

# HOOVER INSTITUTION

ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

Stanford, California 94305-6010



6 October 1988

*Li Minister*  
*cd 21/x*

*Dear Prime Minister,*

*[He is not  
now  
coming]*

I had heard that Ligachev was indeed hoping to see you later in the autumn. You will have seen his recent remarks, in the traditionalist Soviet style, about not abandoning the world wide "class struggle" as the basis of Soviet foreign policy.

It now appears, ( though this is not yet quite clear ), that he has lost his seniority as second in the heirarchy, and if so that he is on the face of it unlikely to be encouraged to meet you. If he ( or anyone of his views ) does, though, they might benefit from a reminder that even without a Soviet evolution in principle into a reasonably co-operative member of the world community we can ( as before ) seek a settlement on the basis of their acceptance that expansionist policies have failed and that we will continue to thwart them. ( After all even Ligachev acquiesced in, probably even agreed with , the withdrawal from Afghanistan ).

The advantage secured by Gorbachev at the recent plenum is great: but his victory is not yet irreversible. There are a number of possible combinations which might in some circumstances still remove him or paralyse him. So it may be worth establishing our attitudes to any visiting representative of other trends.

Yakovlev, now in charge of the party's Foreign Affairs

Commission, might well be proposed for a visit. He has, of course, been Gorbachev's strongest supporter on the Politburo. But he is reported as in some ways very anti-Western. - I am enclosing some remarks he recently made about our style of parliamentary system, in which he appears mulishly Marxist. It is an example of the contradictions we may expect in this, as in any, transitional period, where the rulers - including Gorbachev - both seek a better future and cannot truly rid themselves of the burden of the past.

*with warmest wishes, as ever*

*Robert*

Robert Conquest



A.N. Yakovlev, the most 'liberal' member of the Politburo, (and at one time Soviet ambassador to Canada) recently made these comments on the Western parliamentary system.

Occasionally they still say that we are moving towards western democracy. Comrades, nothing like that ... At first when I saw on television how the Canadian parliament meets, and I thought, "How healthy. Look how with them one party attacks the other, and criticises it". Looked at more closely -- it was a show. And by the end I had developed the impression that it was a revolting show. Watch a member of parliament hammer a minister of the ruling party, barely letting him finish his words. You think, if it was that way with us, I would have rather died than shake hands. But there? It's obvious from the television: he hammers him, then the Minister defends himself, then the Speaker calls a recess. One goes up to the other, goes, "ha ha!"; they embrace and go to the buffet. Possibly someone would say that that is political culture. No, comrades, it is not that.

(in Komsomolskaya Pravda, 18 August 1988)

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# HOOVER INSTITUTION

ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

Stanford, California 94305-2323



5 October 1988

CDP  
28/x.

Dear Charles,

I enclose a brief letter to the Prime Minister, with a quotation from Yakovlev you may perhaps not have seen. It gives a sad insight into the Politburo mind both from its substance and from its shallowness.

I will be over for a week October 19-26: not at my sister's this time, but c/o Shirley Letwin, /262-2593 ( or , our actual downstairs flat number, 262 2745)<sup>x</sup>. Perhaps , with the hurly-burly of the Conference over, there may be time to talk about Russia ?

Perhaps you saw a ( rather quickie) piece of mine in the Sunday Telegraph, making a few points about the plenum.

with best wishes

Yours ever

Phil (CONQUEST)

X But I'll ring you earlier.