

# Putin: I don't want revolutions any more in Russia

*Matrioska full translated the reply of Vladimir Putin during the press conference in Moscow 19.8.2021 after the meeting with Angela Merkel.*

Vladimir Putin: Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

Our talks today with Madam Federal Chancellor as usual taken place in a constructive, businesslike atmosphere.

We have discussed in detail, including with delegations, the state and prospects of development of Russian-German relations, and exchanged views on a wide range of issues.

## About Merkel and german-russian relations

As you know, Ms Merkel's visit was made all the more special by the fact that she will be stepping down as Federal Chancellor after the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the Federal Republic in September. But I want to say straight away: we will always welcome Merkel as a welcome guest in Russia.

The fact that Angela Merkel has spent 16 years at the head of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, confidently leading one of the largest, leading countries in Europe, and that she is rightly among the most respected European and world leaders, cannot but inspire respect.

Over the many years that we have worked together, we

have developed a good working relationship. We have had regular contacts, we have always been in touch, we have discussed pressing bilateral issues, and we have sought to coordinate positions on issues of global politics.

Of course, our views have not always coincided, but the dialogue between us has been frank and substantive, aimed to find compromises and resolving the most difficult issues.

I must stress that Germany is truly a priority partner for Russia, both politically and economically.

Talking about Russian-German trade and economic ties, I would like to note that despite the coronavirus, which is still a serious obstacle to the full recovery of business contacts, mutual trade turnover has begun to grow. Between January and May this year, the index approached 33 percent, topping \$21 billion. The reciprocal investments are approaching the 30 billion USD.

The cross-cutting German-Russian Years of Economy and Sustainable Development will take place in 2020 and 2022. Business people and entrepreneurs from both countries are actively communicating at these many events, and a whole range of promising joint projects in trade, industry and agriculture is being agreed upon.

We have some major projects that everyone is familiar with, they are being implemented, and we strongly hope that these are not the last ones.

### **The situation in Afghanistan**

Naturally, today's talks touched on many pressing

issues of international politics.

In front of the rapidly unfolding events in Afghanistan, we have placed this topic at the top of our agenda. The Taliban now control virtually all of the country, including the capital. This is reality, and it is precisely this reality that must be taken into account to avoid, of course, the collapse of the Afghan State.

The irresponsible policy of imposing foreign values, the desire to build other countries' democracies according to alien "models", taking no account of historical, national or religious particularities, and completely ignoring traditions by which other peoples live, must cease.

We know Afghanistan, we know it well, we are convinced of how this country is organised and how counterproductive it is to try to impose unfamiliar forms of government and public life on it.

Any such socio-political "experiments" have never been successful and only lead to the destruction of states, degradation of their political and social systems.

At the same time, we see that the Taliban have already declared an end to fighting, have begun to restore public order, and have promised to guarantee the safety of local residents and foreign diplomatic missions. I hope all this will be materialized.

This process should be closely monitored by the international community under the coordination of the UN Security Council.

And one more point: in our view, it is particularly important now to prevent the infiltration of

terrorists of all stripes into the territories of neighbouring states, including in the guise of refugees.

## **About Ukraine**

Among other international topics, the issues related to the settlement in the south-east of Ukraine were touched upon in detail. As you know, Mrs Merkel has done a lot to help resolve the internal Ukrainian crisis, she was at the origins of the Normandy format, we have all been looking for opportunities to bring peace back to Donbas together.

This, unfortunately, has not yet been achieved. Today, Russian and German voices expressed serious concern about rising tensions on the line of contact. We have discussed this, and hopefully this discussion will continue in the very near future. Since the beginning of August, more than a thousand ceasefire violations have been recorded, and settlements in Donbas are being shelled every day.

It is also alarming that Ukraine has adopted a number of laws and bylaws that deeply reverse the Minsk agreements. It seems that the leadership of that country has decided to abandon a peaceful solution to the situation. In this regard, we once again ask Mrs Federal Chancellor, including in the light of her forthcoming visit to Kyiv, to influence the Ukrainian side to fulfil all its previous commitments.

## **About Belarus**

Of course, we also talked about the situation around Belarus, and Mrs Chancellor also touched on this topic. We believe that contradictions within the Belarusian society can be resolved only within the

constitutional and legal framework and solely by the Belarusians themselves, without external interference.

### **About Iran**

Discussing the situation around Iran's nuclear programme, Madam Chancellor and I expressed hope that once a new government is formed in Iran, vigorous efforts will continue to be made to maintain the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I informed Madam Federal Chancellor about my recent telephone conversation with the newly elected President of Iran.

### **About Libya**

As you all know, Mrs Merkel is keen to promote an intra-Libyan settlement. Last January, yours truly also attended the Berlin Conference on Libya, initiated by the Chancellor, whose decisions contributed to improving the situation "on the ground".

We now believe that the international community should continue dialogue with all influential political forces in Libya in order to maintain and build on the positive momentum that has not yet been achieved.

### **About Syria**

We have told our German partners about our view of the situation in Syria. A ceasefire is maintained in most of the country and the destroyed economy and infrastructure are being rebuilt, but the terrorist threat persists. Because of the illegitimate sanctions imposed on Damascus and the coronavirus pandemic, the socio-economic situation also remains

difficult.

We attach great importance to United Nations Security Council resolution 2585, adopted in July, on comprehensive humanitarian assistance to Syria. This was to a large extent the result of the agreements reached during the Russian-American summit in Geneva in June. We hope that European countries, including the Federal Republic of Germany, will also join efforts to assist the Syrian people.

### **About Navanly and democracy**

As for the person you mentioned, he was not convicted for his political activity, but for a criminal offence against foreign partners.

As for political activity, no one should hide behind political activity to carry out business projects, all the more so in violation of the law. That is the first part of my answer.

The second, as regards the non-systemic opposition in general. I don't see anything in western countries, in Europe or the USA, just to mention the Occupy Wall Street movement or the 'yellow waistcoat' movement in France, giving them particular support when promoting them in, say, representative bodies of authority, including in parliament. We don't see any such thing. Moreover, when people entered the Congress after the well-known elections in the USA with political demands, over a hundred criminal cases were brought against them. And judging by the charges brought against them, they are facing long prison terms of 15 to 20-25 years, maybe even more. I would ask you to pay attention to this side of the problem to be very

objective.

As for us, our political system is developing and all citizens of the Russian Federation have the right to express their own opinions on political issues, to form political organisations and to participate in elections at all levels. But this must be done within the framework of the existing law and the Constitution. We will do everything we can to ensure that the situation in Russia is stable and predictable. Russia exhausted its limit of revolutions in the twentieth century. We don't want any more revolutions, we want an evolutionary development of our society and state. I hope that this will be the case. As for the decisions of the judicial authorities of the Russian Federation, I would ask you to treat these decisions with respect.

The fight against corruption is a very important thing, but it should not be used as an instrument of political struggle. We know very well, and you know it too, that this toolkit is used to achieve political goals, and is recommended for political purposes by those organisations which run these kinds of people. Although the fight against corruption in itself is a very important thing, we pay a lot of attention to it, we attach a lot of importance to it and we will do everything in our power to eradicate corruption in the broadest sense of the word.

In general, the fight against corruption must be fought by the people who themselves impeccably enforce the laws. This is one of the most important conditions for this fight to be effective.

**Again about Afghanistan**

As for the operation in Afghanistan, it certainly cannot be called a success. But it is not in our interests now to stand there and talk about it as some kind of failure.

We were interested in making the situation in the country stable. It is the way it is today. I think many politicians in the West are coming to realize what I said in my opening remarks, namely that one should not impose from the outside the standards of political life and behavior on other countries and nations, despite their particularities – their ethnic composition, their religious composition, their historical traditions. I think this realization should come eventually and become one of the practical guides for the implementation of real policy.

We have seen what happened during the so-called Arab Spring and now Afghanistan. But we need all our partners to make this a universal rule – to treat our partners with respect and to be patient with them. If they like or dislike something, we must give them the right to determine their own fate, no matter how long they follow the path of democratisation of their countries and how much they like or dislike what is happening there, we must build good neighbourly relations and respect each other's interests in the international arena.

I think that that is the lesson of Afghanistan, and we, together with our other partners, the United States and the European countries, Russia should do everything in our power to unite our efforts today to support the Afghan people and normalise the situation there and build good-neighbourly relations.

## About the Minsk agreement

I agree with Madam Federal Chancellor about the Minsk agreements and the Normandy format. There is no other instrument to achieve peace, and I think it should be treated very carefully and with respect, even though we have not yet achieved the final settlement objectives.

The Minsk agreements are enshrined in a relevant UN Security Council resolution, and in that sense the Minsk agreements have acquired the format of a norm of international law.

We are concerned that the Ukrainian side says one thing to the press at the official talks, but says something else internally. In fact – I want to stress that, just look at the statements of the top officials – they say that they are not going to implement the Minsk agreements.

Today I have informed the Federal Chancellor that another draft law has been submitted by the Government of Ukraine. And if this law is passed – please read it, it is not a secret document, it is hanging on the website for sure – it will actually mean Ukraine's unilateral withdrawal from the Minsk process. Because not only does it contradict the Minsk agreements, everything contradicts the Minsk agreements. It would mean Ukraine's de facto withdrawal from those agreements. I hope that Madam Federal Chancellor during her visit will have some influence, some pressure on the Ukrainian authorities, and this law will not be adopted.

## About North Stream 2

Now about the transit of gas. Yes, Madam Federal Chancellor has always had this position. Always, I

want to stress that. And in the course of construction, which is now coming to an end, there are 44, I think, or 45 kilometres left. (Turning to Miller) What is it, Alexei, 15? Fifteen kilometres left by sea – that's all, we can say it is close to completion. But Madam Federal Chancellor has always raised the issue of continuing transit through Ukrainian territory even after the transit contract is terminated.

The first thing I want to say in this regard. First of all, the Federal Chancellor raised this issue once again during the negotiations today. I assured the Federal Chancellor that we will fulfil all our obligations under the transit contract even after she leaves office. Russia will fulfil all the obligations it has undertaken. We are doing so now and will continue to do so.

Next point. "Nord Stream 2: somebody says this is a political process – this is a delusion or an attempt to mislead somebody. It is two thousand kilometres shorter than the Ukrainian transit. And it is a modern, environmentally friendly system, these are not empty words, these are new equipment which reduces the carbon emissions of our hydrocarbons in transit to Europe by times, I think, five times. It is just that we all have to know it, understand it. And it is much cheaper than transit through the Ukrainian channel.

But we are ready, and I want to say it once again, I have said it publicly and I want to emphasise that we are ready to transit gas through Ukraine after 2024 as well. But we must understand for how long and to what extent. To do this, we must get an answer, including from our European partners, as to how much gas they are willing to buy from us. This

is an obvious thing.

We cannot sign a transit contract if we do not have contracts to supply our consumers in Europe. And with the green agenda, which in fact is already being implemented in Europe right now, we are faced with the question of whether they will buy gas from us at all and how much. This is a matter for discussion.

In any case, this is a purely commercial issue, I mean another component – the technical condition of the pipeline system itself. But, I repeat, we are not only ready to discuss it, we are actually ready to do it. This is particularly true for supplies to Southern Europe. Consumption volumes are growing, and I hope they will continue to do so in the coming years. There is no other more reliable source than Russian gas for German and European consumers today.

### **Again about Merkel**

The question is not a very correct one. I cannot assess the performance of the Federal Chancellor, this can only be done by the German people, including in the upcoming Bundestag elections.

It is true that our relations have been built differently. We have now emphasised that we have different approaches to evaluating different situations. Nevertheless, the scope of our cooperation over these years, despite all the difficulties we have encountered over this fairly long period of time, has increased, it has become more intense.

We have talked today about the economic component. The Federal Republic of Germany is our second largest trade partner in the country after China. We

have invested over USD 7.5 billion, perhaps even USD 9.5 billion, and our German partners have invested USD 18 billion. At the same time, German companies are working predominantly in manufacturing, in real production. We appreciate that.

Today, Madam Chancellor has raised some specific issues related to – I understand this, and I do so from my side – securing the interests of German business in the Russian market. It has to do with deep localisation of production and so on. But these are all current issues. But on the whole, the volume and quality of our relationship has changed dramatically, for the better, of course. I want to express the hope that after the elections, after the change of government, this trend will continue.