

“Putinism” in American History: Lincoln, Roosevelt, and the Fight Against ISIS

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Global Research, October 10, 2015

[New Eastern Outlook](#) 8 October 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Many articles in the US press have speculated at length in an attempt to define a new ideology called “Putinism.” The pieces serve as an attempt to fit Putin into an outdated Cold War narrative, as if some new ideology in the Russian Federation is playing the role that Marxism-Leninism once played in the Soviet Union, though the current Russian constitution forbids this.

The notable leaders of history are rarely ideologues. History judges people mainly by what they achieve, not what they write or say. As Chinese President Xi Jinping recently put it: “The worth of any plan is in its implementation.”

Putin has continued to play a specific role in the history of his country and the world. It is in his role as a leader of Russia that we can really define “Putinism.” However, when examining his achievements, Putin’s role and methods are not so different from those utilized by some well loved leaders in the history of the United States.

What has Putin achieved?

✘ The dismantling of the Soviet Union, presided over by the pro-western Wall Street puppets in the Yeltsin regime, had catastrophic consequences. Ripping apart the state-run planned economy cast Russia and the surrounding countries into desperate ruin throughout the 1990s. There had been almost 100% employment during the Soviet period, but soon millions of Russians found themselves unemployed, with little social safety net. The medical system of the country, which had been one of the best in the world during the Soviet era, also descended into chaos.

Other problems that had been almost nonexistent during the Soviet period, such as narcotics, sex trafficking, and terrorism, also re-emerged with a vengeance. Organized crime, with roots in the underground economy of the Soviet period, suddenly became titanic and lethal. As the life expectancy and standard of living dropped, millions of Russians fled the country.

The only group that benefited during this post-Soviet chaos was a small group dubbed the “oligarchs.” The privatized industries and natural resources ended up in their hands, and they proceeded to loot the country with almost no governmental restraint. Many of the wealthiest Russian capitalists refused even to pay taxes, as the government seemed powerless to enforce even basic laws.

Meanwhile, takfiri Islamist forces in Chechnya, who had been funded by the United States and NATO to fight the Soviet Union, escalated their horrific killings, kidnappings, and mass

murders.

It was in this context that Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, stepped up to lead the country. He began to battle the oligarchs and restore order. He directed the courts to prosecute some of the richest people and enforce the law. He oversaw the expansion of government-owned oil and natural gas corporations. In 2005, Putin launched the “National Priorities Project,” using government funds to build up the country’s education, healthcare, agriculture, and housing.

The results of Putin’s policies have been tremendous for the average Russian. During the first eight years of the Putin administration, the average wage in Russia has more than doubled. Unemployment has been drastically reduced. The rate of poverty has been [reduced to 14%](#).

While the United States is suffering from the horrors of de-industrialization, Russia has been rapidly re-industrializing. During the first eight years of the Putin administration, industrial output increased by 125%, with overall industrial expansion higher than 70%. By 2007, Russia’s industrial output had reached the level of 1990, meaning after 17 years, Russia had finally been able to recover from the disastrous restoration of capitalism.

Between 2007 and 2014, the Russian Gross Domestic Product increased from \$764 billion to \$2096.8 billion. Putin has stabilized the country by standing up for everyday Russians against the rich and powerful. Polls in Russia show that upwards of 80% of Russians have a favorable view of [Vladimir Putin](#).

It was recently announced that Russia’s crude oil production has now reached the highest level since the [Cold War](#). An article from the October 6th edition of the Wall Street Journal quotes John Browne, the CEO of BP describing Russia’s economy saying “No country has come so far, in such a short [space of time](#).”

Internationally, Putin has united with China, ending the tragic divide that began with the 1961 “Sino-Soviet Split.” Putin has embraced the Bolivarian movement of Latin America and expanded trade with Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Russia has joined the BRICS initiative for a new currency, and has become a close ally of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Putin has attempted to remain on friendly terms with the United States, many times meeting with US presidents and often speaking highly of the United States in his speeches. However, as Russia becomes more stable, the United States has become more hostile to it. NATO is rapidly expanding, and a virulently anti-Russian regime has been installed in Ukraine.

Currently, Putin is in the process of attempting to destroy the Islamic State, or ISIS, in Iraq and Syria. The United States and its allies in the Gulf States have poured billions of dollars into an attempt to facilitate the violent overthrow of the Syrian Arab Republic. ISIS, which sprang up in 2014, has its roots in the Free Syrian Army, the Al-Nusra Front, and other US-supported extremist organizations.

Putin has made clear the Syrian Arab Republic is the country’s legitimate government, and that US-funded “regime change” is undesirable. Since the US toppled the governments of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the countries have only become more impoverished and unstable. While the United States continues to fund the anti-government militants, Putin

seeks to help the Baath Arab Socialist Party restore order to Syria so the refugee and humanitarian crisis can end, and the entire region can become safer.

Fighting Slavery and the British Empire

Putin is absolutely Russian, and his style of leadership draws from the vibrant and unique history of his country. However, some key aspects of his leadership style are not foreign to the United States. Two leaders, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, could certainly be described as “Putinists,” if such a thing as “Putinism” exists.

Lincoln led the Republican Party when it was considered to be a radical Third Party in the mid-1800s. The Republican Party had taken its name because of the French Revolution and the republican revolutions that swept Europe in 1848. The slogan of the Republicans was “Free Land, Free Labor, and Free Men.” The Republican Party was the party of labor unions, abolitionists, small farmers, recent immigrants, and advocates of women’s rights. The New York City Republican Party newspaper, the New York Tribune, hired Karl Marx as its London correspondent.

Much like Vladimir Putin, Abraham Lincoln took office not as a firebrand but as a compromiser and moderate. Lincoln was reluctant to run for public office, only agreeing to enter politics when persuaded by friends and admirers. As a Christian, Lincoln was morally opposed to the practice of slavery, but he was not an “abolitionist” because he did not think that moving to directly outlaw the practice was practical in the existing political context. Like Putin, Lincoln did not rise to power looking for a fight. When a fight presented itself, however, he did not back down — and won the love of millions for his strength.

The response of the slave-owners to Lincoln’s election was immediate hostility. Both the Russian oligarchs who oppose Putin and the slaveholders who opposed Lincoln had a powerful ally: Wall Street. Unlike the rising industrial capitalists, the financial elites of the New York Stock Exchange had a real material interest in continuing slavery, as they made profits from cotton exports and insuring slave ships and plantations.

When the southern plantation owners announced that they were seceding from the United States, Lincoln mobilized the country to fight against the slave-owners and restore economic and political order. Lincoln was not afraid to stand up to the bankers, and with his eloquent speaking style and brilliance as an organizer, he led a broad anti-slavery coalition to victory.

Lincoln, like Putin, was called a “tyrant” and “human rights violator.” Lincoln suspended many civil liberties in the context of a violent insurrection directed by some of the wealthiest people. Lincoln’s famous “Emancipation Proclamation” abolishing slavery in the southern states was an Executive Order that did not follow constitutional procedure. In the 1864 presidential election, people living in states controlled by the slaveholders were not given an opportunity to vote against him.

When it appeared that the British Empire may enter the war in support of slavery, which [saw](#) as a source of cheap cotton for their emerging textile industry, the Russian Czar announced that he would defend the United States. The Russian navy sent two fleets to American waters in the Atlantic Ocean to defend the United States from a potential British attack. The Russian Empire had recently abolished a slave-like form of serfdom, and was eager to support the United States in a similar endeavor.

Like Putin, Abraham Lincoln was not a Marxist or a socialist, but was still highly critical of capitalism and happy to align with dedicated, trustworthy left-wingers and radicals. Lincoln honored labor unions as an essential element in a democratic society, saying “Thank God we live under a system where men have the right to strike!” at the famous Lincoln-Douglas debate. Lincoln utilized the labor unions and craft guilds as key in strengthening the Union Army and its war effort. Lincoln happily accepted the endorsement of the International Workingmen’s Association in the 1864 election, with his office sending a letter of gratitude directly to Karl Marx in London. Lincoln’s army, which defeated the slaveholders, had among its highest ranks many self-described communists such as General August Willich and Colonel Joseph Weydemeyer.

The language currently used by the Wall Street media of the United States to describe Vladimir Putin is very similar to that used by the pro-slavery press and historians of the United States and Britain to describe Lincoln. Long after the Civil War, Hollywood films like “Gone With The Wind” and “The Birth of a Nation” demonized Lincoln and glorified the southern slavocracy. Regardless of all who have worked to malign him, Lincoln is still widely remembered as one of the greatest presidents in US history. He may have initially been a reluctant abolitionist, even consciously racist — but history assigned him the position of the “Great Emancipator” and he fulfilled it tremendously.

Resisting “Government By Organized Money”

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office, much like Putin, with his country in a state of economic ruin, reeling from the after-effects of the 1929 stock-market crash. Roosevelt’s inaugural address made clear who was to blame, decrying the “unscrupulous practices” of high finance.

Like Putin, Roosevelt mobilized the government sector to rescue the economy. Roosevelt passed the Glass-Steagall Act, preventing bankers from gambling with other people’s money. Roosevelt began heavily taxing the wealthiest people in the United States, using the funds to hire the unemployed.

Similar to Xi Jinping’s vision of the “New Silk Road,” which Putin has fully cooperated with, Roosevelt’s vision for economic development in the United States involved massive government-funded construction. During the Roosevelt Administration, post offices were built across the country. Hydro-electrical power plants were also constructed. The government subsidized the “National Theater Project,” providing entertainment to schoolchildren and low-income people.

The unemployed youth hired into the Works Progress Administration wore bright green uniforms. They were not treated as “moochers” or “bums” for seeking government employment in a time of economic crisis, but rather as heroes, patriotically working for the good of the country. Towns often honored the “Boys in Green” with big parades as they arrived to pave the local roads, carve out parks, and otherwise beautify and develop the heartland of the United States.

Much like the opposition to Putin in Ukraine, the big bankers funded an openly pro-Hitler and fascist movement against Roosevelt. Much like the Right Sector and the Azov Battalion in the Ukraine, the American Liberty League, the Silver Legion of America, the German-American Bund, and the America First Committee were led by unapologetic Nazis. They saw repressive military dictatorship as favorable to Roosevelt’s plan of mobilizing the people and

consciously organizing the economy. In 1933, US Marine Corp General Smedley Butler revealed the infamous “business plot.” Wall Street bankers had approached him about leading a military coup and forcibly deposing Roosevelt.

However, any attempted coup against Roosevelt would have failed, because like Putin, Roosevelt was loved by the everyday people of his country. Roosevelt’s allies were not in corporate boardrooms, but on picket lines, hunger marches, and sit-down strikes. Roosevelt aligned himself with the “People’s Front” coalition of socialists, communists, liberals, and progressives. When sit-down strikers occupied their Flint Michigan auto plant in 1937, Roosevelt sent in the army to protect the strikers from the local police and company thugs.

Like Lincoln and Putin, Roosevelt rejected Russophobia and did not want to pursue a deadly conflict with a huge Eurasian power. Roosevelt recognized and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1935. His closest advisors like Joseph Davies went to the Soviet Union and studied the “Five-Year Plans” which were rapidly industrializing the country. Roosevelt and famed physicist Niels Bohr worked hard, but were unable to convince Winston Churchill to back down and allow the Soviet Union to join the Manhattan Project.

Roosevelt was not a communist, but he had a clear understanding of problems of capitalism and the need to restrain the wealthy elite. During his 1936 election campaign, he proclaimed: “Government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by organized mob.” When Roosevelt went to greet textile workers in South Carolina, one of them famously shook his hand and said the president was “the first man in the White House to know that my boss is a son of a bitch.” Prior to his death, Roosevelt proposed adding to the US Constitution a “New Bill of Rights” that would ensure everyone the right to jobs, housing, and healthcare.

Though Roosevelt had a big heart and deep love for working people, he was not afraid to lead them into battle. From 1941 to 1945, the United States stood shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party’s “Red Army,” the peoples of Britain and France, and the armed partisan resistance groups in Japan, Germany, and Italy. Roosevelt and his political allies were always clear that fascism and its wealthy sponsors were far dangerous to the national security of the United States than were the peoples of Russia or China.

Roosevelt, like Lincoln and Putin, has been widely maligned. Half a century after his death, the likes of Glenn Beck still describe him as a “socialist” and a “traitor.” However, like Lincoln, Roosevelt is still widely popular among the people. During his lifetime, Roosevelt was more popular than any other US president had ever been. After Roosevelt’s 1945 death, term limits were added to the US constitution, preventing anyone else from being elected as US president four consecutive times.

Will American “Putinism” Re-Emerge?

It seems that just months ago, Barack Obama was lecturing the world about the evils of ISIS in order to justify his drone strike program and violations of Syria’s territorial integrity. However, now that Vladimir Putin has escalated his support for the legitimate Syrian government which is scoring real victories against the ISIS menace, Obama is filled with outrage.

The reality is that the wealthy ruling class of the United States has no interest in defeating ISIS. The real objective of US policy in Syria since long before 2011 has always been to overthrow the Syrian Arab Republic, a stable, anti-imperialist country with a heavily planned economy. ISIS originated as a faction among the anti-government terrorists who were funded by the United States and its Gulf State allies. While ISIS and the US may officially be enemies, Washington and its allies still fund the terrorists in Al-Nusra, and the Israeli government provides medical care to ISIS and other takfiris.

The supposed anti-ISIS airstrikes carried out by the US have been virtually meaningless, and were done without the permission of the Syrian government. Obama had attempted to justify airstrikes against the Syrian government a year earlier in response to allegations of chemical weapons, but failed to convince the international community. The US continues to openly call for the overthrow of the Syrian government, which controls the territory in which 80% of Syria's population is currently living, and was recently re-elected in a nationwide vote.

Unlike US and Turkish airstrikes, Russia's intervention in Syria is done with the full cooperation of the Syrian state. It cannot be described as "imperialism" or "foreign intervention." The Russian military is assisting the Syrian Arab Army as it battles a barrage of foreign terrorists, imported to their country with the help of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, France, Britain, and the United States.

Russia is not alone in wanting to defend the Syrian Arab Republic and smash the scourge of takfiri terrorism, created by the United States and its Gulf State allies. China is sending its forces to Syria. Hezbollah fighters are standing with the Syrian government. Communist Party militias and armed Christian brigades have been formed in Syria. Germany has even announced that it is happy to work with the Syrian government as well as Russia, Iran, China, and other countries to remove the scourge of ISIS.

Just as 70 years ago, a real united front of anti-fascists was formed to defeat the Wall Street-spawned scourge of Nazism, Russia is at the center of a broad coalition to defeat the oil bankers' latest monstrosity.

Christians, Islamists, communists, Baathists, and Russian nationalists are coming together and cooperating against a common foe. Putin is a leader who is rallying the world around the battle to improve peoples' livelihoods, defeat terrorism, and stand up to the source of so much evil, the wealthy global banking elite.

Such qualities of leadership currently displayed by Putin are not foreign to US shores, and if things in the country are to improve, those qualities must emerge in some form once again. Another leader of the caliber of Roosevelt, Lincoln, and Putin is desperately needed in the United States. A mass movement against the crimes of the rich, one that can produce and support such a leader, as the country and world become even more dangerous, is the greatest necessity of the hour.

Not only is the phenomenon widely described as "Putinism" not foreign to the United States. It is likely to return.

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