

“Self-Finlandized” Europe Afraid Of Getting Tough On Russia

WASHINGTON— Way back, during the tense years of the Cold War, some analysts, having noted with concern Europe’s policy to be extra accommodating towards the Soviet Union, coined the expression “self-Finlandization” to describe this self-imposed virtual neutrality.

“Self-Finlandization”, then...

Just like Finland after WWII had deliberately adopted a soft approach towards the Soviet Union in order to keep relations friendly with its mighty neighbor, Western Europe, notwithstanding the NATO shield and American protection, also adopted –without being forced to do so– a soft approach vis-a-vis Moscow.

The goal of a policy of “self-Finlandization” was to assuage the powerful and irascible Soviets, this way reducing the risk of unpleasant confrontations.

...and now

Well, what do you know, now there is no longer a Soviet Union; but we still have Europe adhering to its old “self-Finlandization” policy. Indeed, the Red Army, with its 30 plus armored divisions based in what used to be East Germany, is gone. The Warsaw Pact disappeared. The former “Satellites Countries” of Eastern Europe are now free. They are members of NATO and of the EU. In a word, today’s Russian Federation is a mere shadow of the former Soviet Empire.

But Europe, confronted with the reality of Russian aggression, (Georgia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine), still behaves like a

“self-Finlandized” Continent.

Timid German statements

For example, take this extra mild statement about the Russian engineered crisis in Ukraine, coming from Germany, arguably Europe’s most important power.

“Russia has not done enough to contribute to a de-escalation of the conflict [in Eastern Ukraine]”, said Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Germany’s Foreign Minister, according to an Associated Press report.

“Not done enough”, “contribute to a de-escalation”? Is this really the best way to describe Russia’s essential role in a civil war in Ukraine completely manufactured, funded and actively supported by President Vladimir Putin?

Is this the most accurate way to describe convoys of Russian supplies, armored vehicles, tanks, and surface to air missiles, plus Russian military advisers dispatched to Eastern Ukraine in order to assist the rebels?

Forget about serious sanctions

Well, talk about gentle euphemisms. If there is not even an attempt by mighty Germany to describe the crisis in Ukraine for what it is, you can quickly realize that there is very little enthusiasm for inflicting serious, (as opposed to cosmetic), economic sanctions against Russia, as punishment for such an open violation of the sovereignty of Ukraine.

Too much Russian money

The sad truth is that, even now, after the Malaysia Airlines tragedy, there is no stomach in “self-Finlandized” Europe for getting really tough on Russia.

There is too much Russian money at stake. The wealthy Russians spend lavishly in Western Europe. They buy properties in

France, the UK, Spain and Italy. They keep cash in London. Russia buys a lot of German technology. The French have a big contract to supply vessels to the Russian Navy. Not to mention the fear of losing deliveries of precious Russian natural gas, should things get really ugly with Moscow.

Indeed, the EU Foreign Ministers met again in Brussels to discuss sanctions; and they decided to do...well, almost nothing. Another few symbolic gestures against Russia, with the vague promise of doing more, if things do not get better in Ukraine. But nothing serious.

The message to Putin is: *“Do not worry about us. Just for show, we shall take a few, harmless, steps. But what we all hope is for this dark cloud to go away as soon as possible, so that we can start doing business as usual with you”*.

Baltic states leaders know what's going on

Only leaders of (previously Soviet) Baltic countries, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, have the courage to tell the truth. President Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania said plainly that *“[Putin] uses nationality as a pretext to conquer territory with military means. That's exactly what Stalin and Hitler did. Such comparisons are spot on”*.

Putin just like Stalin or Hitler? This is strong language.

In an interview on France 24 she also pointed out that EU timidity in its reactions to Russian aggression emboldens Putin. He sees that he has nothing to fear; and therefore he will simply continue with the war in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the EU has 28 members. And most of them want peace and quiet, whatever the price.

Nothing will come out of the investigation

As for getting to the truth about who did what in relation to the destruction of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 that was

shot down with a surface to air missile by the rebels (with or without Russian direct assistance), and crashed on territory held by the rebels in Eastern Ukraine, I would not count on it.

By now, the Russia-supplied missile launchers have disappeared. And so (I imagine) have the crews that actually shot the plane down. And, as we know, the rebels and their Russian friends control the crash site.

Therefore, anybody expecting to have a proper investigation so that we shall find the "smoking gun" that directly links any specific individuals, let alone Russia itself, with this tragedy, is a fool.