridge" for Eurasia. Russian speakers said that Russia was committed to increasing its oil and gas deliveries to western Europe, in return for investment to upgrade the ailing Russian pipeline grid and energy sector. Russia no longer wants to be a raw materials supplier for the West, they said, but rather a real partner for the exchange of processed materials and industrial products. This will require massive investment in Russia's transport and industry infrastructure. LaRouche's policy for the development of the Eurasian Land-Bridge is "required reading" for Eurasian leaders, since it identifies the priorities and necessary conceptual parameters for such a program.