

HOOVER INSTITUTION

ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

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Dear Prime Minister,

you must be in the final stages of planning your tactics in Moscow . I was very cheered to see you the other day, separating the wheat from the chaff so expertly. - I thought Bialer sound, except perhaps on SDI. (He ~~is~~ much improved: he went through a bad phase six or seven years ago, with a terrible book. I reviewed it sharply , and he promised me he wouldn't do it again !). And Donnelly was impressive as usual; the others less so (and I thought the papers sent in pretty mediocre). Hugh Seton Watson and Leonard Schapiro are sadly to be missed... But I expect you also read Kissinger's generally sound piece on his recent visit (Newsweek 2 March) , and a good leader in the Economist (February 14) especially on Genscher's attitude.

I am attaching what are only some notes of possible use in your Moscow conversations and, if you get it, your television appearance there.

As I write, a speech by the newly promoted Yakovlev, leading proponent of "democratisation", asserts flatly that this will not mean democracy as the West understands it . That is, it will not mean democracy at all, not even a smidgen of it: merely a new style in the manipulation of various strata by the nomenklatura. They are telling more truth about the Soviet past (though not about Lenin, Leninism or the Revolution). They are almost openly attacking rivals in the Party. They are urging , even to some extent allowing, a measure of public debate on particular policies. These are interesting changes; but they do not

mark the withdrawal of an inch of the Party's claim to total political power, or Marxism-Leninism's status as the sole authority in philosophy and society.

They are telling more of the truth about the present frightful condition of the Soviet economy and society. I am enclosing excerpts from an article by a colleague: every ghastly fact about that society is taken from recent issues of Soviet periodicals. It makes an astonishing read. (Incidentally the Welfare State component of the Soviet GNP is around 15 % - lower than the military component, and much lower than ours.)

I hardly thought it worth telling you about my Senators-and-Congressmen seminars in Jamaica the other day: some bright, some notably thick, too many wishing for comforting cliches about the USSR. (George Walden was the lone Briton, and could tell you more). And Gary Hart, from what I have heard from some of his advisers, is frighteningly ignorant and naif, though not ill-meaning. But I think he may still be denied the nomination, and if not, then beaten by Bush or Dole. Meanwhile I think you are right that, unless something new emerges, the President can regain the initiative.

It was splendid to see you again, (and looking even better than last year, so relaxed and responsible, great and rare combination). I expect to be over in late May and early June, and do hope to hear your impressions.

with warmest wishes as ever,

and to Denis, and from Liddle

Robert

Robert Conquest

A Note on Our Relations with Moscow: March 1987

Robert Conquest

A. General

There is a foolish piece of phrasemongering in some American circles, to the effect that we should not "pressure" the Soviet Union. But "pressuring" simply means saying "we won't give you something you want unless you give us something we want" - normal political procedure, in fact.

While it is true that we may not be able to do much to influence Soviet internal developments, we can still stake out a sound general policy of taking what advantage may be possible, and avoiding conceding substance in return for unsubstantial returns. And we can establish the necessary long-term conditions for true advance to a stabler world community.

2. Leaving aside the question of whether it is in fact possible to "restructure" the Soviet economy to the extent of making it reasonably efficient, we are left with the basic question: is it in our interests to have an efficient Soviet Union? Of course not, if it merely means a more efficient but equally aggressive Soviet Union. Some argue that economic efficiency automatically implies genuine political liberalisation, and as a corollary genuine international detente. This is mere assertion: (and if true, the probability is that the

ruling group will abandon economic efficiency rather than face genuine political liberalisation).

But in either case, our practical position is clear. We can watch and wait for, and take as our criteria, the actual development of any such political liberalisation at home and abandonment of universal claims abroad, rather than accept economic change as a promissory note for such.

The strength of our position is that the Soviet Union is in an ever-worsening economic position. By economic and technological criteria (i.e. especially from a Marxist view) it was always a mistake for them to take on the West on a global scale in 1965. Their only advantages lay in an ability to manoeuvre politically with the Western public to prevent the West deploying its objective superiority. Even at its most successful this only worked up to a point. And now that the Soviet economic inferiority is coming to roost, the last thing we should do is cancel our advantage by unrequited concession.

3. On the human rights issue, Gorbachev will divert attention by speaking of homelessness and unemployment in the West.

The answer is first that as the Soviet press now admits homelessness is also a Soviet problem; and unemployment too, even though less so than in the West. Moreover Soviet economists have strongly suggested that

unemployment will have to rise if the economy is to be restructured. Other enormous Soviet social problems are now at last admitted by the Soviets themselves.

However, our concern for the Helsinki Package Three is not humanitarian. We want the free movement of people and ideas, just as the Helsinki Agreement says, as the only true basis for genuine long-term world peace based on trust and tolerance.

I hope you will get a television appearance; and that on it you will be taking some such line as "We believe that peace is bound up with tolerance for each others' ideas. The Soviet Union, my own country and many others more than ten years ago signed the Helsinki Agreement, where all of us agreed that true peace is dependent on the free movement of people and ideas. Thus, we believe that just as with us there is freedom for Marxist ideas and organisations, the Marxist countries should give freedom for non-Marxist ideas and organisations -- in the interest simply of that understanding and mutual tolerance which is necessary for world peace".

You could welcome the recent Soviet release of dissidents, and a certain improvement in allowing the unification of Soviet-Western families. But we should insist on our hope that this act of grace will be followed, however gradually, by a much more significant further step -- the free expression of views other than

those of Marxism-Leninism, -- in fact of views such as our own, which are widely held throughout the world and deserve the right of expression.

Gorbachev, in a recent speech in Latvia of all places, attacked "bourgeois nationalism": but in our conception 'democratisation' includes freedom of Latvians to vote for "bourgeois nationalists". Indeed, from a Communist point of view, Western conservatives and social democrats are their own countries' "bourgeois nationalists". We tolerate Communist views; why can they not tolerate ours? Moreover, their own troubled economy would benefit from an open examination of principles which have been successful in the West: in particular the free market system for which the Conservative Party stands, and on the basis of which it is elected.

4. I think it is important in Moscow not to speak only of the areas in which we are seeking agreement, but also to present our whole position, including areas in which we do not expect agreement, but on which we can at least see that our view is put and understood.

I don't see why you shouldn't ask Gorbachev if the so-called "Brezhnev doctrine" is still in effect; if the USSR retains the right to intervene in Eastern European states when their internal politics are unpleasing to it.

As suggested below another Soviet activity which might be taken up in one way or another is their inter-

vention in Africa and elsewhere at levels and by methods (including the use of Cuban and other surrogates) calculated just not to provoke political reaction by the Western public and parties, but still in principle unacceptable if they want any support or concessions from the West.

B. Arms Issues:

1. It may be said to you in the USSR that "even our dissident Andrei Sakharov is against SDI". But Sakharov's argument against it is simply that he believes that the cost, vis-a-vis the attack, would be inordinate. This is simply based on the information he has long had from some Western physicist friends: a rare and disputable view, and anyhow outdated even at its own level by recent research. At any rate, Sakharov is not "against" it in the sense implied.

Soviet international demagogy, including Gorbachev himself, speaks of "keeping war out of space". What we seek is to keep war out of the world. But, anyhow, at present nuclear missiles are designed to traverse space; and if the offensive can thus come from space, the defensive can go there too.

The indisputable point of Strategic Defense is that, combined with an adequate nuclear deterrent force, it removes the advantages of the attacker. This applies to all phases of its development; close point defence,

ground-based interception high in the trajectory, and spaced-based interception on launch.

The Soviet press has lately revived the argument, which you may also hear, that space-based lasers could be used to burn cities. But of course burning a hole a few inches across in a sheet of metal is a different proposition. SDI is defensive: even if it could just be used offensively, it is not designed for that. You can kill a man with a shield, but that does not make a shield an offensive weapon.

The ABM treaty (whatever may be said of current political implications) only makes sense in the context of Mutual Assured Destruction. Meanwhile the only deployment is that round Moscow, constantly being modernised, with a 'footprint' covering a large part of European Russia.

2. The SS 20 deployment was, very like Khrushchev's installation of missiles in Cuba, an attempt to secure a quick advantage in the hope of not meanwhile arousing adequate Western reaction. This failed and the Soviets see that they must now abandon it -- or postpone it.

On the present Intermediate Missile offer, we can tell the Russians that, if we can also consider tactical nuclear weapons, this is in principle fine. But that we have the political problem of convincing our public. Therefore, a treaty or agreement must be ironclad. It was logistically and politically much more difficult to

have the American cruise missiles and Pershings brought to Europe than for the USSR to deploy the SS 20s. If the American IBMs are withdrawn, to bring them back would be more difficult than for the USSR to redeploy its own IBMs. So we need strong guarantees, including verification. And with mobile missiles, 'on site' verification is inadequate, as there are no sites. We must work towards a free movement of inspectors in the relevant territories on both sides.

3. Your point on the linkage of nuclear and conventional war capabilities is very central. (I see it estimated that a treaty on large scale cuts in nuclear missiles could release 2% more of the Soviet GNP for new conventional weapons).

So we could only begin to phase out nuclear weapons to the degree that conventional attack is also made impracticable by equality in conventional forces; (and that indirect aggression by surrogate troops is blocked).

In conventional arms, what could easily be done in Europe to improve the balance without affecting Soviet control of the area? The withdrawal of two tank armies from East Germany, and the transformation of about 20 military airfields into farms would be a practical, and unprovocative, suggestion.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET WELFARE STATE

by Mikhail S. Bernstam

(extract)

The Soviet publications turned into a cascade of statistics and stories of mass destitution and despair. The Evil Empire has admittedly produced more misery than most U.S. conservatives and internal intellectual critics could imagine. To take a minor example, the President in the 1987 State of the Union address mentioned that one-third of Soviet families are without hot running water. According to the recent Soviet welfare book by N.M. Rimashevskaja, it is cold running water that one-third of Soviet families are without; as for hot running water, it is only one-third of Soviet families who do have it.

Poverty is ubiquitous and debilitating among single mothers, one-earner families, families with more than two children, the elderly, and the handicapped. The average Soviet wage or salary (net of taxes and union vacation deductions) was in 1986 about \$2,950; the cash poverty line per person was \$1,300 per year. Thus the average one-earner couple with one child and the

two-earner family with more than two children were below the poverty line. Given lower female wages, most female-headed families were poor. Single mothers give children away to orphanages where they are malnourished and abused. Moonlighting on the part of many occupations is prohibited and the same goes for non-working mothers. So, as *Literaturnaia Gazeta* revealed on October 1, 1986, mothers trying to make money by sewing at home to feed the children, end in the slammer.

Deprivation is also a problem for the Soviet elderly, 87% of whom live below the poverty line; the magazine *Ogonek* reported in June, 1986, that many commit suicide out of hunger. For common people, the legal guarantees do not exist. According to numerous reports (in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* of September, 24 and December 17, 1986, and January 21 and 28, 1987, and *Ogonek* of February, 1987) workers are routinely arrested at random, tortured, forced to confess, imprisoned, sometimes even executed for nothing--just because there are planned quotas for crime solutions and sentences. The power of the state transcends also to the human body: The story in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* of January 14, 1987, tells that Soviet factories produce prostheses of two sizes, and if the short one is too short, the surgeons have to cut off healthy flesh of human limb to fit the long-size prosthesis.

The young newly arrived urban workers live in the factory dormitories and barracks, five to 20 people per room. To jump the public housing queue, young female workers produce illegitimate children, which entitles them to a room in the public housing project. 27% of births in the Russian Republic of the USSR are given by single mothers; the latest available illegitimacy ratio for the U.S. is 21% for 1984. *Pravda* of December 13, 1985, cites a new colloquialism: "to get housing via a baby." *Leningrad Pravda* of February 23, 1987, describes another common procedure: "How did you get your housing?--Why

do you think we have children?--And where are the children?--Why do you think there are orphanages?" But reports also tell that the orphanages are short, and vagrant children and youths live in basements and railway cars, steal food and end in jail.

Even children of two full-time working parents are hungry latchkey children, often their only daily meal is a free school lunch; and after school they spend hours in the housing projects basements sheltering from cold (according to *Literaturnaia Gazeta* of February 4, 1987 and *Leningrad Pravda* of January 23, 1987). The above *Leningrad Pravda* quotes a school principal: "The end of twentieth century, see, and here are children, many children, believe me, and they are hungry, unwashed, unclothed." The Soviets discuss much of the children's suffering in the context of drinking parents and promiscuous single mothers. But alcoholism is itself a symptom of poverty and lack of opportunities. This Soviet heavy drinking simply means that the available set of satisfactions and opportunities is the same among the Soviet working classes as it was among the heavy drinking English working classes at the time of the Poor Laws and as it is today in the U.S. inner cities. The magazine *Ogonek* in July 1986, questioned whether "destitution is a perennial feature of our life," and *Leningrad Pravda* of February 1, 1987, described its country as the land where "pigs live better than people."

The leading Soviet economists are shocked; they wonder in a continuous discussion on the pages of the Party main journal, *Kommunist*, how come the special interests have managed to take over the socialist welfare state and to rip off the poor. The deep thinkers finally discovered that public housing distribution at subsidized rents mean that the haves have a lot of spacious cheap housing and the have-nots don't. Housing subsidies also mean that cash incomes are low and food is expensive relative to wages. Food retail price

subsidies mean that, again, the upper and the middle classes with higher cash incomes and access to specialized supplies have both subsidized food from the state and expensive food from the city markets; the lower class does not have access to special supplies and cannot afford market prices. And so it goes for public health care, public education, etc. The socialist welfare state has produced more deprivation and inequity than either the early capitalism or the latter day Western welfare state.

According to the Soviet statistical yearbooks and to the recent book by N.M. Rimashevskaja, about 40% of the Soviet people live below the Soviet designated poverty line (which itself is about two-thirds of the U.S., poverty line). For comparison, in 1984 in the U.S. 9.7% of the total population and 20.5% of blacks were below the poverty line (when in-kind transfers are included). Also, according to the revelation in the Rimashevskaja book, 23% of the Soviet people live below the sub-poverty, minimum subsistence line of \$950 cash income and \$1,330 cash-and-transfer income per person per year.