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MOSCOW'S HOT WAR OF WORDS

INTRODUCTION

When Ronald Reagan last year described the Soviet Union as "an evil empire," the foreign policy establishment was outraged. Such language, they said, was intemperate and would impair Washington's relations with Moscow. Whether what Reagan said was true or not did not seem to matter.

What critics of White House rhetoric ignore is that, while the President has talked bluntly on occasion, it is standard operating procedure for the Soviets. If anyone is consistently guilty of verbal outrage and violations of the niceties of diplomatic discourse, it is the Kremlin's leaders. When, in February 1984, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko accused the U.S. of "recklessness and irresponsibility," it was tame compared to the other recent Soviet statements. It is not unusual, for example, for Soviet officials and official publications to accuse Ronald Reagan of "misinformation, distortion, and direct falsification" or to compare Reagan to Hitler. The Reagan Administration, meanwhile, is routinely excoriated by Moscow for "blackmail, insinuations and diktat," "criminal designs against peace and humanity," "state terrorism," and for being "the most bellicose ruling class."

It is strange that so many foreign policy analysts focus solely on U.S. rhetoric and ignore Moscow's. A sampling of Soviet bombast quickly demonstrates that in the East-West war of words, the U.S. has been a very tame combatant.

SOVIET ATTACKS ON U.S. POLICIES

U.S. Foreign Policy: "The more clearly and dangerously manifest is the militaristic policy of the present U.S. admini-

stration, which is out to upset the existing balance of forces in the world, ensure its superiority, dictate the American rules to everybody, the more demagogy is splashed out of the White House as facts cannot be refuted, they resort to misinformation, distortion and direct falsification....Taking an active part in all this is also personally the President of the United States of America."¹

"Wherever the Reagan administration fails to achieve its hegemonic aims by way of pressure, blackmail, insinuations and diktat, it resorts to the forces of arms, to overt aggression."²

"There is something wrong with morals in Washington's present policy, as there is just no room for morality there. U.S. imperialism is inalienably associated with such crimes as aggressive wars, interference in the affairs of sovereign states, and atrocities by racists and colonisers."³

"The statement says precisely that the militarist course of the U.S. Administration is to blame for the present tension, the threat of nuclear war. It is precisely the administration which, having proclaimed a crusade against real socialism, is daily pushing mankind toward the dangerous brink of a world conflagration."⁴

U.S. Defense: "In a bellicose speech over the television, President Reagan cited new CIA-fabricated figures about the Soviet military potential and used them to try to justify the unprecedented military spending of the United States."⁵

"In justifying his militarist course, Reagan, as previously, used his favorite device--intimidating Americans with the non-existent 'Soviet military threat.' Furthermore he referred to falsified statistics drawn from a recently published piece of Pentagon propaganda--the brochure entitled 'Soviet Military Power.'⁶

"Reports reaching Moscow from Washington indicate that the recent weeks have seen an unprecedented paroxysm of military hysteria whipped up by the American President and his team....The extraordinary pronouncements made in recent weeks by the White House are obviously aimed, among other things, at terrorizing Congress into accepting the unprecedented allocations for the Pentagon's needs insisted upon by Ronald Reagan and Caspar Weinberger. There is no doubt at all that the aim of Mr. Reagan's military program is to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union at all costs."⁷

1 Moscow Pravda in Russian, November 3, 1983, 1st Edition, p. 4.

2 Moscow TASS in English, 1511 GMT, September 20, 1983.

3 Moscow TASS in English, 1622 GMT, October 20, 1983.

4 Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, 1100 GMT, October 15, 1983.

5 Moscow World Service in English, 0800 GMT, March 26, 1983.

6 Moscow TASS International Service in Russian, 1010 GMT, March 24, 1983.

7 Moscow to North America in English, 2300 GMT, April 16, 1983.

Arms Talks: "By sabotaging the talks on the prohibition of chemical weapons the United States would like to free its hand to commit new crimes against peace. It is thus assuming a very grave responsibility toward mankind. No slanderous anti-Soviet fabrications will help it to evade this responsibility."⁸

"That information, which was picked up by the international press, our commentator Vladimir Koroliov reports, is further evidence of the criminal designs of government circles in the United States directed against peace and humanity.

"Those countries where people are fighting for national independence and freedom are used as targets for the experiments with U.S. chemical and bacteriological weapons. As can be seen, this is not coincidental. The U.S. government circles have no compunction in using any means to impede the victory of these peoples and to keep them from living the way they want."⁹

Lebanon: "American ships and soldiers are waging military action against the population of Lebanon...All this represents the policy of state terrorism on the international scene. These actions by the Reagan Administration undermine peace and international security...Surely American votes did not give the President the mandate to tear up basic international law and pursue policies of international piracy."¹⁰

Korean Airliner Destruction: "In their endeavor somehow to justify their dangerous, misanthropic policy, they are heaping mountains of slander on the Soviet Union and socialism as a social system, and the tone is being set by the U.S. President himself. It must be frankly said that it is an unseemly spectacle when, having set themselves the aim of denigrating the Soviet people, the leaders of a country like the United States resort to what is virtually foul-mouthed abuse mingled with hypocritical sermons on morality and humanity.

"The world well knows the worth of this moralizing. In Vietnam morality as it is understood by Washington officials was instilled with the aid of napalm and toxins, in Lebanon it is being hammered in with volleys from ships' guns, and in El Salvador this morality is being introduced through genocide. This list of crimes could be extended. So we also have something to say about the moral aspect of U.S. policy, both when we remember history and when we are speaking of the present."¹¹

"The guilt of the organizers of the sophisticated provocation based on the South Korean airliner that was orchestrated by

⁸ Moscow TASS, March 17, 1982 (FBIS, Soviet Union, p. AA6).

⁹ Moscow to Cuba in Spanish, 0100 GMT, March 9, 1982.

¹⁰ Moscow to North America, 0001 GMT, November 2, 1983 (Igor Aleksandrov commentary).

¹¹ Yuri Andropov, Pravda in Russian, September 29, 1983, 1st Edition, p. 1.

the U.S. special services have long since been proved. It is obvious to the whole world. And yet there is no abatement across the ocean. New attempts are constantly being made there to whitewash the United States and to slander and malign the Soviet Union--to make black pass for white as they say.

"In Comrade Andropov's statement, this act is evaluated as an example of extreme adventurism in policy. The guilt of the organizers of this adventure has been proved. It is precisely with them that the whole responsibility lies for the death of the passengers who were on board the South Korean airliner. And Reagan and others of that ilk, have in vain adopted the guise of humanists, wring crocodile tears from themselves hypocritically bewailing the victims of their own adventure. Moreover, what significance can the lives of those who perish have for such so-called humanists if they are planning a nuclear blitzkrieg against the world of socialism."¹²

United Nations: "Imperial haughtiness and contempt vis-à-vis other countries have long ago been elevated to the rank of U.S. state policy. Now Washington is also flouting elementary rules of decency, among disrespect not only for the statesmen and states, but also for the United Nations organization."¹³

Arms Race: "Describing U.S. policy vis-à-vis the arms race, L. I. Brezhnev noted that 'Selfish imperialist interests, chauvinism and a reluctance to face up to the general situation in the nuclear age ultimately lie behind this aggressive approach to foreign policy....'"¹⁴

Democracy Initiative: "'The psychological warfare against the forces of peace, progress and socialism and the anticommunist 'crusade' which is being waged today by the militarists in Washington, are evidence of just one thing: the moral, political and economic crisis of imperialism,' political observer Nikolay Pastukhov writes in SELSKAYA ZHIZN. '...Hitler's men resorted to such methods, fanning up anti-Soviet and anticommunism during the period of preparation for the Second World War,' the author observes. Nuremberg condemned these actions as criminal. But these methods are again being revived in the present day by the latter-day crusaders from Washington. 'However much the present day crusaders rave, their policy and criminal actions are doomed to failure.'"¹⁵

¹² Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, 1230 GMT, October 2, 1983.

¹³ Moscow TASS International Service in Russian, 1957 GMT, September 28, 1983.

¹⁴ Moscow Literaturnaya Gazeta in Russian, September 29, 1982, p. 14.

¹⁵ Moscow TASS International Service in Russian, 0805 GMT, August 13, 1983.

ATTACKS ON U.S. INSTITUTIONS AND WAY OF LIFE

U.S. Human Rights: "Meanwhile, one cannot help asking such questions, the more so when farcical statements are made by the leaders of the country where democracy, freedom and human rights are trampled underfoot day after day and at every step...."¹⁶

The Pentagon: "The Pentagon has long gained the sordid reputation of a falsifier of figures concerning the balance of forces between the Soviet Union and the United States. In launching a campaign about the alleged 'Soviet military threat' before each new debate in Congress on requests for military needs, the U.S. Defense Department systematically, from year to year, understates the nuclear potential of the U.S.A. and the combat composition of the American Armed Forces."¹⁷

The FBI: "A political show, a rare one for its hypocrisy, took place in the White House. The reason: the 75th anniversary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation--the secret police of the American establishment...."

"The pompous celebrations at the FBI headquarters were attended personally by President Reagan who stinted no words to praise those whose activities have long since become a synonym of crying violations of the elementary civil rights and liberties of rank and file Americans...."¹⁸

"As for foreign policy results, the appearance of the Reagan administration in the White House completed, so to speak, the process whereby the most bellicose ruling class grouping has begun to set the tone in U.S. policy...."¹⁹

ATTACKS ON U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

President Reagan: "It is hard to believe that sensible people in the West can take seriously the verbiage coming from Ronald Reagan about the U.S. desire for peace, or his shrill statements about some Soviet threat. Do they not see here a blatant lie, just as in the well-advertised homily that the U.S. President delivered to the participants in the Orlando conference of the National Association of Evangelicals? 'The world is full of sin and evil. The Holy Scriptures and our Lord Jesus Christ enjoin us to fight against these with all our might,' the master of the White House cried out with pathos, lifting his eyes unto the hills...."

¹⁶ Moscow TASS in English, 0710 GMT, October 26, 1982.

¹⁷ Moscow TASS in English, 1537 GMT, March 23, 1983.

¹⁸ Moscow TASS, July 27, 1983, Alexandr Shalner.

¹⁹ Moscow Komsomolskaya Pravda in Russian, December 30, 1982, p. 3.

"What astounding hypocrisy. It is quite obvious that in viewing the world through the prism of their imperial ambitions, the present crusaders in Washington are clearly relying on solving the most important international problems through unceremonious diktat and the use of crude force."²⁰

"In trying to substantiate his malicious statements, the President distorts and falsifies facts...."²¹

"I would say that perhaps there has never been a time in U.S. history when American leaders have told so many untruths. I am trying to be polite.

"That is because the Reagan Administration's deliberate distortions of the truth are the foundation for the current policy of unrestricted military spending and the creation of more destabilizing types of nuclear weapons. As has been the case in the past, the White House is using a favorite tactic."²²

Charles Wick: "A former Hollywood producer and a former music arranger, Wick sets the highest hysterical note in the 'psychological war' of unprecedented scope and intensity waged against countries and governments disliked by Washington....

"The bigger the lie, the easier people will believe it--the Washington propaganda men follow this thesis of Goebels: Using misinformation and slander the USIA distorts the foreign and home policy of socialist countries, their peace initiative directed at curbing the arms race, at drastically improving international relations."²³

The Administration in General: "George Shultz once again tried to deceive the Americans, trying to whitewash the present course of the Reagan administration....

"Let this political hypocrisy remain on the conscience of the members of the Washington administration."²⁴

"The present U.S. administration is already quite 'famous' for scandals--bribes, fraud of tax establishments, cooperation with the Mafia--and for fierce squabbles between the White House and departments, between secretaries themselves and between secretaries and Congress."²⁵

²⁰ Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, 0842 GMT, April 3, 1983.

²¹ Moscow TASS in English, 1118 GMT, July 23, 1983.

²² Moscow to North America in English, 2300 GMT, March 29, 1983.

²³ Moscow TASS in English, 1804 GMT, August 22, 1983.

²⁴ Moscow Pravda in Russian, November 19, 1983, 1st Edition, p. 5.

²⁵ Moscow Za Rubezhom in Russian, No. 36, September 2, 1982, p. 7.

SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES VIS-A-VIS THE U.S.A.

"The USSR's foreign policy, meeting the fundamental interests of the Soviet people, fully meets also the aspirations of all people in the world, who have a vital interest in upholding and enhancing peace. But there does exist evil on earth. Its main source is the militarist policy of Washington and NATO, which represents a grave threat to peace."²⁶

"The Soviet people and the broadest international public circles are continuing to discuss the statement by Yu. V. Andropov, general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium. The news coming in from all capitals says the same: It is a document of tremendous international significance....

"It is not the first time that the Soviet state has had to face such assaults in its 65 years. Past experience shows that those who try to encroach on our state's integrity, on its independence, and on our system always end up on the ash heap of history. No one can turn back the clock. The USSR and the other socialist countries will continue to live and develop according to their own laws--the laws of the most advanced social system."²⁷

RECENT SOVIET THREATS

"The question is--either Turkey will live under the conditions of peace with its neighbors and the peoples of the Near and Middle East or, surrendering its territory to U.S. bases, it will spoil relations with its neighbors and in the event of a conflict become a nuclear cemetery."²⁸

"Referring to Nakasone's intention to make Japan an 'unsinkable aircraft-carrier' Tass said that this would 'make Japan a likely target for a nuclear response strike. And for a densely populated country as Japan, this could spell a national disaster more serious than the one that befell it 37 years ago.'²⁹

"Scandinavian countries are a 'bridgehead for aggression' which 'are to burn in the fire of nuclear war in the name of 'Atlantic solidarity.'³⁰

CONCLUSION

Reagan Administration rhetoric concerning the USSR has been criticized for aggressiveness, which has allegedly worsened

²⁶ Moscow TASS in English, 1622 GMT, October 2, 1983.

²⁷ Moscow Izvestiya in Russian, October 4, 1983, morning edition, p. 1.

²⁸ Pravda, February 27, 1980.

²⁹ TASS, January 19, 1983.

³⁰ Krasnaya Zvezda, June 21, 1983.

relations between the U.S. and the USSR. These statements have also supposedly given the wrong impression to the Soviets and our allies around the world--the impression that the United States is "trigger happy."

Such criticisms are not valid. After the invasion of Afghanistan, the oppression in Poland, the use of chemical warfare in Laos and Kampuchea, subversion (albeit occasionally, indirectly) in Africa and Central America, as well as the KAL airline incident, there is considerable foundation for Reagan's harsh statements.

• Aside from these foreign policies, the Soviets are pledged to the overthrow of capitalism and the implementation of a violent, international proletarian revolution to destroy the Western way of life. While the Soviets have never categorically renounced these fundamental tenets of their social system, the U.S. has never subscribed to any underlying principle in its own political theory that espouses the reciprocal overthrow of the Soviet government. In addition, the Soviets have maintained a bellicose posture in recent times with continued threats aimed at any capitalist nation that opposes their external aims. The current Soviet leadership continues the tradition of active hostility toward capitalism that was started by Marx and Lenin.³¹

President Reagan's stern speeches, in truth, are only realistic and serve to make the American and Western European public more aware of the actual Soviet positions and policies vis-à-vis the West and capitalism. This in turn has helped the West realize the dangers in the false sense of security the U.S. let itself be lulled into during détente--indeed only now is the "window of vulnerability" swinging closed.

Reagan's tougher stance also reassures U.S. allies of the dependability of the American commitment to NATO's defense. And this new American attitude has increased the Kremlin's respect for U.S. resolve and capabilities, thereby diminishing the likelihood of open conflict.

It is difficult to understand how the Soviets--let alone certain U.S. commentators--can accuse President Reagan of exacerbating relations with the USSR on the basis of his recent speeches. Especially since Soviet statements, as can be seen above, have always been just as tough--and considerably ruder.

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³¹ Soviet domestic behavior can perhaps offer an explanation of the extensive use of threats. In order to achieve power in the CPSU, one needs to be able to dominate one's rivals completely. As there are no legal restraints on how one realizes this, threats and brute force play a major role. This also explains why the Soviets respect and are cautious of a tough adversary.