

E. R.

PRIME MINISTER

Bob Conquest is coming in to see you tomorrow afternoon for a general discussion of matters Soviet. There are plenty of current issues to discuss and you will not need [^]ay _^ briefing.

C D P

(C. D. POWELL)

3 April 1990

Robert Conquest

The End of Global Tick-Tack-Toe

When Stalin died, the Soviet government put out a strongly worded appeal against "panic and disarray." Now that the huge and hideous monster state he left as his legacy is also in its death throes, there may not be much panic around, but there is certainly disarray on a big scale, and not only in the Communist states.

My own disorientation was that of one who has long been battering at a stubborn door and with one last push finds himself staggering in off-balance, not merely to an absence of hostility but actually to a reception being given in his honor. After all my long service as a hard-liner, a certified "enemy," the Soviets are now publishing my books amid the warmest encomia (even in Pravda) not only for their intellectual but also for their moral position.

I and those in like case were on record that the Soviet system was not viable. What took us by surprise was the speed of the collapse. The noneconomists among us were misled by the CIA and other supposedly expert analysts who told us that the Soviet economy was doing pretty well. Their excuse is that they only had Soviet figures to go on, juggle and amend. But these figures were totally fictitious and should not have been taken even half seriously.

The other thing we didn't know was that the disastrous condition of the country had become obvious a decade and more ago,

The New World— What Will It Look Like?

first to Soviet economists and such, eventually to many in the lower and finally to the upper leadership.

The essential feature of the Soviet order was massive falsification about the economy, about the past, about society, about the ecology and about international political motives. But this ate it away from inside until nothing was left but a hollow shell. Western Sovietology by and large failed and is failing to cope, in part because of a bent toward the academically respectable idea of "objectivity" and avoidance of the "judgmental," in part because of an (equally academic) schematism.

What we are now seeing is not amenable to such treatment. As Burke pointed out, problems solved by force are not solved at all but merely eluded, and they come back as complex and difficult as ever. In the Communist sphere, when the tidy lid was taken off, a seething potpourri of political,

"Now Russia is protean, China is explosive, and the tactics are inapplicable."

economic, national intellectual and moral drives and demands was made manifest. Instead of an easily manageable, easily understandable set of non-urgent variables, what faced us was protean and unpredictable. The interaction of changing forces held a variety of potential crises.

In such circumstances, surely, the last thing we want is to revert to simplistic, positivist theories of international politics as the basis of our foreign policies. We need the most careful consideration of the flux of facts, based on every particle of knowledge of the detail of their history and development. And we need to be prepared for the sudden emergence of new phenomena or the sudden revival of phenomena long in abeyance.

It may have been more or less appropriate in Henry Kissinger's time to treat the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China as Power A, Power B and Power C in a political science tick-tack-toe game. Russia and China were then, or so it might be argued, more or less static. Now Russia is protean, China is explosive, and the tactics are inapplicable. And as Lawrence Eagleburger has commendably admitted, the recent ploy with China was a failure even at its own level.

Pragmatism, in its true sense, means taking all the facts into account. In practice those who most pride themselves on it leave out vast areas of human feeling and great tides of political psychology. Moreover, this sort of pragmatism is accompanied by a desire to reduce to a minimum the entities it deals with, so that they will be manageable. Put more briefly, small states and nationalities are a nuisance and should be discouraged.

Well, yes, they *are* a nuisance. But it is no use trying to wish them away. They add to and complicate world problems, in fact providing some which are not soluble. For it is another characteristic of simplifiers to imagine that world politics consists of "problems" that can be "solved," when in reality these are often better seen as situations that can only be handled by containing

them or defusing them on a year-to-year basis.

No wonder, then, that a State Department "official" (at least not a "spokesman") was recently quoted as saying that "we" don't want a lot of small states. They are less easy to treat as wooden counters in the absence of real knowledge. However, they are either going to flourish or be repressed. And those who encourage the repressors must take some of the responsibility. Moreover, it is a short-sighted view: for these nations will reemerge at a later date, once more to spoil the superficially achieved symmetry.

A passion for big states is also to be seen, of course, in American pressures for a federal Europe. Multinational federation is in any case a scheme designed to exacerbate national resentments to the maximum, as with Yugoslavia. Moreover, the idea is divisive rather than unitive of the West, both politically and economically—unlike the idea of a North Atlantic free trade area, which one might hope to see broadened further.

But even within the proposed (and implausible) United Europe, we find Washington "pragmatists" urging that the main weight of American support should go to Germany because it is biggest: quite contrary to rudimentary principle as known to pragmatists of past centuries. One argument is that "Europe" will dilute or contain German power. Possibly, but then it might on the contrary serve to project it. But these are, in any case, arguments about an unknowable, prematurely schematized long term.

Moreover, this sort of retreat from the new complexities into the mental security of a simpler fantasy world is made worse by an unnecessary, hyperactive notion that diplomacy must always be doing something. Even if based on better understanding, this sort of thing is best avoided. What possible benefit could have come from telling the Russians that we wouldn't mind their intervention in Romania? And that was comparatively harmless. The China mission signaled a lack of concern about the Beijing massacre, which might have tilted—and might yet tilt—the balance in some similar act in Communist Europe.

The statement that the Soviets are entitled to "restore order" in the Caucasus is far too close to an incitement to the same action in Lithuania. The Lithuanians have, we are told, behaved imprudently without political skill. But they are not the only ones, and if things go wrong it would be nauseating to see them being made the scapegoats.

The writer, author of "The Great Terror," is a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution.



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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

11 January 1990

This is just to confirm that we have
changed your meeting with the Prime Minister
from Monday, 2 April to Wednesday, 4 April at
4.30.

AMANDA PONSONBY

Mr. Bob Conquest

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Amadeo

Charles



Dear
you: Confinement
am

1630 on
Wed
4 April

10 DOWNING STREET

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19/1

~~Amadeo~~

Robert Conquest

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diff. day with

2 April. Can

we manage to or

5 April please?

CD2.



NS

c/. Conquest

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 December 1989

Thank you so much for your letter and the note - fascinating as always. I have put you in the diary for a meeting with the Prime Minister at 1700 on 2 April. Is this likely to be convenient?

Charles Powell

Mr Bob Conquest.

HOOVER INSTITUTION

ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE



Stanford, California 94305-6010

Charles

*Mon
2 April
at 5:00 PM*

*Amador
6/12*

Amador

La Nuebler 1789

*Can we find a line in
late March / early April please*

CDN.

Dear Charles

I enclose a letter to, and note for, the Prime Minister.

Perhaps you saw a piece of mine in the Sunday Telegraph, foolishly titled by the editor "Why I believe in Gorbachev" and hacked to pieces. I enclose the original, as printed by John O'Sullivan in National Review, parts of which may amuse, even be useful.

Baker, sound Soviet-side men in the State Department tell me, has isolated himself from the main body of the Department with a group of advisers none of whom has had experience on Soviet matters. The impression is of a devotion to negotiating and fixing, without adequate political talent. For the moment his have-it-both ways approach may be adequate, but one wonders about the future.

I shall be going to the Soviet Union again in April, partly for a conference on Russia in the XXth Century, at which

the Institute on the History of the USSR has asked me to speak. My historical books are now coming out in the leading political and historical journals in Moscow and will later appear in book form. I can't resist sending you a copy of the lead-in to a section from my The Harvest of Sorrow in the super-prestigious Novy Mir. (Bit of a change from what they were saying a few years ago). Plus, if I can find it, the blurb written by Senator Moynihan for the U.S. edition of my new book Tyrants and Typewriters (of which I've asked the London publishers to send the Prime Minister a copy).

I expect to be in London late March-early April, en route to Moscow, and again late April on the way back. By then further change will be with us.

Yours ever

BD