



**Interview given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, to the russian press agency "Itar-Tass" on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of general De GAULLE'S visit to Russia (excerpt)**

Paris, 30 June 2006

(...)

Q. How would you describe the current state of cooperation between France and Russia and your relations with President Putin?

THE PRESIDENT I'm wholeheartedly optimistic about the future of Franco-Russian cooperation.

Moreover, our relations are consistent with a relationship between Russia and Europe which is constantly being intensified and is gradually building a genuine community of destiny between our countries.

My personal relations with President Putin are marked by mutual respect, trust and esteem. He embodies the Russia of today, a Russia we must absolutely support and encourage in her pursuit of efforts to modernize on the democratic, economic and social fronts.

In September I'll be meeting him again with pleasure in Paris. On that occasion, we'll also be having a meeting with the [German] Federal Chancellor, Mrs Merkel. Together, our ambition is to work for this great Europe of men, ideas, goods. This Europe of freedom, at peace with itself, reconciled, spreading influence in the world, harmoniously structured around its two major regions: the European Union and Russia./.