

Episode 56FFb June 16, 2023. Reasons for Putin's bombing Ukraine back to the Stone Age, where some resort to using polluting wood burning for fuel.

In the New Yorker Issue June 19, 2023, pages 59-64, a reviewer looks at a few books about the economic failures of Russia since the early 1990s, and the concomitant rise of Vladimir Putin. The books cited explaining the economic failures of Russia are 1)twenty-twenty one's "Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union" by Vladislav Zubok, 2)twenty-twenty one's "Not One Inch: America, Russia and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate" by Mary Elise Sarotte, and 3)twenty-twenty three's "How the West Lost the Peace" written by German historian Philipp Ther, and translated by Jessica Spengler. The books explaining the rise of Vladimir Putin are twenty-twenty two's "Putin" by Phillip Short, twenty eighteen's "No Place for Russia" by William Hill, and twenty sixteen's "Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia" by political scientists Timothy Colton and Samuel Charap.

Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity, and for relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates. Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates are concerned with clean alternatives to Biomass (wood) burning and concerned with clean alternatives to residential wood burning. Putin's war with Ukraine led to the West being cut-off from Russian heating oil and gas. Putin's war with Ukraine also led to bombing of civilized Ukraine. Ukraine has been forced back to using residential wood burning for home heat and cooking when electrical grids were, and are, being destroyed. But the Russian war with Ukraine has also accelerated the West's unified aim of deploying alternate sources of energy, some polluting such as oil and gas imported from other parts of the world, but some less polluting or non-polluting, such as wind, solar and geothermal energy expansion, and smarter electrical grids.

1)Vladislav Zubok. George Bush did not react to Mikhail Gorbachev's statement that the Soviet Union was prepared to no longer view the United States as an adversary. Gorbachev thought he was discussing the creation of a new world, in which the Soviet Union and the United States worked together. George Bush thought he was negotiating the terms for the Soviets' surrender. After the Berlin Wall came down, the most pressing problem was what would happen to the two Germanys. In 1989, four years after Gorbachev's Perestroika, there were still nearly 400,000 Soviet troops in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). In West Germany there were hundreds of thousands of NATO troops and most of NATO's ground-based nuclear forces. Germany remained the loser of World War II. West German politicians dreamed of German reunification, but East German politicians were less enthusiastic because they were losing population to West Germany, with its lure of Western consumer goods.

2)Mary Elise Sarotte. Gorbachev had a chance to negotiate with Bush before Germany reunified. In 1990, U S Secretary of State James Baker asked Gorbachev "Would you prefer 1)a unified Germany outside of NATO, independent and with no U S forces or 2)a unified Germany tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?" Did the second question promise an unchanging NATO? There has been debate for decades about whether a promise was made by James Baker in 1990 not to expand NATO. Gorbachev answered that of course, NATO could not expand. Gorbachev did not make any explicit demands that NATO not expand. Two weeks later, German leader Helmut Kohl said "The Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. To hell with that." Gorbachev settled for money from Germany and vague security assurances. U S policymaker's priority became nuclear deproliferation. Ukraine became the number 3 nuclear power. In 1991, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia petitioned to become members of NATO.

3)Philipp Ther. Reforms in Russia moved it to more of a free market economy. Hollowing out the government, privatizing public services and letting the free market run rampant were policies also implemented in the United States. If this had happened in 2008 during the financial crisis, rather than in the nineteen nineties, people might have questioned the idea that capitalism can be trusted to run itself.

The worst years for Russians were 1988 to 1998; after that, the ruble was devalued, exports began to rise, oil prices went up, and despite theft at the top, dividends began to trickle down to the rest of Russian society. But life expectancy had dropped five years. At the end of it, many people were prepared to support Vladimir Putin, when he emerged as a leader. 4) Philip Short. Putin was recruited to the K.G.B. in his last year of college. Putin was sent to East Germany in 1985 where he got a clear view of how East Germany looked when Soviet power collapsed, and Putin did not like what he saw. As deputy mayor to St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak, from 1990 to 1996, Putin considered it “ridiculous” that Estonia had established as an independent state. Putin established ties to criminal organizations and oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky at this time. Putin became unemployed after Sobchak was defeated for mayoral office in 1996. Putin hounded former supporter Boris Berezovsky into exile and to an early grave. Boris Yeltsin abdicated in favor of Putin on December 31, 1999. Some Russians view this as the end of Russian democracy, while others believed up to one decade into the Putin regime, that democracy could be revived. Russia was positioned between a dynamic Europe and a rising China. Putin was quick to solve problems with violence, and over time he grew more aggressive. By 2004 Putin was talking more and more about the threat of NATO expansion. The United States cheered the “color revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine. Putin was lucky. Oil prices rose and Russia grew richer.

How could the Ukraine war have been avoided? The years when Putin associate Dmitry Medvedev served as Russian President were less combative with the rest of the world. But in the Libyan civil war in 2011 Dimitry Medvedev went along with a U N resolution to help protect Libyan rebel forces from Muammar Qaddafi’s army. Putin supposedly watched the filmed killing of Qaddafi multiple times. A few months after NATO bombed Tripoli, Libya, Putin announced he would be returning to the presidency.

5) William Hill. There was no place for Russia in the European Union because it was too big. There was no room for Russia in NATO because it was an anti-Russia alliance. The United Nations was sidelined. The stronger NATO became, the weaker Russia became. American power was so great that everything America did seemed like a provocation.

6) Timothy Colton and Samuel Charap. What Colton and Charap called “the in-betweens”, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and especially, Ukraine, formed the new fault line between Russia and the West. In the winter of 2004-2005 Putin watched thousands of protestors in Kyiv, Ukraine, demand a new vote after Viktor Yanukovich’s large scale fraud was discovered. Viktor Yanukovich was reelected in the next election cycle, but in 2014 vast Ukraine protests about Yanukovich’s refusal to sign an association agreement with the European Union (E U) again chased Yanukovich from power. That same week Russian soldiers in unmarked uniforms appeared in the Crimea. The invasion of Ukraine had begun.

According to Wikipedia, NATO currently recognizes [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Georgia](#), [Sweden](#), and [Ukraine](#) as aspiring members as part of their Open Doors [enlargement policy](#). RAWSEP View: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia are now members of NATO. Putin seems to have been greatly influenced to act by the demise of Qaddafi by death and the demise of Yanukovich by being driven from power. Neither demise should have been mourned. According to Wikipedia, In 2017, Russian media suggested that Yanukovich is apparently living in Bakovka near Moscow, in a residence owned by [Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs](#). Of Eastern Partnership’s (EaP) 6 partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, none has yet become a member of NATO.

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