

## **From Cold War to Cold Peace: the EU-Russian Relations.**

**By Tatiana Zonova - MGIMO- Moscow**

In April 1951, when the agreement on the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community was signed, the Cold War was at its height, and the Korean Peninsula was facing a real Hot War. It is not surprising that the reaction of the USSR towards the ongoing process of the West European integration has been very cautious. In a note dated September 11, 1951 handed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.Vyshinsky to Charge d'Affaires of France, the «Schuman declaration" of 9 May 1950 was assessed as part of a plan aimed at the remilitarization of West Germany and the revival of German imperialism, incompatible with the interests of preserving peace in Europe.

The note was followed by articles on the European Coal and Steel Community which appeared in the Soviet central press. The European Coal and Steel Community was seen as a step towards the formation of economic bloc analogue of the aggressive NATO bloc.

On the eve of the signature of the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community the Foreign Ministry issued a statement handed to the embassies of European countries and the United States in Moscow (16 March, 1957). The statement claimed that the plan to create two new closed organizations would inevitably lead to further deepening of the division of Europe. They stressed that all the activities of the "Common market" and the Euratom would be subordinated to the interests of NATO while West Germany would be dragged more deeply into the system of closed military groupings of the Western powers. A similar statement was sent to the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe. Thus, we can conclude that any attempts to unite European countries were seen through the prism of ideological stereotypes of those years. The European integration was considered as an attempt to strengthen the position of world imperialism against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as well as against international workers' and national liberation movements.

In this regard I would like to note that such a position, in all probability, had been previously agreed with the "fraternal" communist parties, above all, with the ICP and the FCP. The statements of those parties on this matter were similar to the Soviet one.

Soviet ideologists tried to ensure that the inter-imperialist contradictions would inevitably lead to the disintegration of the EEC. On the basis of this ideological assumption, the Soviet government failed to recognize the EEC as a political reality and did not consider the possibility of establishing official relations with it.

This, however, did not affect the economic relations with individual countries of the Community, which were regulated by bilateral international agreements and protocols.

Khrushchev's "Thaw" marks a turning point in the attitude towards the European Community. On May 23, 1962 the main official newspaper "Pravda" published an article in which it was recognized that EC "certainly is a political and economic reality".<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, at the same time in the statements of ICP leaders also appears the recognition of the Community as an objective reality. On the part of the EEC followed a reciprocal step. In September 1963 the Council of Ministers of the EEC decided to address to the Soviet Union Memorandum "On trade relations between the" Common Market "and the countries of the Eastern bloc." EEC expressed its willingness to lower import levy on vodka, caviar, and crabs<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> La Civiltà cattolica, 5 gennaio 1974, anno 125, P.499.

<sup>2</sup> AVP RF, f.46, op.26, d.66, p.269, l.8.

However, we can suppose that in the Soviet leadership the proponents of recognition of the EEC "reality" did not constitute a majority. The Memorandum was rejected because de facto recognition of the existence of a single customs tariff in trade with the "Common Market" would also imply the formal recognition of this organization. With the verbal note they replied that the Soviet Union had no relations with the EEC and that it could negotiate on customs duties only with single European countries on the basis of bilateral agreements<sup>3</sup>. The Comecon countries were forced to take a similar position.

The issue of relations with the EEC rose again on the agenda in connection with a new stage of détente due to the so-called Eastern policy of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, and fuelled in its turn by the signing of the Soviet-American Treaties as well as by the signing of the Conference on Security and Cooperation Final Act.

On March 20, 1972 the CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in his address to the XV Congress of Soviet Trade Unions stressed that "the Soviet Union did not ignore the real situation in Western Europe and the existence of an economic grouping of capitalist countries known as the "Common Market". The Soviet leader said that he had been closely monitoring the activities of the "Common market" and its evolution. At the same time, in his speech, relations with the EEC were dependent on "the recognition of existing realities in the socialist part of Europe, in particular, taking into account the interests of the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance."<sup>4</sup>

In June 1973 the Secretary of the Comecon N. Faddeev unofficially visited Copenhagen and held talks with the Danes, who were holding presidency at the Council of Ministers of the EEC. They discussed prospects for rapprochement between the Comecon and the EEC. In January 1976, the Comecon Executive Board approved the draft of the General Agreement on the relationship between the Comecon and the EEC. The draft was handed to the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the EEC<sup>5</sup>.

Suppression of the nascent dissident movement in the USSR, struggle against violation of human rights in the Soviet Union initiated by President Carter and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to the rollback of detente. The USSR toughened its positions so that the negotiations on the establishment of relations with the EEC were interrupted.

The situation started to change only at the end of 1984, when Mikhail Gorbachev, then head of the Soviet parliamentary delegation in Britain, defined Europe as "our common home". On the occasion of Italian Prime minister B.Craxi's visit to Moscow (May, 1985), Gorbachev spoke about the readiness to recognize EEC not only as an economic union, but also as a political reality. Negotiations concluded with the signing of Joint Declaration on the establishment of official relations between Comecon and EEC (June 1988). The same year in August, official relations were established between the Soviet Union and the EU as well as between the EU and Hungary, Poland and East Germany. Political dialogue between the EU and the Soviet Union started in 1989, when the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and the President of the EC Council Spanish Foreign Minister Fernandez Ordonez met in Vienna.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR considered a political dialogue between the Soviet Union and the EU, as well as relations between the Comecon and the EEC as a fundamentally new channel of dialogue between East and West Europe. On 18 April, 1989 the meeting of the Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov with the President of the European Commission Jacques Delors took place in

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<sup>3</sup> AVP RF, f.46, op.40, p.437, d.47, l.11.

<sup>4</sup> <http://brezhnev.su/3/>

<sup>5</sup> AVP RF, f.46, op.38, p. 413, d.42, l.171.

Luxembourg. They discussed the possibility of concluding an agreement on trade and cooperation between the USSR and the EU. The agreement should regulate trade-economic, scientific, technical, financial, investment and other relations, including cooperation in specific sectors (energy, transport, agriculture, standardization, tourism, etc.). On 18 December, 1989 the EEC, European Coal and Steel Community and Euratom, on the one hand, and the USSR, on the other hand, signed the Agreement on trade and commercial and economic cooperation. However the USSR failed to enjoy the fruits of this Agreement because of the country's collapse in December 1991.

It is essential to state that after the collapse of the bipolar system the role and place of Russia on the world scene became one of the most important issues for the Russian foreign policy. At the same time the main challenges for the perception of Russia as a great power were as follows: a significant reduction of the territory along with the decrease and often the loss of links with fourteen former Soviet republics, a deep economic crisis, the need to seriously strengthen the former boundaries as well as a growing social discontent. That is basically why the first Foreign policy concept (1992) reiterated its commitment to ensure first of all "favorable conditions for the development of the country"<sup>6</sup>. Other stated goals coincided with the foreign policy objectives carried out in the USSR during the "perestroika" period i.e. the end of the Cold War, agreements on arms reduction, openness to the West, the establishment of relations with NATO and the European Union and negotiations on accession to the IMF and the WB.

The relations with the European Union drew a particular attention. It is worth mentioning that the development of relations with the EU has been the priority of Russian foreign policy from its very beginning. On 23 December 1991 the EEC recognized Russia as the successor of the Soviet Union in international affairs.

A new 'Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation' (1994) gave ground to the development of relations in the political, legal and humanitarian spheres in addition to the economic dimension<sup>7</sup>. In 1999 the EU adopted a 'Common Strategy towards Russia'<sup>8</sup>, while the latter elaborated the 'Strategy for the development of relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union for the medium term'<sup>9</sup>. In the European document the interest in 'Russia's ability to integrate into the European economic and social space' was specified as one of the main objectives, whereas the Russian document emphasized the task of 'making strategic the EU-Russia partnership'.

Russia and the EU created a solid institutional architecture, more than 20 rounds of expert consultations on specific policy issues were being held annually<sup>10</sup>. Since 2010 the 'Partnership for modernization' serves as a framework for promoting reforms and improving the competitiveness of the Russian and the European economies<sup>11</sup>.

At the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003 the EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their cooperation by creating in the long term four 'common spaces' in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and on the basis of common values and shared interests: common

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<sup>6</sup> Konzeptsia vneshney politiki (foreign policy concept)1992//Foreign policy and national security of contemporary Russia.1991-2002. Anthology in four volumes. Vol. IV. Documents. Moscow: MGIMO, RISA, ISE-Center, 2002. P.19.

<sup>7</sup><http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=201>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.greekgazeta.ru/archives/nomer07/articles/16.shtml>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ieras.ru/journal/journal1.2000/9.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/ob-itogakh-rasshirennogo-zasedaniya-koordinatirov-initsiativ-rossiya-es-partnerstvo-dlya-moder>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

economic space, space of freedom, security and justice, space of external security, space of research and education, including cultural aspects. In order to form such spaces the Moscow summit in 2005 approved the respective 'road maps'.

Through years a regular dialogue at the high and highest level was established. Twice a year such meetings take place in Russia and in the country, of the EU President. The Russian Prime minister and the President of the Commission meet regularly. Twice a year the Russian Minister of foreign affairs meets with the "trojka" of his counterparts. Annually in the framework of the UN General Assembly session the Russian Minister of foreign affairs also meets his 27 counterparts. The Permanent Partnership Council brings together the ministers of foreign affairs as well as the heads of other branch ministries. Russian leadership suggested also the formation of common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. One of the proven effective forms of cooperation with the EU remained interaction through "Northern dimension partnerships", as well as the formation and implementation of trans-border co-operation programs which are realized in the interests of the neighboring territories of EU countries and Russia in the context of regional development strategies, in particular, the Strategy of social-economic development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation.<sup>12</sup>

Since 2008 Russia and the European Union have been negotiating a new agreement on partnership and cooperation. However, progress on this path was sluggish. The negative attitude towards Russia fuelled by countries which recently had become members of the EU ('new Europe') constituted a substantial obstacle on the way of improvement of the Russia-EU relations. In particular, Poland, Lithuania and some other East-European countries seemed to have a conflicting potential due to the history of their relations with the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and also the Russian Federation. The diaspora in Western countries with origins from Eastern Europe counting millions of people also played a very crucial role in terms of the respective opinion making activity.

Russia's WTO accession has slowed the progress of negotiations. At the suggestion of the EU talks were frozen in order to understand the conditions under which Russia would enter the WTO<sup>13</sup>. Since its accession in 2012 informal expert consultations resumed.

Russia became the third (after the United States and China) trading partner of the EU. The European import of Russian energy accounted for more than a half of Russian foreign trade; more than two thirds of the foreign investments into the Russian economy also came from Europe. Bilateral relations, primarily in the economic dimension, developed successfully with Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and several other European countries. Russia also suggested elaborating an EU-Eurasian Union agreement on the free trade zone. At the Sochi summit (2006) Russia and the EU agreed about the necessity to work out a new basic agreement on strategic partnership.

Negotiations on a new basic agreement with the EU highlighted other numerous disagreements. Problems of visa-free regime and energy policy also kept the stage for confrontation. The Council of Europe (Russia joined it in 1996) criticized the Russians for human rights violation and the use of energy supplies as an instrument of political pressure as well as for other issues. The Third Energy Package (2009), aimed at weakening energy suppliers' control over the pipelines and distribution network, was of particular concern for Russia. Russia regarded this Package a 'discriminatory measure', first of all against Gazprom which is the Europe's main gas supplier<sup>14</sup>. Minister Lavrov claimed that 'attempts to retrospectively apply the Third Energy Package were not in line with the

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.embrussia.ru/ru/sites/default/files/docs/obzormid\\_rf-2013.pdf](http://www.embrussia.ru/ru/sites/default/files/docs/obzormid_rf-2013.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> See: Interview by vice-minister for foreign affairs A. Meshkov, 6 February 2014.

[http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp\\_4.nsf/fa711a859c4b939643256999005bcbbc/02bfe3f89658fdca44257c7700480286!OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/fa711a859c4b939643256999005bcbbc/02bfe3f89658fdca44257c7700480286!OpenDocument)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=4555>

standards of international law<sup>15</sup>. At the last Russia-EU summit (January 2014) when relations became tense because of the Ukrainian crisis the parties managed to agree only upon one document “Joint EU-Russia statement on combating terrorism”.<sup>16</sup>

The situation worsened after the annexation of Crimea and the imposition of sanctions. In April 2014 Russia filed a complaint at the World Trade Organization against the European Union's energy market laws enacted in 2009, claiming that they violate international rules. These laws ban suppliers from owning transit facilities such as gas pipelines, and would force Gazprom to allow third-party gas producers to use the South Stream pipeline. On 1 December 2014, during his state visit to Turkey, President Putin announced that Russia was withdrawing from the South Stream project, blaming Western sanctions and the lack of construction permits on the territory of the European Union.

The developments of Russia-EU relations belong to the global interdependence agenda. That is why it seems that constructive partnership with countries included in the European Neighborhood Policy and in the Eastern Partnership program as well as qualitative improvements of the Russia-US relations should be an important precondition for a successful advancement in the Russia-EU cooperation.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp\\_4.nsf/sps/001AA34D8D8CACHED44257D0F00530B8D](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/sps/001AA34D8D8CACHED44257D0F00530B8D)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/140835.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/140835.pdf)