

Will Bush Lunatics Wreck Relations with Europe?

by Mark Burdman

Attendees at a conference on transatlantic relations on the weekend of March 9-11 in Germany, came away with two main conclusions. First, that if the current policy of the George W. Bush Administration toward Europe goes forward unimpeded, a major crisis in U.S.-European relations is all but inevitable. Second, that there are significant battles already erupting within the American policy establishment, especially as the saner heads among that part of the establishment which deals with Europe, try to neutralize the maniacs within the Bush milieu.

The event took place at the Loccum Evangelical (Lutheran) Academy, near Hannover, in the German state of Lower Saxony. It was co-sponsored by the Academy and by the Vesper Society, a religious and social affairs group based in Hayward, California. The conference theme was, "The Renewal of the Transatlantic Partnership: The Responsibility of the EU [European Union] and the U.S.A. for Stability, Security, and Peace in the World."

An unusually large delegation of some 20 American State Department officials (current and former), and veteran strategists, think-tankers, and diplomats, were in attendance, as were a number of up-and-coming "Generation X" individuals, identified by conference organizers as "young leaders." The Americans were there for discussions with their European counterparts, the large majority of whom were from Germany, with a handful of others from Denmark, France, Holland, Austria, Hungary, and Great Britain.

Most of the American attendees are long-standing "Atlanticists," who have worked in various capacities in the diplomatic, intelligence, and military fields, on questions of relations with Europe, since the Second World War. While their policy biases have generally been skewed in the direction of "liberal globalism," most of them have a strong sense of the importance of relations between the United States and continental Europe, and are not pleased with the current Administration's narrow-minded foci on South America and parts of Asia.

As one leading U.S. "Germany hand" told the conference, "All this talk about the supposed 'trans-Pacific' orientation of American policy is overrated. Transatlantic commerce is 50% greater than trans-Pacific commerce, and transatlantic trade and investment relations are much more extensive. The reality of the transatlantic networks will not be replaced."

Most of the Americans there were fluent in German, which is hardly a common phenomenon in the United States these days.

Under "normal" circumstances, given the parameters of the post-World War II relationship of the former occupying power United States with Germany, a conference like this, and such a big American deployment, would have been the occasion for the Americans to "lay down the line" on what the "new reality" is in Washington, and for the Germans to simply accommodate. The problem now, however, is that there is such a strong berserker element in the Bush Administration, that even those State Department people who would have, formerly, done exactly that, are aghast at some of the directions that the Bush crowd is taking. They are willing to state that view with some frankness, most often privately, but on some occasions, quite openly.

The berserker element is embodied in the appointment of Richard Armitage as number two at the U.S. State Department, behind Secretary of State Colin Powell, whose nomination must still be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Armitage is such a controversial "knuckledragger," that the current President's father, Sir George Bush, was forced to withdraw his nomination from senior posts in 1989, out of fear that sensitive aspects of Armitage's dirty involvement in the "Iran-Contra" arms-for-drugs scandal would come to light, during Senate confirmation hearings. Armitage is also roundly disliked by leading circles in the American military, for some of his dirty activities in Vietnam, especially his role in the infamous "Operation Phoenix."

During the Loccum conference, several current State Department officials made it clear to this reporter, off the record, that they are most unhappy with Armitage's appointment. They know that types like him, with no sense of policy outside of covert operations and thuggish blackmail, can throw a monkey wrench into the entire foreign policy process.

From Teddy Roosevelt to Al Capone

That the lunatics are running amok in the Bush circles, was made unmistakably clear by the speech and comments at Loccum on March 10 by Jeffrey Gedmin, a senior figure at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and executive director at the AEI-based New Atlantic Initiative (NAI). Several members of the new Bush team are in the AEI-NAI nexus, and, according to a State Department official in Loccum, Gedmin "is closer to the Administration than are my colleagues and I at State."

Gedmin launched a major provocation against continental Europe, in the context of a Jan. 12-13 conference in London, co-sponsored by AEI and the London *Daily Telegraph*. For that occasion, he wrote a commentary for the Jan. 11 *Telegraph*, entitled "Bush to Europe: No More Mr. Nice Guy," in which he swore that Bush's policy dictum toward Europe

would be that of early-20th-Century Anglophile U.S. President Teddy “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick” Roosevelt (“ ‘Bush Lobby’ Plots New Provocations in London,” *EIR*, Jan. 26, 2001).

At Loccum, Gedmin didn’t speak so softly.

He began his presentation, by identifying himself, supposedly jokingly, as the typical “bad American” and “force of darkness,” a reference to his fellow AEI provocateur and Bush adviser, Richard Perle. Gedmin stated that “there is a possibility that the transatlantic relationship *could* break apart”—and quickly tried to ensure, that this is exactly what will happen.

Gedmin denounced growing “Euro-Gaullist tendencies” and a “Euro-nationalist” trend. He accused the Europeans of “accentuating differences, even when they don’t exist.” His prime example, was the Europeans’ “obsession with the American death penalty,” saying that then-Gov. George W. Bush was perfectly correct, some months back, in refusing to see a group of French legislators in Austin, Texas, because, he claimed, they would discuss nothing but the death penalty.

He then defended the Bush National Missile Defense (NMD) policy, particularly as protection against the ostensible missile threat to the United States from China.

Next, Gedmin went into a wild diatribe, about how a “worthy transatlantic project of solidarity” would be to bring down the regime of Saddam Hussein of Iraq. “Saddam Hussein is still in power. That is a transatlantic problem, not an American problem,” he said. He raved against the “Saddam threat,” and attacked Secretary of State Powell’s “smart sanctions” policy for helping to “erode sanctions” against Iraq. He enumerated a number of extreme measures that, he insisted, must be put into place to bring about “an end of regime,” including support for a “government in exile” for Iraq.

Then came the question-and-answer period, and Gedmin became even wilder.

Attacks on Europe

In response to comments from the floor, he gave an example of what irked him about the “European attitude.” He griped that an unnamed member of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party had recently complained to him, that the Americans were trying to “trick” the Germans into supporting the United States in the event of a confrontation with what Gedmin called “Communist China,” over Taiwan. Gedmin said, yes, indeed, we expect European support, if such a crisis erupts.

Concluding his remarks, Gedmin “joked” that his last words would reflect his role as an “ugly American hegemon.” He insisted on the importance of the “use of force,” when necessary, in contradistinction to alleged European hesitation or opposition to use of force, and said: “As Al Capone said, ‘You can get a lot more with a gun and a smile, than with a smile alone.’ ”

‘Social Darwinism in the Security Field’

The immediate impact of Gedmin’s comments was somewhat softened because the lunch break followed him, but throughout the conference, participants buzzed about his Al Capone quote. Various Europeans told *EIR* privately, with irony, that they found Gedmin “refreshing,” because he was so direct and open, rather than covering up his words with academic circumlocution and double-talk.

During the afternoon working group sessions, one former State and Defense Department official, Prof. Daniel Nelson, was blunt about how he evaluated the crowd that now has the upper hand in Washington. Nelson, who served in the government during the Clinton years and who is now with the military-linked George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany, warned attendees that the Bush Administration was captivated by a “privatization mythos,” whereby security is defined by the notion that “those who are secure, are those who deserve it. We will now see Social Darwinism being applied in the security field. I call this ‘free market security,’ that those who deserve it, will be secure, and those who don’t deserve it, will be insecure.” Nelson affirmed that he was “proud” to oppose this policy.

One other State Department figure told *EIR* privately, that he hoped that the Western Europeans would start becoming firmer in their relations with the Bush Administration than they have so far. As was stressed at various points during the Loccum weekend, leading German Social Democrats, and individuals in the circle of Green party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, are bending over backward to appease the new Administration. The current government’s chief liaison with the United States, Social Democratic parliamentarian Karsten Voigt, has reversed his previous years’ reservations about American policies, and is now, in effect, a cheerleader for a special German relation to the Bush government.

What is most odd for those familiar with past decades of U.S.-German relations, is that the CDU has increasingly become the “enemy image” for certain leading American policymakers. One American think-tanker at Loccum favorably cited recent testimony by Gedmin to a U.S. Congressional committee, blasting CDU parliamentary foreign affairs spokesman Karl Lamers, for his attack, during the recent Wehrkunde defense gathering in Munich, on the American NMD project (“Bush Team Wants To Be ‘Masters of the World,’ ” *EIR*, Feb. 16, 2001). Lamers has become the *bête noire* for many in the Bush milieu.

The State Department figure commented, that the Germans, and others in Europe who try to be nicey-nice to this new Administration, “will end up paying a price, I can assure you. The world will quickly get around in Washington, that these Europeans are an easy touch, and can be pushed around. The end result will be very messy.”