

Remarks of James Russell Wiggins

at Hulls Cove

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Distinguished authorities, in the past summer, have come here to share with you their knowledge about world affairs. That is not my purpose. I am here to share with you my perplexities—perplexities about the Soviet Union and not my knowledge about it.

Winston Churchill once described it as a "riddle wrapped in an enigma." Chip Bohlen once said the only man who dares boast that he knows how to handle a difficult wife is one who never tried it; and the only man who dares boast that he knows how to deal with the Russians is one who has never tried it.

There are many men who have done much reading and research about Russia, and I have done some, but they all run the risk of getting the reproach a member of the House of Commons once hurled at a speaker who boasted of his wide reading on a subject. A critic said he had smothered the feeble spark of his intellect by the vast quantities of fuel he had heaped upon it. All I will attempt to do today is to heap a little fuel upon you. I hope it doesn't smother the spark of your intellect; but I suspect it will leave you as perplexed as I am.

My first offering is from Alexis de Tocqueville, who, in 1835 published one of the finest studies of American democracy ever written. I quote the following prescient paragraph from it:

"There are at the present time two great nations in the world which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."

It may be said that this perceptive paragraph is a comment on Czarist Russia and not on the Soviet Union. In my opinion it is equally relevant as a description of the central philosophy of both regimes - a concentration of authority, an emphasis on the collective will, an indifference toward individual rights. I believe that after the Bolshevik take-over there was a widespread mistaken notion in this country that a liberal revolution had occurred in Russia. What had occurred, in fact, was the substitution of a despotic party rule for a despotic monarchical rule. Lenin believed in the elite vanguard of the masses, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and he steadily concentrated all power in the party, supporting this concentration by the control

of press, thought and the use of terror. Stalin made the party dictatorship even more arbitrary and more personal and more terror-ridden. His successors have struggled to invest the system with greater legitimacy and diminished resort to terror but have not abandoned for a moment the despotism of centralized rule. For a generation, this counter revolution has masqueraded as a revolution.

From where does this despotism derive? Solzhenitsyn has his explanation. In the Spring 1980 issue of FOREIGN AFFAIRS, he wrote:

"Two mistakes are especially common (in dealing with Soviet affairs). One is the failure to understand the radical hostility of communism to mankind as a whole - the failure to realize that communism is irredeemable, that there exist no 'better' variants of communism; that it is incapable of growing 'kinder', that it cannot survive as an ideology without using terror, and that, consequently, to coexist with communism on the same planet is impossible. Either it will spread, cancer-like, to destroy mankind, or else mankind will have to rid itself of communism (even then face lengthy treatment for secondary tumors). The second and equally prevalent mistake is to assume an indissoluble link between the universal disease of communism and the country where it first seized control - Russia. This error skews one's perception of the threat and cripples attempts to respond sensibly to it, thus leaving the West disarmed."

What Solzhenitsyn is talking about is the Russia of the orthodox church, of the Russian peasant, of the Russian society of the 50 years before 1914 - a Russia notable for a cultural revolution that exploded in the intellegentsia - the Russia

of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Pushkin; of Moussorgsky, Rimski Korsakov, Tchaikowsky, of the Bolshoi Ballet, and all the other explosions of art, science and literature that occurred in spite of the authoritarian government of the Romanovs.

This cultural revolution is beautifully described in the Land of the Firebird, Suzanne Massey's new book. It is a description that does justice to this outpouring of genius among the Russian intellegentsia. (Perhaps it does not deal adequately with the surviving remnants of ancient imperialism which lead^e to the revolution, but it makes a point for Solzhenitsyn.)

Contributions of the Russian past of another kind have been elaborated on by Zbigniew Brzezinski, when he spoke here last year. As Brzezinski said in a recent book published by the Academy of Political Science:

"The distinctive character of the Russian imperial drive is derived from the interconnection between the militaristic organization of the Russian society and the territorial imperative that defines its instinct for survival. As often noted by both Russian and non-Russian historians, from time immemorial Russian society expressed itself politically through a state that was mobilized and regimented along military lines, with the security dimension serving as the central organization impulse. The absence of any clearly definable national boundary made territorial expansion the obvious way of ensuring security. Such expansion bred new conflicts, new threats and a further expansionary drive. A relentless historical cycle was thus set in motion: insecurity, in turn fueled further expansionism."

American leaders at intervals have chosen to remember the

remnants of the cultural Russia in the Soviet Union rather than the survival of the territorial imperative. But, now and then reality has intruded as it did when one of them said:

"The Soviet Union, as everyone who has had the courage to face the fact knows, is run by a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world. It has allied itself with another dictatorship and it has invaded a neighbor so infinitesimally small that it could do no possible harm to the Soviet Union." That was FDR addressing the American Youth Congress in February 1940.

This expansionism is the subject of examination by Arkady N. Shevchenko's book Breaking With Moscow in which he states that Soviet leaders "abhor American armed strength for what it could do if properly and consistently directed to frustrate Soviet expansion. Furthermore they understand that it is the main, if not only, barrier to their plans for world domination." Shevchenko reports a chilling exchange with Gromyko, in another paragraph:

"One day, while we were lunching at Gromyko's dacha at Vnukovo, I asked Gromyko what he saw as the greatest weakness in U.S. foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. 'They don't comprehend our final goals', he responded promptly. 'And they mistake tactics for strategy. Besides they have too many doctrines and concepts, proclaimed at different times, but the absence of a solid coherent policy is their big flaw'."

Lenin in 1917 identified as the main object of the Communist party the spread of Communism throughout the world. In 1917 in his "Tasks of the Proletariat" he wrote: "there is one and only one kind of internationalism indeed; working wholeheartedly

for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting - by propaganda, sympathy, and material aid - such, and only such struggle and such line in every country, without exception." He described it as the obligation of the first Communist country to do "the utmost possible in one country for the development, support and awakening of the revolution in all countries."

Erik P. Hoffmann, of the State University of New York, has given us a succinct version of Lenin's legend which continues to dominate the Communist Party. He wrote in The Soviet Union in the 80's, the following:

"Leadership, in Lenin's view, required an understanding of the class antagonisms and power relationships within and among nations, as well as a passionate but pragmatic commitment to create a more harmonious and just social order in Russia and eventually throughout the world. Lenin sought to transform the Russian Marxist movement into a small, secretive, and hierarchically structured political party of full-time revolutionaries, with close ties to the workers and other dissatisfied elements of Russian society and eventually to the laboring classes of all nations."

I would like, now, to turn from these comments on the theories of government dominating both the Czarist and the Communist state, and touch briefly on the long relationship between Russians and Americans. It is a relationship that can best be described by borrowing from Herbert Feis the title of his book From Trust to Terror; for the dealings between the two countries have fluctuated for generations between these two contradictory attitudes.

The relationship commenced in trust. Here is Thomas Jefferson, a lifelong enemy of consolidated, authoritarian government, writing to William Duane, the editor, about Emperor Alexander of Russia, in a letter dated July 20, 1807:

"I have often wished for an occasion of saying a word to you on the subject of the Emperor of Russia, of whose character and value to us, I suspect you are not apprised correctly. A more virtuous man, I believe, does not exist, nor one who is more enthusiastically devoted to better the condition of mankind. He will probably, one day, fall a victim to it, as a monarch of that principle does not suit a Russian noblesse. He is not of the very first order of understanding, but he is of a high one. He has taken a peculiar affection to this country and its government, of which he has given me public as well as personal proofs. Our nation, being like his, habitually neutral, our interests as to neutral rights, and our sentiments agree. And whenever conferences for peace shall take place, we are assured of a friend in him.I have gone into this subject, because I am confident that Russia (while her present monarch lives) is the most cordially friendly to us of any power on earth, will go farthest to serve us and is most worthy of conciliation. And although the source of this information must be a matter of confidence with you, yet it is desirable that the sentiments should become those of the nation."

Then there is Jefferson's letter to the Emperor of Russia, written on April 19, 1806:

"I owe an acknowledgment to your Imperial Majesty for the great satisfaction I have received from your letter of August the 20th, 1805 and embrace the opportunity it affords of giving

expression to the sincere respect and veneration I entertain for your character. It will be among the latest and most soothing comforts of my life, to have seen advanced to the government of so extensive a portion of the earth, and at so early a period of his life, a sovereign whose ruling passion is the advancement of the happiness and prosperity of his people; and not of his own people only, but who can extend his eye and his good will to a distant and infant nation, unoffending in its course, unambitious in its views."

This warm and friendly tone persisted into the exchanges of the next Administration and the diaries of John Quincy Adams, minister to the Russian Court, are filled with the reports of his friendly conversations with the Emperor Alexander, conversations on official business and on encounters on walks along the Quay where he frequently met Alexander.

In the Monroe administration things got a little dicey. The Russians established a colony just North of San Francisco, claimed the Pacific, north of the 51st parallel, Russian waters, and clashed with the British over boundaries, and with the Americans, British and French over fishing rights.

John Quincy Adams, now secretary of state, was involved in deciding what to do about these issues in the northwest. Baron Tuyl, the Russian minister called on Adams, to find out what instructions the State Department was sending to our minister in St. Petersburg. Adams in his diary reports: "I told him especially that we should contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume distinctly the principle that the American continents are no longer subjects for any new European colonial establishments."

By 1823, the American government was worried over the rumors that the Quintuple Alliance would intervene in this hemisphere to restore to European powers control over former colonies. Monroe included in his seventh annual message protests against European intervention of any kind, stating that there were great differences between the political systems of the allied powers of Europe and ours and that we would "consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety."

President John Quincy Adams, in his own administration, in his second annual message in 1825 took occasion to note the death of the Emperor Alexander, saying that the United States had been "deprived of a long-trying, steady and faithful friend." He said the Emperor had been "sensible that the interests of his own government would best be promoted by a frank and friendly intercourse with this Republic."

Such cordial expressions about Russia grew rare by 1852. Some Americans were frightened by the suppression of the 1848 revolutionary movements in Europe. The one-time chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Henry Winter Davis, tried to rouse opinion against Russian leadership of the monarchical governments of Europe. He wrote a book called Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Zoroastrian gods of good and evil. He thought the suppression of the European revolts had altered the balance of power in Europe in favor of Russia, and inaugurated the Dictatorship of Russia in Europe, which he said was "devoted to the ruin of all free governments." He favored a union with Great Britain to aid the cause of freedom with arms and money. He warned the Russian agents were flitting like demons of the night around

the skirts of English dominions and were felt and seen in the Afghan War. Davis thought that a Europe "in the hands of Russia with all its energies bent on the extirmination of the intractable spirit of liberty and the founding of a perpetual and universal despotism" would "menace the liberties, the safety and the existence of this government." Bemoaning the disasters in Hungary and Poland and the opposition to freedom elsewhere in Europe he concluded: "Nor are these the only sources of foreign danger. We are surrounded by feeble and factious republics, the prey of eternal war, delivered over to the horrors of civil discord, and the very points an ambitious, active and malicious power would sieze on to annoy us." He warned: "the protection of distance is destroyed when nations at our door sufficiently numerous and powerful of themselves seriously to harass if not seriously to endanger us, may be stirred up by foreign intrigues, armed by foreign money, led by European science."

The administration did not share Representative Davis's views, but he was for a time, a powerful political figure, and he reflected a segment of American opinion.

Our own Civil War gave us other problems and during it, Alexander sent a Russian fleet to New York to show his support for President Lincoln and the Union. The fleet including the Almaz dropped anchors in New York harbor and stayed from October 1863 to April 1864. On board the Almaz was Rimsky-Korsakov, the great Russian composer and friend of Moussorgsky. But the most remarkable Russian-American cooperation of that period was the Russian sale of Alaska to the United States. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 led Russia to believe her American colonies were in an exposed position and in 1857 the Russian

minister to Washington was instructed to hint to this country that Russia might be willing to sell Alaska. Negotiations were begun in 1859. In February 1867 the Russian minister was instructed to enter into negotiations. Agreement was reached and a treaty approved on March 30 accomplishing the sale for \$7,200,000. Congress did not approve the treaty until July 1868 amidst outcries of "Seward's Folly."

The Portsmouth Treaty of 1905, ending the Russo-Japanese War was mediated by President Theodore Roosevelt in another episode of friendly Russo-American relations.

World War I brought no close collaboration between the Americans and Russians like that of World War II and the Bolshevik revolution took Russia out of the war and ended diplomatic relations between the two countries until 1933.

Two serious attempts to gain U.S. recognition were made by the Soviet Union from 1920 to 1933, but were rebuffed. There was rising trade between the two countries, but it did not assume major proportions in world commerce. Given the proclaimed purposes of the Soviet state it may not have been too unreasonable on the part of the U.S. government. In 1928, the Comintern, in its second constitution stated:

"The new International Association of workers is established for the purpose of organizing common activity by workers of various countries who are striving towards a single aim: the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the International Soviet Republic, for the abolition of classes and the realization of socialism — the first step toward a Communist society."

Notwithstanding such bold proclamations of hostile intent, the United States did engage in extensive relief operations in the Soviet Union. It contributed more than 67 million dollars for the relief of the 1921-22 famine.

Then came the long collaboration of World War II. Soviet-American relations, as the war ended, were conducted in an atmosphere of surprising trust, considering the different principles of the two countries. Then came the unraveling of the wartime coalition best described in the great book by Herbert Feis, From Trust to Terror. The historic territorial imperative of the Communist Party took over the policy of the government and a period of characteristic expansion reasserted itself, extending the Soviet Empire to new limits in the center of Europe and to the far reaches of Asia.

The emergence of nuclear weapons gave to the growing East-West confrontation new aspects of terror. The United States government under President Eisenhower proposed the formation of a United Nations Nuclear Agency to eliminate the risks of nuclear war, but a Soviet veto in the Security Council ended this most far-reaching effort to check a nuclear arms race. Technical advances have made nuclear weapons infinitely more powerful and dangerous than ~~the~~ the two atomic bombs dropped on Japanese cities. Those weapons could inflict destruction in a three mile radius. Minute Man II extended the area of destruction to 72 square miles. The MS missile pushed out 293 miles. Soviet weaponry in SS18 and SS19 series achieved greater destructive power.

The number of U.S. weapons remained quite stable in the sixties, but the Soviet Union pressed forward with the greatest military build-up in recorded history. The Soviet strategic

arms build-up overtook U.S. nuclear weaponry in 1972. As of July 1983 the United States had 1,045 ICBMs, the Soviet Union 1,398. The Soviet Union had 941 submarine launched missiles, the United States 568. The Soviet Union had 375 bombers to U.S. 271 bombers. The balance in all kinds of delivery vehicles stood at 1,884 for the United States to 2,714 for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had 7,700 warheads; the United States 7,297. The Soviet nuclear arsenal had a throw-weight of 11.8 million pounds to the U.S. 4.4 million pounds. The United States launchers were generally 15 years old; the Soviet launchers 5 years old.

As the accuracy and range and throw-weight of missiles increased, each side acquired the ability to wipe out the other's land based missiles in a first strike. That would leave the victim with the option of submitting or of making a massive response that would destroy the enemy and, if unlimited, might end life on the planet.

The two nations are in the perilous position of scorpions in a bottle.

The leaders of the Soviet Union and of the United States are to meet in November to see if these risks of war can be diminished.

The problems and potentials for that meeting, in my opinion were best set forth last March by Paul Nitze, who often has been a guest here in the Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture entitled The Objectives of Arms Control. He traced the development of our policy from 1963 when he and other defense experts shifted our efforts from multi-lateral to bi-lateral negotiations and concluded that a level of perhaps 500 strategic nuclear weapons

for each side might be appropriate. President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara took a proposal to have a freeze on 500 strategic nuclear weapons to Glassboro in June 1967 and got the message that negotiations on this might not be impossible. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 temporarily made that impossible and Salt I negotiations were deferred until the fall of 1969.

Nitze pointed out that the Soviets in 1972 passed the United States in the number, size and throw weight of offensive strategic missile systems and deployed one generation after another of more modern systems while the United States had frozen the number of our weapons systems and restrained the modernization of our weapons.

The Nitze address put the goal of American policy in a single sentence: "Our hope and intent is to shift the deterrent balance from one which is based primarily on the punitive threat of devastating nuclear retaliation to one in which nuclear arms are greatly reduced by both sides and non-nuclear defences play a greater and greater role."

What is the chance of getting the Soviets to agree to that?

Judging by the past, we would have to say they are not very good. But we surely must try. Some optimists think that the appearance of Chairman Gorbachev may improve the situation. Such students of Soviet policy as Konstantin Simis, formerly of the Institute of International Relations of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Soviet Union takes a gloomy view in the current issue of FOREIGN POLICY. He says:

"Unfortunately the available evidence about the new Soviet generation justifies scant optimism. Gorbachev and his political peers have so far shown every sign that their main interest is preserving the domestic status quo, and especially the political structure through which they have risen. For these leaders are first and foremost creatures of a Soviet system that has evolved into a "partocracy," in which a fusion of the party and government apparatus now permits the former to control completely the legislative, executive and judicial branches. As a result, Western leaders and analysts should not be fooled by the cosmetic changes and tactical deviations that will be made in Soviet foreign policy in the years to come. Domestically and internationally, what the new generation has in mind is more of the same."

I cannot leave our subject without letting in a final confusing word by that old dissenter George Ball in a recent issue of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. He writes: "One of the sagest admonitions in George Washington's Farewell Address was that we Americans should beware of 'inveterate antipathies against particular nations.' 'The nation,' he said, 'that indulges toward another an habitual hatred is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity....which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interests.' And he added: 'Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions or disputes occur.'

"That advice has particular relevance today", Ball said,

"for our government is exhibiting toward the Soviet Union such an 'habitual hatred' as to make it, in Washington's phrase, 'to some degree....a slave to its animosity'."

Slavery to any passion or emotion ought to be avoided where the survival of the nation and of mankind is involved; but so should sentimental and wishful credulity leading to the eager embrace of wishful and unfounded expectations. If the forthcoming negotiations do not succeed, we must try again. And if they continue to fail, we must carefully examine the acts that we might undertake unilaterally to diminish the risk of destroying life on this planet.

No one is optimistic enough to believe that the forthcoming conference will even deal with the fundamental source of Soviet-American East-West conflict arising from both the historic expansionism of the Russian state and the Soviet Union's repeatedly restated object of world-wide revolution.

Many Americans have hoped that time might diminish the missionary zeal of the aggressive religious faith to which the Soviet Union adheres. It has diminished and moderated many other fanaticisms in the past. Other great empires have finally come to understand that a friendly neighbor is better than a surly colony, as Turgot explained to imperial France. Such a conversion does not seem imminent today. Nevertheless, given the options we have, maybe the West should make more concerted efforts to seek the moderation of the Soviet Union's hostile drive to conquer the world. In the interim, the best we can hope for is the achievement of the modest goals described by Paul Nitze.

It will remain a grim world indeed, if we can neither diminish the menace of the arms race, or alter the philosophy that has created it.

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