
Putin on Victory Day

‘We Have a Great Moral Right...’

by Rachel Douglas

May 9—Newly inaugurated Russian President Vladimir Putin presided over today’s Victory Day military parade in Moscow’s Red Square, marking the 67th anniversary of the defeat of fascism in Europe in 1945. Putin’s speech to the event, as well as features of the parade itself, and other events during the day, available on the Kremlin website, should be heard and seen by anybody foolish enough to dismiss current Russian warnings about the danger of a new world war.

The commander of the parade, which featured marching units from every branch of the Russian Armed Forces, and military hardware including strategic nuclear weapons, was Deputy Chief of the General Staff Gen.-Col. Valeri Gerasimov. He is the same officer who, just last week, presented video animations of the nuclear war danger, at the Moscow conference on missile defense held May 3-4.

Putin repeatedly referred to the current situation in the world, citing the historic failure of war-avoidance before World War II, as he ad-

ressed the crowd and the nation during the parade:

“This is our day of memory, our day of pride and mourning, the day that unites everyone in Russia. Sixty-seven years ago, we defeated the terrible and cynical force that was Nazism. We must never forget how that force was born and grew stronger and ever more audacious before the world’s very eyes. We must never forget how barbarians planned the destruction of entire peoples and sought to dictate the destinies of whole countries and continents.

“We must be open in recognizing that the Nazis’ aggressive plans did not meet with timely collective resistance, and that the divisions between countries and their mutual suspicion and ideological disputes prevented them from being able to stop World War II. Humanity paid a terrible cost for this, but in the end, the inevitable happened, and responsibility and the collective determination to vanquish this evil finally triumphed. Countries rose in common coalition against the Nazi enemy. Today, we pay tribute to the countries that made an enormous contribution to defeating our common ruthless enemy.

“It is our common duty to remember why the war began and to analyse its lessons, which remain just as relevant today. I stress today that strict respect for inter-



Presidential Press & Information Office

“...It was our country that bore the brunt of the Nazi attack, met it with heroic resistance, traversed immense hardships, determined the war’s outcome, routed the enemy, and liberated the world’s peoples,” Putin said in his Victory Day address. Here, Red Square, as the parade is about to begin.

national law, state sovereignty, and the independent choice of each people is one of the crucial guarantees for ensuring that the tragedy of World War II never happens again.

“Russia is consistent in its policy of strengthening security in the world. We have a great moral right in taking this principled and firm stand, because it was our country that bore the brunt of the Nazi attack, met it with heroic resistance, traversed immense hardships, determined the war’s outcome, routed the enemy, and liberated the world’s peoples. This victory provides a strong foundation for our young generations too. . . .

“Veterans, you stood shoulder to shoulder throughout this war, united as brothers, enduring hardships, deprivation, and torment such as seem more than a man can bear. But you did not give in to the enemy, and became those who truly made victory with your own hands. You drew strength from Russia’s glorious military traditions and from the true values that shone so brightly during those times of great trial, and you prove once more that victory is won not only by strength of arms, but by the spirit, solidarity, and faith.

“The Great Patriotic War is part of history now, but your courage and your ability to love and defend your motherland will never fade, and will always remain the yardstick of moral sense, patriotism, and duty for the generations to come. Today too, your descendants follow the Victory Banner and parade with pride across legendary Red Square, and they do so in a sign of deepest respect to those who gave them this great day, those who remained forever on the battlefields and will never celebrate this most sacred of holidays together with us here.

“We will always remain true to your great deed. This is the guarantee of our future, and we will do everything to ensure that it is a safe and peaceful future. Glory to the victorious people! Congratulations! Congratulations on Victory Day! Glory to Russia! Hurrah!”

Parade Highlights

Among the highlights of the parade itself: A color guard carries the national flag and the Victory Banner



The Topol-M, Russia’s most modern intercontinental ballistic missile, on display in the Victory Day parade.

into Red Square. The Victory Banner is the Soviet flag that was raised over the Reichstag in Berlin, in May of 1945. When Putin’s speech begins, the camera pans the crowd of World War II veterans who were present.

Near the end of the parade, several units of truck-mobile Iskander short-range missiles cross Red Square. This is the system being deployed in the far western district of Kaliningrad (historically German Königsberg) as a capability to attack U.S./NATO anti-missile installations in Poland. Soon after the Topol-M, Russia’s most modern intercontinental ballistic missile, appears.

Russian national TV also broadcast excerpts from a meeting Putin held in the afternoon with the families of soldiers of the 6th Paratroopers Company, 104th Guards Airborne Regiment of the 76th (Pskov) Airborne Division, which was nearly entirely wiped out in March 2000 during the 2nd Chechen War.

Speaking with 100 relatives of the 84 paratroopers who died, Putin said once again that in that conflict (it was launched by the British- and Saudi-backed separatist forces just when Putin became acting President in 1999), Russia’s survival was threatened. “Your loved ones did not die in vain,” he said, “because they really blocked the collapse of the country. In truth, that is no exaggeration. I know this. Because we could quite well have had a situation develop like in Yugoslavia. There, the country simply disintegrated, and with bloody fighting. . . . If, God forbid, it had come to that here, things would have been far worse.”