

Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

A very interesting
account by George
Walden of a
meeting with American
Congressmen & academics.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

US/SOVIET RELATIONS: CONGRESSIONAL OPINION

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The second in the series of teach-ins in Soviet Affairs for US Congressmen, sponsored by the Aspen Institute, which aims to build a "congressional cadre" on US/Soviet relations, took place in Jamaica from 14-18 January. Again, it drew a good cast of about 20 senior figures including Sam Nunn, Steve Solarz, and Republican and Democratic Whips, Al Simpson and Tom Foley. Prime Minister Seaga attended one of the sessions, and gave a Third World view of super-power relations. The panel of American experts was impressive. (Full cast attached).

It was a good chance to take the temperature of American congressional thinking on Soviet affairs post-Reykjavik. The mood was thoughtful - even a trifle perplexed - and pragmatic, with no party posturing. No one now disputed that Gorbachev was trying to change things, though it was agreed that he was still much stronger on stating the problem than proposing solutions. But the impression that he was a "high roller", playing for big stakes, had been confirmed by his behaviour at Reykjavik. This had disturbed some of the Soviet military, and some of the American experts made comparisons with Khrushchev's "hare-brained" reputation, though accepting that Gorbachev was more intellectually in control.

Opposition from Party and other institutionalised interests, and a torpid populace, could block any reforms. The fact was that the country seemed in less of a hurry than Gorbachev. He might over-reach himself and fail. The Congressmen were unenthusiastic about a possible reversion to a more closed

Soviet society, with a less imaginative and mobile foreign policy. But no one expected any sudden crisis: the real choice for the Soviet Union was whether it was going to muddle through up, or down. Meanwhile there could be important foreign policy opportunities for the West, since it was easier for Gorbachev to go for international than domestic success.

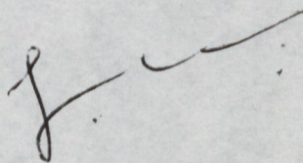
The unanimous view was that his intentions should be tested, and that a window of opportunity existed for an arms control agreement. At the same time, many accepted Robert Conquest's warnings against excessive optimism, and his insistence that the West should continue to take a firm line on human rights. Despite this, and the clear limits of our ability to influence events, I sensed a tendency amongst the Congressmen to cast around for ways to help Gorbachev to succeed.

James Billington, the dominant intellectual voice at the meeting, stressed the need for greatly expanded US/Soviet exchanges to circumvent the malign influence of Arbatov, and to give the Great Russians in the Politburo experience of the US. He even suggested in private (please protect) to Al Simpson, who sees the President weekly, that the entire Soviet Politburo should be invited to the US, both as a political gesture and in the hope that some at least might come.

Although many of the Congressmen seemed puzzled, and some embarrassed, by Reagan's behaviour at Reykjavik, they also seemed unaware of the depth of European misgivings about the implications for our defence. They were focusing increasingly narrowly on Soviet/US Super-power relations, and on Gorbachev's personality, asking themselves "what can we do to help him?" I warned against the danger of replacing a crusading with an evangelical spirit in the approach to Moscow. Even in a milder climate, western cohesion was as vital as ever: competitive detente could be as damaging to the Alliance as unnecessarily high US/Soviet tensions.

During my visit to the USA (which was mainly concerned with higher education, student grants and science) I was invited

to a small, private dinner given by Dr Kissinger. He was feeling more than usually frustrated by the incoherence in Washington, and convinced that a slipshod arms deal would be struck simply because there was no-one there to pull things together and take a firm line with the Russians. He himself is going to Moscow in 10 days time under the Council for Foreign Relations auspices. The delegation will include Cy Vance, Harold Brown, and - at Kissinger's suggestion, to harden up the team - Jean Kirkpatrick. The delegation would be meeting Gorbachev who, in Kissinger's view, would be able to play any tunes on it that he liked, given that there was no serious American position for the delegation to put forward. In all this flux, he stressed how right we were to keep Trident.



GEORGE WALDEN

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Participants U.S.-Soviet Relations Conference

Montego Bay, Jamaica

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SENATE

Republican

Thad Cochran (Miss.)
Bill Cohen (Maine)*
Dave Durenberger (Minn.)
Dan Evans (Wash.)
Larry Pressler (S.D.)*

Democrat

Bill Bradley (N.J.)*
Dale Bumpers (Ariz.)*
Alan Cranston (Calif.)
Christopher Dodd (Conn.)*
Albert Gore (Tenn.)*
Carl Levin (Mich.)
Barbara Mikulski (Md.)*
Sam Nunn (Ga.)
Paul Sarbanes (Md.)
Terry Sanford (N.C.)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republican

Doug Bereuter (Neb.)
Dick Cheney (Wyo.)
Mickey Edwards (Okla.)
Hamilton Fish (N.Y.)
Jim Leach (Iowa)*
Trent Lott (Miss.)
Lynn Martin (Ill.)
Olympia Snowe (Maine)

Democrat

Norm Dicks (Wash.)*
Tom Foley (Wash.)
Bill Gray (Pa.)
Lee Hamilton (Ind.)
Dave Obey (Wis.)
Stephen Solarz (N.Y.)

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Manuel Medina (Spain)
Giorgio Napolitano (Italy)
Dietrich Stobbe (Germany)
Joris Voorehoeve (The Netherlands)
George Walden (England)

SCHOLARS

James Billington, Wilson Center*
Robert Conquest, Hoover Institution, Stanford Univ.
Alex Dallin, Stanford Univ.
David Hamburg, Carnegie Corp.
Gail Lapidus, U. of Calif., Berkeley
Robert Legvold, Harriman Inst., Columbia Univ.
Edward Warner, Rand Corp.

*Unconfirmed