

which is issued by the State Department.

Q: One more on this. Would, then, Chechen separatists, by the statement you read today, calling on them to cut off links to this group, are they on notice, as the Taliban is, that they will share the terrorists' fate if they don't do so?

Fleischer: The President's words speak for themselves about those terrorist organizations that have global reach. But what's notable here is the President is reiterating that it's important to have a political solution to the situation in Chechnya. But undeniably, there are terrorist organizations in Chechnya that have ties to Osama bin Laden.

Helen Thomas: Haven't we made many statements denouncing Russia for its attacks in Chechnya? And isn't there some image of freedom fighters there? And all of a sudden you're calling them terrorists?

Fleischer: As I just indicated, the concern for human rights remains a vital part of American policy, and the only solution to the problem in Chechnya is a political one.

Q: Yeah, but why is it just today that you're calling them terrorists? What has changed?

Fleischer: Well, as I indicated, that's not the case. That's been the long-standing position.

Q: I think this is the first time—is this not the first time you've used this word at that podium? It's the first time we've heard it.

Fleischer: I'm not sure that I have discussed the situation in Chechnya with the White House press corps prior to this. We haven't had much reason to do so.

But that's why I indicated, going back to the previous administration, in testimony before the Senate, they said what they said because it's true. And the State Department publishes a report every year that included similar information.

Q: Is it fair to assume that these words from you are in exchange for Putin's cooperation on the U.S. effort?

Fleischer: No, it's an accurate statement about the situation on the ground and the importance of the speech that President Putin made. But keep in mind, President Putin called for political discussions. Leaders of Chechnya have now indicated they are willing to engage in such discussions. That's a positive development.

Q: It sounds like a deal, though. It sounds like, in exchange for Putin's support, we, rhetorically, from this podium, are lending him support in characterizing the opposition as international terrorists.

Fleischer: No, there's no—no such conclusion should be reached. This is consistent with actions taken by the previous administration, because it's an accurate statement about developments in Chechnya.

Putin Addresses Nation On Terrorist Threat

Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a nationally televised address on the evening of Sept. 24, after going to the State Duma (lower house of parliament) earlier in the day to brief and discuss with its leaders, his security deliberations over the weekend. This was his statement (subheads have been added):

After the barbaric acts of terrorism in New York and Washington on Sept. 11 of this year, the entire world has continued to feel the impact of this tragedy.

The Russian Federation has been waging the struggle with international terrorism for a long time, relying exclusively on its own resources, and has repeatedly called on the international community to unite efforts. Russia's position is unchanged: We remain, it goes without saying, prepared to contribute to the struggle against terrorism. We hold that it is necessary, first and foremost, to give attention to strengthening the role of those international institutions, which were created for the purpose of reinforcing international security. These are the United Nations, and the UN Security Council. It is also necessary to put energies into improving the basis in international law, which would make possible an effective and timely reaction to acts of terrorism.

Position On Afghanistan

As for the planned anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, we define our position as follows:

First. Active international cooperation between intelligence services. Russia is providing and intends to continue to provide information in its possession, concerning the infrastructure, the locations of international terrorists, and the training bases of terrorist fighters.

Second. We are prepared to open the air space over the Russian Federation for flights by planes carrying humanitarian cargoes into the region where this anti-terrorist operation is conducted.

Third. We have coordinated this position with our allies among the Central Asian states. They share this position and do not exclude the possibility of providing their airfields.

Fourth. Russia is also prepared, if it becomes necessary, to take part in international search and rescue operations.

Fifth. We shall expand our cooperation with the internationally recognized government of Afghanistan, headed by

Mr. [Burhanuddin] Rabbani, and shall provide additional assistance to his armed forces in the form of supplies of weapons and military equipment.

Other, deeper forms of cooperation between Russia and the participants in the counter-terror operation are also possible. The extent and nature of this cooperation will directly depend upon the overall level and quality of our relations with these countries, and our mutual understanding in the area of the struggle against international terrorism.

I have created a group to coordinate the work on all of the matters outlined above, headed by Minister of Defense S.B. Ivanov. This group will collect and analyze information received, as well as carry out the practical interactions with participants in the operation.

Events In Chechnya

We also believe that the events in Chechnya cannot be viewed outside the context of the struggle with international terrorism. At the same time, we understand that these events also have their own pre-history. I believe it is possible that there are people in Chechnya to this day, who took up arms under the influence of false and distorted values. Today, when the civilized world has defined its position towards the struggle with terrorism, every person must define his position. This opportunity should also be extended to those, who have not yet laid down their arms in Chechnya.

Therefore, I propose to all participants in illegal armed units, and those who call themselves political leaders, to immediately cease all contacts with the international terrorists and their organizations. They have 72 hours to make contact with official representatives of the Federal agencies of power, to discuss the following questions: the procedure for disarming these illegal armed units and groups, and the procedure for their inclusion in the peacetime life of Chechnya. V.G. Kazantsev, Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Southern Federal District, which includes Chechnya, will be authorized to conduct these contacts on behalf of the Federal authorities.

'Islam Against Terror'

I should also like to take this opportunity to say a few words about my meeting today with the Muslim religious leaders of Russia. This meeting took place on their initiative. They have proposed to convene in Moscow an International Islamic Conference under the slogan "Islam Against Terror." I share their concerns, which arise in connection with the current world situation. And without any doubt, the convocation of this conference will be supported. I believe that it is only possible effectively to combat religious extremism and fanaticism, and not only Islamic, but any other brand, with the active participation of the religious communities themselves.

Thank you for your attention.

German-Russian Trade, Cooperation Growing

by Rainer Apel

The statements and interviews made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in connection with his three-day visit to Germany, were remarkable even from the narrower standpoint of bilateral German-Russian relations. In an interview with the daily *Bild Zeitung* appearing just prior to his arrival in Berlin, Putin called upon Germans to step out from the shadow of the post-World War II era, and to recognize their own sovereign national interests in the international arena. He delivered most of his speech before the Bundestag (parliament) in German, and in his introduction in Russian, he expressed joy over being a state guest in Berlin, the city where, over 200 years ago, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Gotthold Lessing lived and worked.

Putin described Germany as not only a leading world economic power, but also a leading nation of culture, with Classicists such as Goethe and Schiller, poets who for centuries have enjoyed great respect among Russians—despite two world wars in which Russia and Germany were enemies.

In his address at the Hgel Villa in Essen, Putin also praised Chancellor Gerhard Schrder for his personal interventions on behalf of expanding German-Russian economic relations—"indeed, doing so during a period of general economic decline." The spectacular growth of German-Russian trade—25% over the first two quarters of this year, and now almost equalling the level of Soviet trade with both parts of Germany a decade ago—would not have been possible without Schrder's personal involvement, Putin said, though he was also quick to add that the potential for cooperation, especially in the high-technology sector, has only just begun to be exploited.

Relations Are At Best Level

The German government's interest in establishing closer relations with Russia was also evident in Schrder's second meeting with Putin on Sept. 27, held in Dresden. Indeed, German-Russian relations have never been better over the past 56 years, and they can keep on improving, so long as no one acts to sabotage the intense diplomacy and economic contacts going on now between Berlin and Moscow.

Putin's remarks to the Bundestag and at the Hgel Villa are especially remarkable, because of the broad perspective