

at first, all Europeans were called “Germans” in Russia, and the European district in Moscow was called *Nemetskaya Sloboda*, the German settlement.

Cultural influences among the two peoples were, of course, mutual. Many generations of Germans and Russians studied and still today enjoy the works of Goethe, Dostoyevsky, and Lev Tolstoy. Our two peoples understand each other’s mentality very well. A good example of this are the excellent Russian translations of German writers. These translations are very close to the original texts, maintain the rhythm of narration, the atmosphere, and the beauty of the originals. Boris Pasternak’s translation of *Faust* is just one example of this.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are various pages in our common history, and sometimes painful ones, especially during the 20th Century. But, before that we were often allies.

The relations between these two European peoples were repeatedly consolidated by marriages between dynasties. In general, women always played a major role in our history. [Applause.] Think, for example, of the daughter of the Archduke of Hesse-Darmstadt, Ludwig IV, known in Russia as Princess Elizabeth. Her fate was tragic. After the murder of her husband, she founded a nunnery. During the First World War, she nursed the wounded—Russians and Germans alike. The Bolsheviks executed her in 1918, but not long ago she was rehabilitated and canonized—for general veneration. A monument in her honor now stands in central Moscow. Neither should we forget the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst. Her name was Sophie Auguste Friederike, and she made a unique contribution to Russian history. Simple Russian people called her “*matushka*,” but she went down in history as the Russian Empress Catherine the Great.

Today, Germany is the main economic partner of Russia, our biggest creditor, one of our main investors, and a key interlocutor on matters of foreign policy. Let me give an example: Last year, trade between our countries reached a record DM 41.5 billion. This is comparable with the total trade of the Soviet Union with both German states. Should we be satisfied with that and rest on our achievements? I think not. Russian-German cooperation still has quite some potential to develop.

I am convinced that today we are opening a new page in our bilateral relations. By doing this, we are making a joint contribution to the construction of an all-European home.

In conclusion, I would like to speak the words which were used in the past to characterize Germany and its capital. I would like to apply this idea to Russia and say this: Of course, we are at the start of our path to building a democratic society and a market economy. There are hurdles and obstacles on that road, which we must surmount. But, if we free ourselves from the objective problems and from our own inexperience, which we sometimes exhibit, we shall see how the strong and vital heart of Russia beats. And this heart is open to genuine cooperation and partnership.

Documentation

Putin’s Hard-Hitting Interviews In Germany

On the eve of his trip to Germany, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave three interviews to German media. An interview with the newspaper Bild was given Sept. 18, followed by interviews for ARD-TV and Focus magazine on Sept. 19. These excerpts are translated from the Russian versions, posted on Putin’s website.

The Tasks Of Intelligence

Focus: You have already told us, that around a year ago you warned about the existence of a terrorist international. Did you know more than the Americans did? Did you not tell them, or did they not listen to you? Or were your intelligence agencies also in the dark?

President Putin: You know, it seems to me that what we lack most of all at the moment, is a realization of how much the world has changed. I think that our intelligence agencies, too, have a fair number of people who are living by an old system of priorities. The same goes for Western intelligence services; they are still fighting the Soviet Union, failing to notice that it no longer exists. Sometimes I have the impression, that this is not even because they are so stupid, but because they have to earn a paycheck and feed their families, but they don’t know how to do anything but fight the Soviet Union. So they pretend that nothing has changed, that the same work can just be continued. There are plenty of such people in the foreign policy agencies of our country, as well as in the West. Therefore when people send each other, say, some reports and so forth, they don’t know what to do with them. They go round and around, and finally throw it in the trash.

I hope very much that the recent tragic events will confirm the necessity of understanding what it means really to pool our efforts, to increase mutual trust, and will not only inspire, but actually result in a qualitative transformation of work in this area.

Focus: If your intelligence agencies had possessed some information . . . would they have given this information to the American intelligence services, that is to another country? Or did they hand over this information, but it was ignored?

Putin: I would not like my reply to sound like an accusation against any one of our partners, for insufficiently deep study and evaluation of the material we did pass to them. And we really did give them reports. This is not the time to exchange recriminations. What we should do now, evaluating the situa-



“In London, there is a recruitment station for people wanting to join combat in Chechnya. Today—not officially, but effectively in the open—they are talking there about recruiting volunteers to go to Afghanistan.”

tion, is to abandon all preconceptions and, I repeat again, unite our efforts in the struggle with terrorism and other manifestations of extremism. We are ready for this. . . .

Focus: What were these reports, maybe from the CIS countries, which the Americans either didn’t receive, or didn’t attribute importance to them?

Putin: As for these specific acts of terror, we did not have specific information on this question. But we had information, that terrorists were preparing certain terrorist actions against American citizens, American facilities abroad, and on U.S. territory. And all of these reports, this information, needed further checking and work-up. All of this information was passed to our American partners in a timely fashion. This does not mean that, on the basis of that data they could have reached conclusion about the attack that was being prepared. But how they treated this information, I do not know.

The Financing And Recruitment Of Terrorists

Bild: How can you fight a criminal, who kills himself, and who cannot be pursued?

Putin: Believe me, there are plenty of ways. You will agree with me, that people potentially prepared for suicide cannot be considered normal. We all know very well, that to get positive results, one must exploit existing weaknesses. And you can believe me, that the terrorist organizations and the terrorists have many weak points. First of all, it is necessary

to shut down all their flows of financing. It is necessary to locate the sourcing of financing, make the relevant demands, whether it’s a question of countries, or of some firms or legal entities, and then tightly close the borders to such financial flows.

Focus: . . . You once mentioned [Osama bin Laden] as involved in the Chechen events. . . . Do you think there is a connection between terrorists in Chechnya, and those in Afghanistan?

Putin: Listen, I was talking a year ago—take a look at my public speeches—about the existence of a so-called terrorist international. That was a year ago. Nobody should pretend that this problem will not affect him. Therefore today, having understood the threat, we should coordinate our actions in all areas. Above all, we must shut off the channels for financing, and we should influence the governments of all countries towards creating a barrier to the activity of terrorist organizations on their territories. . . . In some countries of the East, fundamentalist organizations operate almost out in the open. In some European countries, volunteers were being signed up for the war in Russia’s North Caucasus, actively and practically in the open. Today, the same people, in the same places, are recruiting volunteers for a possible war in Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

Of course, it requires political courage and some serious measures, for the government of any countries to put a stop to this activity. There will likely be some political costs, but

this must be done, and done without delay. Of course, we could, in the framework of the G-8 or the Security Council, think up a whole complex of political, educational and economic measures, in order to deprive extremist organizations of their support base, and assist and support those tendencies within, say, Islamic groups and organizations, which oppose terrorism as an instrument for achieving political goals. . . .

Focus: You talked about the recruitment of mercenaries. Can you name specific countries or names of people, involved in this?

Putin: In London, there is a recruitment station for people wanting to join combat in Chechnya. Today—not officially, but effectively in the open—they are talking there about recruiting volunteers to go to Afghanistan. This is well known, the mass media talk about this. And there are many such centers in Western Europe. But we should absolutely not allow a situation, like you have with the ostrich, which hides its head in the sand when it senses danger, evidently supposing that the entire rest of its body cannot be seen. This is not the case.

The Implications Of Military Action

Focus: But surely this solidarity [with the United States] has not reached the level, that you will agree to take part in the Americans' military actions?

Putin: Nobody has asked us about that. We cannot be more Catholic than the Pope. But, we are prepared for joint work.

Focus: And if you are asked?

Putin: We shall see, specifically what they ask from us, at what time, on what scale, and so forth. On one front, we are already combatting international terrorism. I don't think fighting a battle on two or three different fronts is the best way to proceed. This is well known in Germany.

But if our partners want, really want, not just to use Russia, but to work together with Russia and jointly combat terrorism, then we are prepared for this. But then we have to fight together also on the front where Russia is fighting today. In that case, we are prepared to look at the possibility of our participation in other areas of the struggle against terrorism.

Focus: The second front is Afghanistan. If the Americans "help you in Chechnya," would Russia strike against the Taliban from the north and the Americans through Pakistan, "to get at the chief terrorist bin Laden, if that's what he is"?

Putin: Have you seen the pictures on TV around the world today, of what is happening in Pakistan? We have to understand that there are complex processes going on in the world. And we should support the governments of countries, which are genuinely in solidarity with the world community in the struggle against terrorism. But, we should support only such

governments as really want to do this. It is a difficult task, and we should support them in carrying it out, not just support them because they have pretty eyes or something. We should act cautiously and be careful in what we say, so as not to make provocations. In any event, this is an area where sometimes it is necessary to talk less, and act more. We are prepared.

ARD: How far are you prepared to go in cooperation with the U.S.A. and NATO, if a military strike is made? Is it imaginable, that Russia would give its agreement for the use of air bases on CIS territory, for example in Tajikistan?

Putin: You said "CIS," which means the Commonwealth of Independent States. These states are independent, in the full sense of the word. Of course, we have a certain influence on them, as they on us; we were born out of a single state, the Soviet Union, so we have many ties, and a substantial economic presence there, but these states take political decisions of this sort independently.

Now concerning Russia's possible participation, we are prepared to work extensively with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism. So far we have not received specific requests in this regard, but our intelligence services have been working together already for a long time. The question is, to raise this cooperation to a new, qualitatively higher level. We are ready for that. Of course, I should say that all of our actions are and will be in total accord with Russian law, and with the international obligations Russia has assumed, and the norms of international law.

ARD: Is it imaginable that Russian troops might fight on the side of U.S. and NATO troops, or do you exclude such a possibility?

Putin: You know our principled position. The deployment of our Armed Forces outside the territory of the Russian Federation, first of all, entails a special legislative process and requires the approval of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian Parliament.

Moreover, the deployment of the Armed Forces in "third" countries can occur on the basis of a decision of the UN Security Council. We have followed these rules until now and we intend to do so in the future. But, this does not mean that we cannot discuss such questions, and think together with our partners about possible reactions in connection with acts of terrorism. I should say that the members of the UN Security Council, at any rate the permanent members, are in general and complete solidarity with the United States, and support the fight against terrorism. . . .

ARD: Could we imagine in the current global crisis situation, related to the fight against terrorism, that you would say, "If you Americans slow down your anti-missile shield program, we will find a greater possibility of helping you militarily with more support in the fight against terrorism,"



Russia's President speaks to the German Bundestag (Parliament), offering to Europe and the United States, Eurasian-wide cooperation against terrorism and for economic development: "I consider it unacceptable to talk about a 'clash of civilizations.'"

or can you not picture such a way of dealing?

Putin: No, we do not wish to, nor shall we make any trade-offs here.

No Clash Of Civilizations

Bild: Mr. President, there is an American writer Samuel Huntington, who some years ago wrote a book called *The Clash of Civilizations*, in which he writes about the struggle among cultures. Is that what we are dealing with today?

Putin: No. I think this is a harmful theory. In order to combat manifestations of religious fanaticism today, it is necessary first and foremost to find support within the framework of the region the religion comes from. . . . One should not divide up the world according to cultures.

Focus: Within the enormous country of Russia, there is also the problem of many ethnic groups, including Muslims. . . . And you have to solve the problem of preserving the unity of this space, attracting peaceable and well-wishing Muslims to your side. . . . How do you intend to achieve this goal?

Putin: . . . The special situation in Russia, is that for centuries we have had two cultures — Christianity and Islam — co-existing fairly peaceably; there have been ways of cooperating over the course of a very long time. In this sense, Russia has a unique experience not only of combatting terrorism, in the recent period, but a unique humanitarian experience of the

coexistence of two great cultures and religions. It is a kind of natural symbiosis, which one can find in few places in the world.

An important basis for this positive symbiosis is the unconditional recognition by one people, of the lawful rights of another people. . . . In Russia, the moral atmosphere is favorable for people of different cultures and creeds.

The Self-Conception Of A Leader

Putin (in Focus): It is a positive thing for me, that fate granted me the opportunity to do something for my homeland, for my country, that other people are not in a position to do. And I am obliged to take advantage of this in the best way.

I think that it is an absolutely superior quality of the democratic way of organizing a nation, that the person at the pinnacle of power must never forget, that he should act in such a way today, that tomorrow he will be able to live in that country, to look people in the eye and recollect with satisfaction, the time when he took decisions, on which the fate of millions of people depended.

For Russia this is especially urgent, because Russia is now at the stage of constructing our statehood and forming a civil society. And the person who is the great initiator today, must remember that some time will pass, and then he will be an ordinary citizen, and he will have to live in the society he is creating today. I try not to forget this.