

The problem of the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad seen by the German right-winged press “*Das Ostpreussenblatt*” and “*Junge Freiheit*”

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For the necessary updates to the present day (2008) on the complex Kaliningrad issue see the EU's External Relations' website:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/kalin/index.htm;

The territory of Kaliningrad, a former Prussian then German territory, torn by the Russians from Hitler's Germany in 1945, at the end of victorious the Great Patriotic War, last territory of the "remaining external empire" to Russia and its strong national pride, is an internal political factor that the president Putin will have to take carefully in consideration, not being able it neither to sell to Germany in exchange of the cancellation of the Russian debts neither to submit it to a regimen of "shared sovereignty". The territory of Kaliningrad currently constitutes a possible occasion for a better development of the political relations between the EU and Russia and equally a possible factor of perturbation of the same .

The Russian President proposes also the abolition of the visa between Russia and European Union, and therefore a rapprochement of Russia to Europe, its gradual integration into the European context, enjoying also the agreement of the former German minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans Dietrich Genscher, persuaded of the feasibility of the plan in medium-long terms. The problem of Kaliningrad will constitute in fact one " litmus paper" between Russia and EU: the question will be whether it will give rise to strong contrasts between these two entities, or whether it can prosper, as once the ancient Baltic Hansa did. When the phase of the enlargement to the east of the EU will be completed, in fact, Kaliningrad- that currently is under Russian administration- will find itself in a situation of enclave between of the States that will belong to the European Union like Poland or the Lithuania and States that to not will belong to it, like Ukraine and Belarus of the newstalinist Lukashenko.

Currently a row is taking place between the European Union and Russia on the future status of Kaliningrad/ Königsberg in as much, when the agreement of Schengen comes soon into force, moreover not compulsory within the EU, the Russian citizens of Kaliningrad will have to be in possession of a transit permission in order to visit or also in order to only journey through countries of EU.

Obviously that sounds unfavourably to the Russian president Vladimir Putin, expert of Germany since he has stayed a long while in Dresden at the times of the former DDR like agent of the KGB, today FSB. Putin considers this fact as an attack to the human rights of the Russian population of the territory of Kaliningrad and a strong hamper to its trade relations, comparable to the aerial block of Berlin put in place by the Russians in 1948. And just like in Berlin of the Cold War, the Russians propose to build a railway corridor, without possibility of stop, between the oblast of Kaliningrad and the mother country, in the best tradition of the Cold War and the former DDR. This naturally

only in the case in which the EU's uncompromising stance in the imposition of the transit visa was demonstrated. Putin has then aimed a lot at the psychological effect that the concept of violation of the human rights would have on the European institutions. It is in fact an ancient Soviet technique the making of proposals that very difficultly could be accepted by its interlocutor, in order to put it therefore in bad light in front of the home and international public opinion.

"Das Ostpreussenblatt" writes in fact : "While the European Union is convinced that the enlargement to the east will carry advantages and well-being not only for its supporters and for the Countries that will adhere to it soon, but also for the other Countries, among which not last Russia, Putin instead has compared the situation of Königsberg with the one of West Berlin during the period of the Cold War. According to him, the issue of the connection of West Germany with West Berlin was resolved more democratically than the authorities of the European Union are now tackling the issue of Kaliningrad. This statement is evidently aimed to hit Europeans in their weakest point: Putin has thought to have obtained a large psychological victory, comparing the decision of the European Union to a violation of the human rights of the inhabitants of Kaliningrad"

According to *"Junge Freiheit"*, the international law gives faculty to Russia to reach without problems its "exclave" on the Baltic Sea, also in the case that this in future should be encircled by adherent States to the European Union and to the treaty of Schengen.. *"Junge Freiheit"* writes : *"With the entrance in force of the Treaty that definitively regulated the process of re-unification of the two Germanies of the 12.09.1990 (so-called Treaty 2 + 4) from the point of view of the established international law the territory of Kaliningrad is integral part of the territory of the Russian Federation. Also according to article 65 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation the territory of Kaliningrad is subject of right and integral part of the Federation. It is then the case of a Russian "exclave", in as much the territory of Kaliningrad is encircled by Poland and Latvia. For cases of the sort, in the consuetudinary international law the right of free circulation between native mother land and enclave has already long been established ; with other words that is to say that it exists a transit right to travel from the motherland via earth to the exclave and viceversa. In the last 12 years, at least from the entrance into force of the aforesaid Treaty, the issue is regulated in this way. Therefore Russia has the right to the free access to its enclave, and beyond that the human rights of their nationals don't allow to separate the inhabitants of Kaliningrad from the motherland like also the Russian citizens travelling to the territory of Kaliningrad"*

"Junge Freiheit" speaks out therefore against an introduction of visas and corridors, historically unfortunate, between the Russian exclave and the motherland, as it could seriously damage the relations with Russia and choke the already precarious economic existence of the territory which is slowly improving. After all, the author of the article, Prof. Wolfgang Seiffert, teacher of German law by the Academy of Sciences of Moscow, invites the European Union and also others not to try to impose with force the decisions to Russia, but to handle it like a partner worthy of respect. This must happen, asserts the author of the article, in special way as a result of the treaty of co-decision of Russia in the NATO, without possibility of veto, signed in Pratica di Mare in may of this year 2002.

In this controversial picture of Russia- European Union relations, the problem of an eventual, although improbable, restitution of the territory of Kaliningrad to Germany, strongly wished by the press that gravitates in the area of the German nationalists and the associations of the refugees of Eastern Prussia, in particular *the Landmannschaft*). This Eastern Prussian hypothesis at the moment does not seem to have any foundation in as much, according to reliable sources, (the British *Sunday Telegraph*), the proposal would have been already rejected some years ago by the German

government. The associations insist on the fact that the expulsion of the Germans from their lands would have been carried out on a basis of a presumed concept of collective guilt on ethnic base, principle today commonly not accepted in the international law. They also insist for the reopening of a German consulate to Kaliningrad/Königsberg, for the restoration of the German toponymy beside the Russian one, and for the optional teaching of the German language in the schools etc.

Obviously these associations, like the ARE, (*Aktiongemeinschaft für Recht und Eigentum*) - Community of action for the right and property -, or *the Aufbau Ost*, initiative of the refugees of Eastern Prussia that has for program the reconstruction of infrastructures in Königsberg, greets much favourably the actions of the Russian government of the exclave in direction of a partial recovery of the German past of the former Königsberg. And this series of tiny political fractions that support the restitution of the assets to the refugees is engaged to resort to the European Court of Justice if the federal German jurisprudence, the Court of Karlsruhe, does not recognize its rights of property, recognized by the international jurisprudence like fundamental human rights, on the lands abandoned in 1945. However, it is interesting to analyse in the present article the position of the two German "revanchist" newspapers, "*Das Ostpreussenblatt*" and "*Junge Freiheit*" on the future geopolitical status of Kaliningrad and its repercussions in the international political panorama. Equally interesting is the analysis of the echo that the positions of two newspapers have had in the German political world.

"*Junge Freiheit*" and "*Das Ostpreussenblatt*" have always emphasized like Königsberg and its legal status, since Chancellor Adenauer in the Fifties onwards, have always constituted for German politics a "*heikle Frage*"- a thorny issue-, above all from the point of view of international relations. The territory of Kaliningrad has been in fact until 1991 an important Soviet military base, hermetically sealed to the contacts with the outside world and fundamental military base also in order to hold to at bay the then already quarrelsome Poland. Today, to the territory of the oblast of Kaliningrad are potentially interested at least five States among which: Germany, Russia Poland, Belarus and Latvia, (in possession of Klaipeda, an important ice-free harbour, the former Prussian Memel, yielded by the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic to Latvia in 1949). This handover could represent a serious problem for Vilnius and source of serious territorial controversies with Russia, and therefore an obstacle for the adhesion of Latvia to the EU and NATO, as they do not accept members with suspended territorial disputes and makes it therefore, once more, apt to blackmail by Russia that exerts pressure in order that Latvia does not turn down the proposal of the creation of a corridor. Obviously there is then Russia, but for "historical responsibility", also Germany, besides the overwhelming interest of the EU to defuse a possible source of tension and of social and ecological problems in the area of the Baltic Sea.

"*Junge Freiheit*" describes therefore, shortly and effectively, the impasse in which the German government found itself in the red-green coalition that is accused openly of sloth : "*after the opening of the territory to the tourists, Königsberg is returned to be part of the visual ghost of the German public opinion. From the point of view of Bonn, Königsberg officially continued not to exist. Instead, from the beginning of the "Berliner Republik", and paradoxically under the regency of the red-green government coalition of Gerhard Schröder, Königsberg re-entered in the scope of vision of the German federal Government. But, not in a purely German perspective, the efforts of the associations of the refugees of the Prussia are aimed to the development of several activities in their former native land in collaboration with Russians, Poles and Latvians, but these are not officially noticed in Berlin. There are too much great fears that old resentments can burst in the interested Countries against Berlin. The fear of being accused of revanchism works so that for Berlin the issue of Königsberg in the official language is defined a European and not a German issue. Recently, in an interview with a Russian newspaper, Chancellor Schröder has stated that Kaliningrad could constitute a bridge between the EU and Russia. Schröder has categorically*

denied a German interest towards Kaliningrad. And therefore the discrepancy continues to grow between the interest produced by the issue in the German public opinion (daily at least four-five daily papers report on the territory of Kaliningrad) and the substantial inactivity of the government of Berlin towards the territory. But as adjacent State and greater creditor, the government of Berlin, perhaps also with regard to the BMW, that owes a plant of assembly, is currently in negotiations with Moscow on the future of the enclave. Lately it must however be noticed that up to now Berlin has shown its will not to include in the negotiations with Moscow the refugees of Eastern Prussia and equally with Brussels, although an European solution to the issue would have taken care also of the German interests

To this purpose "*Junge Freiheit*" proposes to constitute in Eastern Prussia a colony of "*Russlanddeutsche*" that is of Russians of German descent, who were deported by Stalin in 1941 in Central Asia them, as a result of the consequences of the operation "Barbarossa" of June 1941.

They have carried on building the construction of infrastructures and of schools with the favour of the Russian regional authorities that hope to gain from it an economic profit. Russian authorities of the territory, therefore, comments the newspaper, would not oppose to a recovery by the city of its Prussian past, in particular for the young people, by means of a cultural promotion of the territory that may carry a flood of foreign investments, in particular of German ones. The authorities of Moscow then would engage themselves to speak without censorship to the entire public opinion of the Russian Federation about the territory of Kaliningrad, its problems and its potentialities, ripping therefore the silence that had encircled the territory for more than forty years. Moscow, observes "*Junge Freiheit*", would find itself internally split between the desire to enjoy the advantages of the international economic and political collaboration and the concerns deriving from any sharing of sovereignty on a territory, that could bring about as a result dangerous centrifugal tendencies. Therefore, writes "*Junge Freiheit*" : "*Governor Jegorow in his interviews on the future of the foreign territory declares himself extremely favourable to the collaboration with economic partners, but at the same time has maintained himself prudently in the wake of Putin, not wanting to contribute in any way to national disintegration. Moscow remains therefore a point of reference in the background*" the newspaper characterizes very well "*les incertitudes russes*" when it writes that while "*Putin's yearning towards Brussels to make of Kaliningrad a model region for the economic cooperation with the other States of the region, therefore making of it a trade window of Russia towards the EU, its minister of commerce German Gref- a German of Russia- has temporary suspended the status of Kaliningrad as a special economic zone with custom facilitations, and has decreed its shutdown towards the outside world. At the same time strong investments for the widening of the harbour facilities are scheduled, which include a second gas pipeline coming from Russia and a thermal powerhouse. Ultimate goal of these investments would be the < economic consolidation of the territory >. Königsberg is to be declared < priority zone of Russian regional politics >.*

It appears obvious from these facts like Moscow has concerns on the future of its enclave. The EU, writes the right-winged newspaper, in particular in the person of the German Günter Verheugen, (SPD), commissioner for the enlargement, would lack an all-embracing solution for the thorny issue, and, above all, "*in perfect bureaucratic style, it would not hold in some consideration the historical vicissitudes that are at the core of the issue; this is the not the too much thin reproach of the newspaper. Its main concern would be exclusively that to resolve the problems relating to the rail shipment of the goods, the improvement of the energetic refuelling of the territory, the struggle against crime, the improvement of the hygienic situation etc*". To this pure bureaucratic style of the EU, Warsaw opposes its vision on the future of the Russian enclave: it would have to connect closer economic and political relationships with its neighbours to the south and the north, Poland and Latvia, but above all it would have to avoid that Berlin reaffirms its institutional presence,

while the single *Länder* could participate to the work of reconstruction of the badly polluted territory .

Warsaw would still have therefore "an historical" approach to the issue of the territory, like if it had not succeeded in historicize a painful and often conflicting past, like if still feared to find itself again *Zwischeneuropa*, "Europe of the middle", crushed between its two powerful neighbours, Germany and Russia. When in September 2002 it still seemed that the candidate to the Chancellery, the Bavarian leader of the CSU Edmund Stoiber, could win, the two newspapers had strongly supported the attempt to dilute the national borders so fraught of historical wrongdoings, by means of making reference to Europe, implying in this way the creation of transnational regions in which the national powers of the States were diminished. This would, according to their view, ensure above all the respect of human rights, in particular of those of the German former refugees from the East. Stoiber insisted on the historical, ethical and identitary tie that connects the Prussian Königsberg to today's German society, deprived, in his opinion, of sufficient sense of the State.

In fact, before the elections, the weekly magazine of conservative area "*Der Spiegel*" had organized an imposing press campaign in memory of the German refugees from the East and their enormous suffering, proposing therefore an equivocal comparison among them and the Polish and Russian, Czech etc victims of Nationalsocialism. Stoiber, in particular, supported by the associations of the refugees, meant to reopen the whole issue about the decrees of expulsion of the German minorities from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Be it remembered what the whole issue is all about: the decrees known respectively as decrees Bierut, from the name of the former president of the Polish communist State and the decrees Benes; they were emitted after the war by the then Czech president Eduard Benes, in order to expel the German minorities, the Sudetes, potential "horse of Troy" in the case of future German territorial claims, and the Hungarian minorities, from the territory of former Czechoslovakia, with the consent of Winston Churchill, veteran from the conference of Potsdam. Stoiber, against all the forecasts, has lost the elections, thanks to the tactical astuteness and also to the stance taken by Schröder not to support the US led war in Iraq , taking advantage to the most of the antiwarmongering mood spread in the German population and to his behaviour during the floods that had struck Germany in the late summer, and furthermore he has attracted on himself the vote of the numerous Turkish community in Germany, also thanks to the laws proposed by the Greens, essential partner of the red-green coalition, as they had contributed to abrogate the law of "*ius sanguinis*" in favour of a more modern law of "*ius soli*" according to which also a Turkish citizen resident in Germany can acquire the German citizenship at certain conditions. As a result of the defeat of Edmund Stoiber, the associations of the refugees have definitively lost the chance to find someone who represents them at governmental level. The German government of the renewed red-green coalition in fact has opted for a nearly total neutrality of Germany in the issue of the former Prussian territory, delegating it therefore entirely to the European Union.