

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
ROUTING SLIP

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Remarks **ER COPY.**

Executive Secretary



RESEARCH AND
ENGINEERING

(SAA)

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

Executive Registry
84 - 9123

STAT

24 SEP 1984

Honorable William H. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Bill:

I have recently read Herb Myers' letter of 28 June 1984 presenting his perceptions on the Soviet Union and detailing a long term strategy for "denying the Soviets an external solution to their problem." I agree with his perceptions of the Soviet Union and also his call for a cohesive strategy.

I also agree that any long term strategy developed should be bi-partisan and exclude the concepts of the extreme right or left.

If a re-evaluation of our strategy is initiated, I offer whatever assistance I can provide and would welcome the opportunity to participate.

Sincerely,

cc: Mr. McMahon
Mr. Meyer



C-140

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

28 June 1984

DDI- 0377⁸/84

STAT

NOTE FOR: DCI
DDCI
DDI

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer, VC/NIC

Here's an exceptionally rich com-
pendium of (unevaluated) reporting of
life in the Soviet Union.

HEM

Herbert E. Meyer

Attachment

Distribution:

- 1 - Each addressee (w/att)
- 1 - ER (w/att)
- 1 - VC/NIC Chrono



C-140

The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

28 June 1984

C-140

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman
National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: What Should We Do About The Russians?

1. For nearly forty years now, we and our predecessors in the intelligence and foreign-policymaking communities have devoted the bulk of our time and energies to the search for an answer to one single question: What should we do about the Russians?
2. This search has taken on a special urgency during the last several months, as Soviet events, actions, and attitudes have combined to focus unprecedented attention on the superpower rivalry and, once more, raised the specter of a serious US-Soviet collision: The Soviets have walked out on three sets of arms-reduction talks, buried Yuri Andropov after a brief but violent reign that included the shutdown of KAL Flight 007, admitted publicly that for a year they had been lying about Andropov's state of health, and selected the visibly ailing Konstantin Chernenko as their new leader. The Soviets have harassed Western commercial flights to and from Berlin, fired on a US Army helicopter along the German-Czech border, and announced the presence of nuclear-armed Soviet submarines off the US East Coast. They have launched a set of military exercises that scared the wits out of some Western observers, boycotted the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, unleashed an anti-US propaganda barrage more strident and sustained than any in recent memory, and generally tried to whip up a war scare that in tone and substance bears an uncanny resemblance to the one that occurred in 1927, which historians now believe Stalin cooked up as part of a (successful) effort to quash domestic enemies.
3. As a participant in the current flurry of meetings, brainstorming sessions, water-cooler conversations, working lunches, even dinner parties--and as an avid student of earlier such flurries--I am struck by a recurring flaw: We always focus on the need for a policy;

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we never focus on the need for a strategy. But without a strategy--the deployment of a nation's political, economic, psychological, and military forces to afford the maximum support to its adopted policies--any policy regardless of its merit will lack the strength to survive when trouble strikes. Little wonder that so many of the Soviet policies we have pursued during the last forty years--under Republicans, Democrats, liberals, and conservatives--have ultimately been blown away like flimsy buildings by tornados.

4. An effective strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union is now within our grasp, and it is the purpose of this memo to spell it out. The key to this strategy lies in a new, almost revolutionary perception of the Soviet Union itself that is taking hold among specialists, scholars, and observers throughout the West. This perception is one that I share--in part because it goes a long way toward explaining current Soviet behavior--and which I detailed in an earlier memo entitled Why Is the World So Dangerous? To briefly recapitulate:

-- After 67 years of communist rule, the Soviet Union remains a nineteenth-century-style empire, comprised of more than 100 nationality groups and dominated by the Russians. There is not one major nationality group that is content with the present, Russian-controlled arrangement; not one that does not yearn for its political and economic freedom.

-- Since the imperial system is itself fatally flawed, all empires eventually decay. And at long last history seems to be catching up with the world's last surviving empire. Decades of over-emphasis on military production have wrecked the country's civilian industrial and technological base. More precisely, the Soviets have failed miserably to generate the kinds of innovations on which modern economies are increasingly dependent: robotics, micro-electronics, computerized communications and information-processing systems. Even if the Soviets could develop such systems, they could not deploy them without losing the political control on which the Communist Party depends for its very survival. For after 40 years of fear among Western intellectuals that technology would lead inexorably to Big Brother societies throughout the world, it now turns out that technology, in the form of personal computers and the like, has put communications and information processing beyond the control of any central authority. Unwilling and unable to develop and deploy innovations like these--as we in the West are doing with such robust enthusiasm--the Soviet Union now can produce little but weapons. As a result, the Soviet economy has become stagnant and may even be starting to shrink--a trend that already has begun to make even the production of weapons more costly and inefficient.

-- At the same time, The Soviet Union has become a demographic basket-case. Today only about half the country's

population can speak Russian; for an industrialized, technologically-advanced society, this is intolerable. Moreover, so low has been the Russian birthrate that in coming years the able-bodied working-age population of the Russian Republic, which contains roughly two-thirds of the Soviet Union's total industrial production capacity, will actually decline. This is not merely a drop in the growth rate; it is a drop in the total number of warm bodies showing up each morning, drunk or sober, for work. Moreover, high birthrates in the Moslem republics have begun to soak up vast amounts of investment for schools, hospitals, roads, and so forth. Thus, fewer and fewer Russians must work harder and harder to support more and more non-Russians. This sort of thing cannot go on indefinitely. Nor can the trend itself be reversed in less than several decades.

-- All this is compounded by a growing contentiousness and disarray within the communist world itself. Moscow's efforts to ease domestic economic pressures by shifting the burden to its East European satellites are meeting with growing resistance from satellite leaders, who rightly fear for their own grips on power. One reflection of this fear is the rising level of opposition among East European leaders to Moscow's plans for higher levels of defense spending by the satellites; another is these leaders' unprecedented vocal efforts to coax the Soviets back to the arms-reduction tables. Obviously the Soviets have sufficient military power to get their way, but now the chances are increasing that the Soviets will need to use this power. And elsewhere in the communist world--against every tenet of Marxist philosophy--communist nations are waging war among themselves. More precisely, the Soviet Union and China, having fought one another along their common border, are now fighting against or through their respective surrogates: China versus Vietnam; Vietnam versus Kampuchea.

5. From Moscow's point of view, history could not have chosen a worse moment to catch up with the Soviet empire. After a period of drift, the US is once again leading the West forward:

-- Our own economy is recovering--growth has lately been running at an annual rate of more than 9 percent, a level that delights everyone except the gloom-and-doom mongers on Wall Street--with the only argument among serious economists focusing on the size and breadth of the boom.

-- US defense spending is up, with the debate in Congress and on the campaign hustings focusing only on the proper size of the increase.

-- We and our allies have begun to limit the flow of credits to the Soviet Union.

-- We and our allies have begun to staunch the hemorrhage of technology to the Soviet Union.

-- With initial deployment of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, NATO is at last beginning to change the balance of power in Europe back to its favor.

-- With the emergence of five anti-communist insurgencies--in Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan--the Soviet drive for Third World dominance has been slowed. And, of course, our own country's use of military power to set free Grenada has shattered the myth that communist revolutions are irreversible. Now it is their dominoes that are toppling.

6. Moreover, we now stand on the threshold of an historic change in the very nature of warfare. Technology is shifting the advantage from offense to defense. Since the US is a defensive power while the Soviet Union remains an offensive one, the long-term edge is now moving in our direction. This, of course, is why the Soviets are so worried by our own emphasis on high-technology weapons such as cruise missiles and precision-guided munitions; it means that the US has both recognized and acted upon the new reality. This also explains why the Soviets are having fits over the President's Strategic Defense Initiative, although this is a longer term project. Given our country's awesome record of success when we combine our scientific and technological prowess with our industrial strength--the Manhattan and Apollo projects come to mind--the Soviets must assume that eventually we will succeed. And when we do, Soviet rockets will cease to be a threat to anyone.

7. From the moment that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union seized power back in 1917, the primary thrust of its propaganda has been to convince not only its own people but also those of us in the West that the Party's revolution is irreversible; that the Soviet Union as organized by Lenin & Co. is a stable, permanent state. So successful has been this propaganda effort that for decades the conventional wisdom here in the West has been just this: that the Soviet Union is here to stay. One corollary of the conventional wisdom is that the US-Soviet rivalry is itself a permanent feature of life on earth.

8. Yet the new perspective that I outlined in Why Is the World So Dangerous, and which I have briefly recapped here, fundamentally challenges both the conventional wisdom and its corollary. This perspective recognizes the Soviet Union for what it is--an empire--and accepts that like all empires this one must eventually decay. Moreover, this perspective holds that the beginnings of this decay are now evident. Indeed, since publication of that earlier memo information has continued to accumulate which suggests that the decay is progressing:

-- The selection of Konstantin Chernenko as Andropov's successor indicates strongly that the bureaucracy could not stomach even the modest economic reform efforts that were begun after Brezhnev's death. The political leadership has virtually ceased to talk of reform; stagnation thus is likely to continue.

-- Living standards in the Soviet Union are beginning to decline. Marshall Goldman, the Harvard University Soviet specialist, now reports that food is in short supply outside the Moscow-Leningrad area and that rationing has been imposed in 12 cities. According to recent issues of published Soviet medical literature, five of seven key communicable diseases are now out of control: polio, diphtheria, scarlet fever, whooping cough, measles. Georgetown University demographer Murray Feshbach--among the most competent and reliable students of Soviet life--reports that according to published Soviet statistics, so high is the incidence of measles that it now stands fractionally below the level at which epidemiologists attribute the problem to mass malnutrition. Feshbach's earlier research has shown that throughout the Soviet Union infant mortality is rising and life expectancy is falling.

-- A sense of deep pessimism has taken hold among the Soviet people. One reflection of this is the abortion rate, which for the Soviet Union as a whole is between 60 percent and 70 percent, and which for Slavs and Balts is 75 percent to 80 percent. We simply cannot attribute these staggering rates entirely to the low quality of available birth-control products and to decisions by sensible, practical parents to limit the size of their families because their apartments lack sufficient space for comfort. Rather, we must view these rates, at least partly, as an indication of the average couple's judgment of life in the Soviet Union. As Frank Shakespeare puts it, these abortion rates reflect a vision of the future that is bleak and despairing almost to the point of national suicide.

-- Artistic works are often a leading indicator of a society's perception of its own prospects, and Soviet artists are turning now to themes of looming decline. A singer/poet named Bulat Okudzhava has lately been serenading audiences at a Moscow cabaret with a little number that strikingly compares today's Soviet Union with the Roman empire in its last days. Here's the first verse:

"The Roman Empire at the time of the decline
Maintained the appearance of firm order.
The leader was in his place, with his comrades in
arms at his sides,
Life was wonderful, judging by reports.

But the critics will say that the expression
'comrade in arms' is not a Roman detail,
That this mistake deprives the whole song of
meaning.
Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps it isn't Roman...."

-- For the first time ever, articles are appearing in Soviet newspapers and magazines that talk about "the contradictions of socialism," and vaguely suggest the need for basic structural changes. Given the limits of what one can say in the Soviet press--and remain at large to say again--this is explosive stuff indeed. Clearly, commentators are sending strong signals that in their view fundamental changes are needed, and the sooner the better, if the regime is to survive in its present form.

9. This growing sense of pessimism and looming decline may well account for much of current Soviet behavior. In a vague but very profound way, Soviet leaders are starting to recognize that something has gone hideously wrong. We are not talking here about merely a bad stretch in relations with the US or a temporary run of bad luck; we are talking here of a perceived fundamental shift in the balance of future power. History is no longer on Moscow's side--if ever it was--and Soviet leaders sense they lack the wit, the energy, the resources, and above all the time, to win it back. Thus the current burst of vicious, vitriolic rhetoric and action. It is like the first reaction of a very nasty man whose career has been soaring from triumph to triumph over the broken bodies of his enemies--and who with final victory in sight has just learned he has a terminal illness.

10. The implications of all this are staggering. If indeed the Soviet Union is an empire at the beginning of its decline, one of three courses is likely:

-- The Soviets could undertake fundamental reforms.
This remains a possibility, and obviously we must be alert to any indicators. But it seems probable that the Soviet leadership will not make the changes necessary to either reverse these trends or cope with them. Kremlin leaders could boost their country's economic growth rate only by slashing the defense budget or by enacting massive economic reforms. Either remedy would threaten the Communist Party's grip on power, and this is a price that Kremlin leaders have always been loath to pay. The demographic nightmare is equally difficult to end. Moscow cannot transfer industrial-production capacity from the Russian to the non-Russian, and especially non-Slav, republics. Doing so would give these republics more power over Moscow than Moscow is willing to risk. And Moscow cannot import workers to Russian factories from Moslem republics because these workers (a) don't speak Russian, (b) don't want to come, and (c) would be bitterly

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resented by Russian workers, who would be required to share scarce housing and food with individuals they view as racially inferior.

-- The Soviets could blow it. That is, they could fail to stop their empire's decay and, over time, allow the Soviet Union to drift into a downward spiral from which would emerge a different sort of society. To be sure, we have no idea of what this successor society would look like. It might be a "better" society, which is to say a freer and more democratic one. Or it might be different from the present society but every bit as mean and repressive. And we can only guess at the future relationship between the Russian Republic--the imperial power, so to speak--and the fourteen non-Russian republics that now comprise the Soviet Union. But clearly, any sort of imperial free fall would produce a political structure that, at least for a while, would be less threatening to the West than the current regime.

-- The Soviets could decide to go for it. Faced with a "use-it-or-lose-it" situation, Soviet leaders could choose a high-risk course designed to change the correlation of forces before it is too late to do so. As you recall, it is this option that was the focus of Why Is the World So Dangerous? The thrust of my argument there was that as Soviet leaders perceive that time is no longer an ally, the range of options they would be willing to consider will inevitably widen. Thus we must prepare for the possibility that the Soviets will do something very, very dangerous--for instance a grab for the Persian Gulf, an attack on Western Europe, even a first strike on the US. Again, as in that earlier memo, I emphasize that I do not predict any of these actions. I merely point out--and this is worrisome enough--that to some Soviets these actions may no longer be too risky to consider. Thus my concern that the coming years will be the most dangerous that we have ever known.

11. IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE THE COMING YEARS WILL BE SO DANGEROUS THAT WE NEED TO DESIGN, ARTICULATE, AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION THAT WILL AVOID WAR. THE THRUST OF THIS STRATEGY, SIMPLY PUT, SHOULD BE TO DENY THE SOVIETS AN EXTERNAL SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEM. The logic runs like this:

-- The Soviet Union is the world's last empire, and after 67 years of communism it has entered its terminal phase. We should be no more surprised, or alarmed, or relieved about this than by the sunset at day's end; it is merely inevitable, and our choice is not whether to accept it but how best to respond. The only operational question is the rate of descent.

-- We will do nothing whatever to try and "bring down" the Soviet regime. More bluntly, we are not going to charge

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in there throwing bombs at them. Any effort of this sort, by any country, would be dangerously stupid. We won't engage in this sort of activity, and we will stop anybody else who tries. We will let the Soviet Union's rate of decline be managed by our strongest ally: history.

-- By the same token, we won't go out of our way to prop up the faltering Soviet regime. It's easy to see why in coming years the Soviets will seek massive amounts of Western financial and technical assistance. But we and our allies have learned the hard way that the Soviets use whatever help we give not to improve their country's standard of living but rather to build and deploy more weapons. You don't loan a man money--at any rate of interest--if you know from experience that rather than feed his family he'll buy a gun and rob your own bank. Putting aside common sense and morality--which bankers have been known to do--this sort of business is financially dumb. The tiny profit is more than wiped out by the expense of additional robbery insurance and physical security measures. When Soviet officials come calling for economic and technological help, we should politely but firmly turn them away. And we should keep them from stealing what they want.

-- Our hope is that Soviet leaders will turn their considerable skills and energies to reforming their system. We and our allies would like nothing better than a stable, secure, prosperous, free Soviet Union. If Moscow will display even the smallest sign of moving in this direction, we and our allies should and will help in every way we can. Indeed, we yearn to negotiate seriously with the Soviet Union across the entire spectrum of contentious issues--arms reduction, of course, but also the sorts of economic, scientific, technological, and environmental agreements that would help improve standards of living and lessen the dangers of war throughout the world.

-- Our concern is that Soviet leaders will prove unwilling, or unable, to undertake fundamental reforms. And if they can't, or won't, well that's too bad. The decline of an empire is never a very pleasant thing for those who live within its borders, and we wish all Soviet peoples the best of luck as they go about the difficult business of coping with the transformation of the current political structure into something else--something we hope and pray will serve them better than the structure they have now.

-- Our goal is to make absolutely certain that at no time during the coming years do Soviet leaders conclude that they can somehow save themselves by destroying us. This is more than merely protecting ourselves from falling bricks. That's easy. We need to anticipate the sorts of aggressive actions that a faltering empire might be tempted to take and which, if successful, would either reverse the decline or slow

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it down. And we need to establish a set of conditions under which, should in fact the Soviets be tempted, they will in the end resist on grounds that it just wouldn't work. It's a bit like establishing conditions in a neighborhood so that a hungry drifter who peers through the kitchen window of a house and sees a twenty-dollar bill lying on the table decides, in the end, to leave it there for fear he couldn't get away with it. Perhaps in time we could even get that drifter to knock politely on the door, and to ask if there is any work that needs doing.

12. Obviously, we will need a strong defense to make this strategy work. More precisely, we will need to prevent the Soviets from cutting off access to oil and other raw materials that we and our allies import from Third World countries--as they are attempting to do now in the Persian Gulf and in southern Africa. We must continue to resist Soviet efforts to gobble up fragile countries, and by doing so turning these countries into bases for the re-export of revolution--as they are attempting to do now in Central America. We must be sufficiently strong to block the Soviets from driving a political wedge between ourselves and our allies--as they are attempting to do now in Western Europe. And, at all costs, we must be so strong defensively that even in their worst moments, Soviet leaders won't be tempted to let their missiles fly in some sort of desperate, last-ditch gamble to destroy everybody in hopes that they will emerge in control of the wreckage.

13. A strategy of denying the Soviets an external solution to their problem will generate support for a strong defense because it offers the one thing people rightly demand for support of any sacrifice: hope. Remember that by convincing people the Soviet empire will last forever, Moscow's propaganda network has also convinced people that the US-Soviet rivalry is a permanent feature of life on earth. This, in turn, has led to a growing perception that all our defense spending achieves nothing. They spend, we spend, weapons become more and more deadly, and the cycle goes on forever; the chances inevitably grow that something awful will happen, if not by design then by accident. So depressing and so genuinely frightening is this prospect that more and more people no longer have the will to face it, and instead they turn toward silly and sometimes dangerous schemes they are told will somehow break the cycle. In this category I would include the idea of a nuclear freeze, and the various proposals floating around that, in one guise or another, would amount to unilateral disarmament. In despair, people forget the lesson that Paul Nitze and Dean Acheson stated so eloquently back in 1950, in their famous memorandum, NSC-68: "No people in history have ever survived who thought they could protect their freedom by making themselves inoffensive to their enemies." This strategy of denying the Soviets an external solution to their problem will sustain and even generate support for a strong defense--not only among Americans but among our allies as well--because it suggests that if we can hold on for a while longer, the need for such sacrifice will decline.

14. Bear in mind that what I outline here is a strategy, not a policy. It is meant to serve as a guide to the formulation of specific policies, and as a foundation for those policies we choose. Should we engage in ASAT negotiations with the Soviets? Should we seek a summit? Should we put a new START proposal on the table in Geneva? Should we sell them grain? How should we handle the leftward drifts of Suriname and Guyana? No strategy can--or should--dictate the answers to questions like these. Too much will--and should--depend on circumstances of the moment and on our national needs and interests at the time. A strategy of denying the Soviets an external solution to their problem is a long-term venture, with zigs and zags inevitable and even useful along the way. Flexibility is not an antonym of strength, but rather a source of it.

15. In pursuing this strategy through the policy battles that inevitably lie ahead, nothing will be more vital than a precise knowledge of the Soviets' state of readiness and, even more important, their state of mind. In essence, we need to put that country and its various elites in a sort of intensive-care monitoring system. We must do even more than we do now--which is a lot--to track the development and deployment of weapons and troops, the state of the Soviet economy, and the prospects for Soviet science and technology. And to an extent that we have never done before or needed to do, we must track the mood of Soviet elites--political leaders, industrial chieftains, military figures, scientists, indeed all members of the Soviet intelligentsia. For when all is said and done, it is the mood of these people--the degree of their pessimism and their judgments of their country's prospects--that will warn us either that the Soviet Union is preparing for major reforms, edging toward a dangerous, "use-it-or-lose-it" decision, or merely giving up and accepting its descent into history. At the same time, we need to make certain that these Soviet elites understand us more accurately than they have ever understood us up to now--our military strength of course, but more importantly the strength of our will to survive as a free people and our willingness to assist them if only they will cease to threaten our own survival.

16. Let me give you some indication of how people will react to all this. I have tried out my-proposed strategy on several dozen political figures, journalists, Soviet specialists, and public-affairs-minded friends and acquaintances. The professional doves reject my proposed strategy on grounds that it requires continued high levels of defense spending, provides a rationale for our current efforts in Central America, encourages support for our Strategic Defense Initiative, and in general points the way toward a post-Soviet world in which the US would likely be the only superpower. The professional hawks reject my proposed strategy on the grounds--so help me--that it will be viewed as a godsend by the professional doves. As the hawks see it, this perception of the Soviet Union as a declining empire will give

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doves the rhetorical ammunition to defeat many of our current initiatives. "For heaven's sake, let's not poke sticks at a wounded bear. He's dangerous, so let's back off and do nothing--nothing--the bear might possibly view as threatening," the doves will say. Or so fear the hawks. My own view is that hawks and doves have been making the same arguments for so long, and have become so proficient at making their respective arguments, that these negative reactions are an instinctive response to something new. On the other hand, there is a school of thought which holds that any strategy opposed with equal vehemence by extremists on both ends of the political spectrum is probably just right.

17. One immediate benefit will derive from this long-term strategy. It will help to dampen one of the most bitter and corrosive debates that has ever raged among Americans and among our allies, and one that I fear over time will tear the fabric of our societies. On the one side are those of us who want peace so badly that we are willing to pay any price for it. On the other side are those of us who also want peace badly, but who believe that peace without freedom would be intolerable and, in the long run, violently unstable. With the strategy that I have outlined here, this debate will peter out as people come to understand that it is not necessary to choose. We will have peace. And we will be free.


Herbert E. Meyer

Free
10 JAN 1984
WJC



United States Department of State

Assistant Secretary of State
for Economic and Business Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20520

WJC
Executive Registry
83-6234

SECRET:

Hon. William Casey
Director: CIA
Washington, D.C.

STAT

December 27, 1983

Dear Bill;

Attached is my reaction to Herb Meyer's recent piece on
Why Is The World So Dangerous?

We are presently all transfixed by events in Lebanon. But the worst that is likely to come out of that mess pales into insignificance beside what the Persian Gulf situation can turn into.

At some point, the Soviets may provide the Iranians--on a cut rate basis if necessary--with their version of the Exocets for use against tankers, and with Scud Bs for use against oil loading facilities. And if that happens, we are going to have a real mess on our hands.

Best Wishes;

Rich
Richard McCormack

P.S. attached is a memo I recently sent to George Shultz on this matter.

[Redacted area]

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United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State
for Economic and Business Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520

December 27, 1983

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman
National Intelligence Council
Central Intelligence Agency

FROM: Richard T. McCormack 

SUBJECT: Your Memo: "Why ~~Is~~ the World So Dangerous"?

You can well imagine after our conversation that I find myself in large agreement with much of the picture that you present in this memorandum. It is an excellent piece.

I would caution you on your conclusion, however. To conclude from current favorable trends that the Soviets will attempt something as desperate as nuclear war as their only way to avoid prospective relative weakening and political disintegration does their analysts a disservice.

Soviet analysts know that trends in Washington last only as long as administrations. Our tougher bunch will at some point be replaced by a more starry-eyed crowd, and then the Russians may hope that the rot in the West will resume. New opportunities may arise as happened during the Carter Administration in Iran and Central America. The Defense budget may be slashed again. The economy may suffer a new wave of inflation and instability.

But I utterly agree with you that the Soviets will exploit opportunities as and when they arise to weaken the West. And in that context I say to you: Beware the Persian Gulf. There lies disaster for the West if we fail to contain the spreading hostilities between Iran and Iraq. There lies the possibility of major war in which we could progressively become embroiled. There lies the opportunity for the Soviets to provide weapons to local belligerents who would sink our ships and block our oil and so raise oil prices, abort our economic recovery and jeopardize both our debt strategy with the Third World, and our re-election prospects in the United States.

bcc: Honorable William Casey
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

SECRET



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

S/S

SECRET/SENSITIVE

28 NOV 1983

TO: The Secretary
FROM: EB - Richard T. McCormack
SUBJECT: Major Conclusions from My Trip
Last Week to the Persian Gulf

I have just returned from a week in the Persian Gulf. My major reason for accompanying Secretary Hodel on this trip was the concern that hostilities could spread in the Persian Gulf and knock out for a significant time much of the Gulf's oil exporting capacity.

Prior to my departure, I had been visited by an important Saudi Arabian Prince (protect) who informed me that Iraq would launch air attacks against Khark Island and Iran-bound shipping within weeks, not months. The Prince was also very supportive of this move, believing that it was the only way that hostilities could be brought to a compromise conclusion. I tried to convince him, without success, that it was a far easier matter to escalate a conflict than predict the ramifications that would follow. This, however, appeared to make no impression on him--his overriding concern being that further Iranian military success would result in a Shiite regime being installed in Baghdad, with dreadful long-term consequences for the rest of the Gulf.

Upon my arrival in the Gulf, I found key people so pre-occupied with the prospect of Iranian attacks against oil shipping and exporting capacity, that they did not once issue the standard lecture against past Israeli iniquities. This is the first time in a dozen visits to the region that no official even mentioned Israel to me. They were all anxious to know how active the U.S. would be in the event of Iranian actions, and urged us to consider them reliable suppliers of oil. Oil Minister Yamani assured us that there would be no nominal oil price increase for three years. Sheik Zaid of Abu Dhabi, who was the first Arab ruler to announce an oil embargo against the United States in the 1973 war, went so far as to praise Egypt's Camp David diplomacy. When one studies how little oil the U.S. now buys from the Persian Gulf, and how this lessened demand has impacted on local developmental plans and ambitions, it is very plain that Arab OPEC has temporarily lost a lot of its ability to single out the United States for pressure.

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DECL: OADR.

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As Sheik Zaid said: "Today the Gulf oil exporting countries need the United States more than the United States needs the Gulf oil exporting countries."

The farther away from the region one travels the more one hears the theory that Iraq is merely bluffing in its threat to use the Exocets to persuade the Iranians to accept a compromise peace. I found few serious people in the Gulf who believe this.

Gulf leaders are more inclined to believe that Iraq will indeed use these missiles in an effort to shift the decisive battle away from the front line, and to use financial pressure as the critical weapon against Iran. If this happens, the logical response of the Iranians would be to direct their efforts against not only Iraq's remaining oil exporting capacity, but also against the oil exporting capacity of those countries who are financially supporting Iraq. Iran has plainly threatened to do this.

If we are initially successful in limiting the ability of Iran to counterattack against Saudi and other Gulf exporting facilities, there is no doubt in my mind but that the Iranians will if necessary, turn to the Soviets for technical assistance and hardware. In the early stages of any Soviet assistance program the Soviets are not likely to provide pilots, or otherwise expose themselves to a situation whereby an East/West war might erupt. But I can easily see the Soviets providing Khomeini with such things as conventional tactical rockets or with other technical advice and equipment to help Iran mount effective attacks on the oil exporting facilities on the other side of the Gulf. Launching sites for mobile tactical missiles are not all that easy to locate and destroy.

It is totally in the Soviet interest to disrupt oil exports from the Gulf. Not only would this cause oil prices to rise (benefitting the Soviet Union as a major oil exporting nation), but this would also jeopardize the free world economic recovery and our ability to manage the Third World debt problem.

In view of the high stakes on the board, and the potential for escalation that would present U.S. policy makers with an ever worsening series of choices, I recommend that the United States put its full diplomatic power behind steps to stop the escalation now, before the violence rises to ever higher levels.

We must first convince the Saudis and other Gulf states that there are alternatives to safeguard their long-term security against a future radical Shiite regime allied with Khomeini in Baghdad.

We need to point out to them that if the war worsens against Iraq, Saddam Hussein's Baathist colleagues are far more likely

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to turn to one of their associates or to some compromise candidate to replace Hussein, rather than let Khomeini march into Baghdad and install a Shiite radical in his office.

Khomeini has already moderated his terms for reparations--from \$150 billion to \$50 billion. This is still a fair piece of change, but it indicates that the bargaining has already started on one front. Khomeini's remaining demand, namely that Saddam Hussein go, can be taken care of by Hussein's own colleagues/^{if and} when things grow more desperate militarily. Now it appears that the military situation, at least on the northern front, is stabilized behind a series of easily defended ridge lines. If that is the case, there is no need for a sense of desperation on the part of Iraq's financial supporters that imminent defeat for Iraq looms.

My fear is that unless we move very quickly to convince the Saudis and others that the situation in the Gulf could get rapidly out of hand unless they exercise their financial leverage on Baghdad, the consequences could be tragic for the Gulf and the world.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that you send a very senior representative out there very soon with this mission.

Drafted: EB:RTMcCormack:meh.
11/28/83:632-0396

SECRET/SENSITIVE

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 8784-83
6 December 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman, NIC

FROM : Hal Ford
National Intelligence Officer At Large

SUBJECT : Why Is the World So Dangerous? An Alternative View

1. I want to second some of the alerts Herb has sounded, but disagree with him about other of his alarms, and about a lot of the world picture he paints in arriving at his conclusions. My differences are not just academic, but relate professionally to how we should assess world developments most accurately for our policymaking consumers.

2. Herb's think piece performs some useful functions in stimulating intelligence officers (a) to avoid straight line projections in the belief that the world will necessarily go on about as it has; (b) to be alert to the possibility of a Soviet-initiated rise in the intensity of global competition, and hence to the prospect of an especially dangerous possible period of world history immediately ahead of us; (c) to acknowledge that the USSR's world-wide network of CPs, agents, client states and groups offers Moscow considerably greater opportunities for creating trouble than is often appreciated; and (d) to entertain the idea that the USSR's vulnerabilities and disarray may be substantially greater than has been generally acknowledged.

3. Apart from these considerations, however, I disagree fairly strongly with a number of the propositions of the memo. Overall, it tends to pick and choose only selected data, those which happen to fit the particular arguments being advanced. As for specific areas where I disagree, the memo overstates:

- The uniqueness of present violence in the world.
- The possible degree of alarm on the part of Soviet leaders in 1983, as compared, say, with their probable world view in 1979.
- Soviet causation of various ills in the world.

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- The likelihood that a significant number of Soviet leaders believe that the USSR has had it, and is now terminally ill.
- The according readiness of such Soviet leaders to "go for it."

4. Is there a rise of global violence? In the first place, it can be questioned whether there is such a thing as "global violence." There are, certainly, always many violent situations in train at any one time in the world, stemming from countless causes. Secondly, there is nothing too distinctive about recent months: there are many times in the past where a number of disparate, dramatic events could have been viewed as a "sharp rise in violence in the world." Certainly various years could so qualify: for example, 1948-1949, 1950, 1963, 1968, and so on -- even Herb's own 1979 (i.e., Iran, Afghanistan, Rhodesia, the Nicaraguan revolution, the Yemeni war, the China-Vietnam war, etc.). And, Lebanon's self-immolation did not begin in 1983. Thirdly, in selecting only certain violent events, what does one think about other continuing bloodshed now: in Iran-Iraq, Timor, Spanish Sahara, Northern Ireland, the southern Philippines, Latin America, and many other locales? Are all these, too, the product of Soviet impetus? Fourthly, 1982-1983 could have been picked for making a case just opposite to that of Herb's memo -- that is, a time of especially unique non-Communist violence: e.g., the Falklands; heightened resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia; Israel's armed initiatives in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada; and US, French, and Israeli reprisals in Lebanon.

5. Is 1983 so much worse a year than 1979, say, for Soviet leaders that they have become despondent about the course of world revolution? Again, the memo does not clue the reader that there may be offsetting data that do not happen to fit the memo's construct. True, Soviet leaders almost certainly have been frustrated by many developments in the last year or so, and certainly most of all by the way the United States has stirred itself at home and abroad. But are the Soviet setbacks as momentous as the memo makes them? And are they so much worse, say, than in 1979? That year, 1979, was itself no great shakes for Soviet leaders, given for example the then-recent US recognition of China, and Soviet fears at the time of an impending US-PRC alliance; NATO's INF decision and the nightmare prospect this presented Moscow of Pershing II warheads ten minutes away; the sharply adverse worldwide reactions to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, including China's cutting off of what had been somewhat promising talks with the USSR; the necessity the Soviets faced of having to repair their fortunes in the Horn of Africa, after having been deprived of the good thing they had had going in Somalia; and the beginnings of a sharp decline in Brezhnev's health. Also, most of the facets of Soviet domestic malaise that Herb's memo lists for 1983 were already of great concern to Soviet leaders then, in 1979.

6. Are the Soviets indeed the source of all this recent "global violence?" Here the memo is on shaky ground, in attributing to what it terms a rickety USSR the capability to orchestrate the world's grief. Granted, the Central American and Lebanon challenges to US interests are much the worse because of the Soviet pressures back of the Cubans and the Syrians, and the USSR certainly initiates and exploits much trouble the world around, including -- in my view -- much more in the way of terrorist activities than we have yet been able to document. But it's quite another thing to see some brooding Slavic malevolence behind all kinds of disparate crises in the world. This applies in particular to the memo's listing of the KAL shootdown: why did these clever Soviets so botch their responses to that flight, both on the spot and subsequently? And just what did they have in mind when they put the North Koreans up to the Rangoon bombing? Did the Soviets purposely intend to deal North Korean fortunes a heavy blow? It cannot be excluded that the Soviets planned the murder of Aquino, but what happens to the giant causation thesis if we learn some day, say, that some of Marcos' (or Imelda's) own thugs mistakenly thought they were serving their boss when on their own they did away with their troublesome Becket?

7. The principal disservice the giant causation thesis performs does not relate to these particular issues in debate between Herb and me, however, but to the broad question of how best can intelligence guide policymakers to the true state of the world, and to the true sources of that world's troubles. Even if the USSR and the CPSU did not exist, the late 20th-Century world would be experiencing much violence. All kinds of people would still be killing one another: Arabs vs. Arabs, Shias vs. Sunnis, Gemayel Christians vs. Franjeh Christians, Arabs vs. Israelis, Southeast Asians, Palestinians vs. Palestinians, East Indians, Irishmen, Africans, Iranians - Iraqis, and so on. The root sources of world violence would continue to reside chiefly in the forces of historic antagonisms, unresolved territorial disputes, dislocations of de-colonization, wide disparities in wealth, gross social and political inequities, tribal and religious emotionalisms, distorted debt loads, the sharp rise in the number of political actors, the increase of literacy and education but not of opportunity, the gaps between expectations and reality, the instant awareness of TV and cassette without accompanying responsibility, the ready access to arms, and so on and so on. Certainly many of these troubles are of greater danger to US interests because of Soviet exploitation. But constructive US policy attack on the world's violence requires that we address its root sources rather than settling for cursing the Soviet darkness, and that we ask ourselves more often, "Just where do the Communists come from?"

8. Is the outlook of some Soviet leaders now wholly bleak, and do they indeed consider that the October Revolution is going down the drain of history? Herb's memo once again raises only a partial list of considerations. In many respects the future must certainly look unpromising to Soviet leaders. But the memo does not mention many issues which various Soviet leaders may feel will work to the disadvantage of the United States

over the long term, and so prevent it from reversing "the inescapable logic of historical determinism." Mistakenly or not, Soviet leaders may well consider that such issues include: the weak political base for US objectives that exists in Lebanon; difficulties the United States faces in increasing its influence among Arab audiences; a United States identified with Israel but not in control of its domestic and foreign initiatives; the strong hand the Soviet-backed Syrians hold; the vulnerability of the US allies to any diminution of Gulf oil supplies; the intimidating effect which the USSR's strategic power and expanding military reach can exert in the world; the security dependence of NATO on certain weapons which are becoming more difficult political instruments for NATO; the growth of neutralism in Western Europe, especially among the rising generation; the many difficulties the United States faces in the Third World, and the existence of many Soviet assets and intermediaries there; the not to be excluded possibility that Central America and Mexico may constitute a long-term time bomb for the United States; the absence of US foreign policy consensus; and the existence of sufficient economic and sociological problems within the United States to give Soviet ideologues confidence that a society with such "inherent contradictions" cannot in the long run prevail over the more disciplined USSR.

9. US policy certainly must stay alert to the possibility that the USSR is much weaker than has generally been acknowledged, and must develop improved ways and means of exploiting such weakness to US and allied benefit. At the same time, US intelligence and policymaking officers must keep that view of the Soviet condition in perspective, weighing it against the greater possibility that the USSR -- rude, brutal, and crude -- is going to be with us for years to come, continuing to present enormous challenges to US security and policymaking. I would hazard the guess that the US-Soviet cold war may still be confronting our grandchildren; that two world systems will still be locked in competition a la earlier Islam-Christendom or the wars of religion; that the Soviet challenge will not disappear as the result either of its own folly or of the brilliance of this or that Republican/Democratic policy initiatives; and that the reduction of that challenge will require a long sustained effort; much acuity; much imagination; much consistent, measured toughness; much diplomatic skill; much attack on the root causes of vulnerability to Soviet and Communist exploitation; and -- not least -- much in the way of taxes.

10. Will despairing Soviet leader "go for it?" We must of course keep our watch up and our powder dry. But, the cruxes of Soviet -- indeed Russian -- policy have been steady pressure, long-term outlook, and a fairly keen sense of what the traffic will bear in risk-taking in each circumstance. The bear is patient. His modulated pressures have paid off in many ways over the decades. His leaders are not damn fools. Since Stalin the ponderous bureaucratic necessity for consensus has prevented any leader or leadership faction from getting too far out ahead on any dramatic new foreign policy initiative. The Soviet leaders and the Soviet public know -- far better than do we, for that matter -- what war on a large scale can bring to the

homeland. And, if the bear doesn't like the present US Administration, the surest way some Soviet leaders can rally the American people around another term for that Administration will be to "go for it" in some way, or to pull off a coup of sorts within the Kremlin and embark the USSR on a program of greatly heightened aggressiveness in the world. In the near term at least, the Soviets have got to sort out their troubling succession problem. In past experience at least, such periods have not given birth to aggressive new adventurism, although we must of course watch that succession with extra care, to insure against the outside contingency that some Soviet Strangelove faction has not taken control of the USSR's destiny -- and ours.

11. What is the so-what of these alternative views of the world's violence? The answer is one thing if the debate is just between two intelligence officers. The significance would be quite otherwise, in my opinion, in the event senior policymakers should subscribe to many of the views Herb's memo advances.



Hal Ford

STAT

SUBJECT: Why Is the World So Dangerous? An Alternative View

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NIC# 8640-83
30 November 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT : Why Is the World So Dangerous?

1. The level of global violence has risen as sharply and as suddenly as a child's temperature. In just the last several months we have seen the shoot-down of KAL Flight 007, the assassination of Benigno Aquino, the murderous decapitation of South Korea's leadership in Rangoon, the terrorist bombings of US, French, and Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, the Libyan invasion of Chad, and the anti-Bishop coup in Grenada that ultimately triggered our own successful action on that island. What makes these acts of violence so especially disturbing is their common denominator: each has hurt the citizens, governments, or interests of the Free World.

2. Clearly, the world has become a much more dangerous place. We need to know why. Are these acts of violence somehow linked, or traceable to the same malevolent source? Or should we dismiss the present trend as a series of frightening, tragic, but unconnected events whose one-after-another timing is mere coincidence?

3. I believe the current outbreak of violence is more than coincidence. More precisely, I believe it signals the beginning of a new stage in the global struggle between the Free World and the Soviet Union. My contention rests on a perception that present US policies have fundamentally changed the course of history in a direction favorable to the interests and security of ourselves and our allies. What we are seeing now is a Soviet-led effort to fight back, in the same sense that the Mafia fights back when law enforcement agencies launch an effective crime-busting program. Let me concede right now that I cannot prove this -- if your definition of proof is restricted to intercepts, photographs, and purloined documents. Of course these things matter. They matter hugely. But to truly understand an alien phenomenon like the Soviet Union, one needs to go beyond a listing of facts; one needs also to make a leap of imagination:

4. If four years ago the Soviet leadership had asked my counterpart -- call him Vice Chairman of the Soviet National Intelligence Council -- for his evaluation of the global struggle, I believe my counterpart would have



replied: "Comrades, I'm delighted to report that the correlation of forces is moving steadily in our direction." He would have cited the following trends to support his upbeat analysis:

- The US economy was faltering.
- US defense spending was too low to truly assure the nation's security.
- The Soviet Union had established a mechanism for the steady flow of wealth from West to East.
- The Soviet Union had established a companion mechanism to assure the steady flow of technology from West to East.
- The Soviet Union, through the effective use of surrogates such as Cuba and Vietnam, had developed a technique for spreading its influence throughout the Third World by targeting fragile countries, destabilizing them, and swiftly taking over.
- Through the massive deployment of SS-20s, the Soviets were changing the balance of power in Europe.
- In more and more countries, policymakers, elites, and the masses were coming to accept the Soviets' long-standing claim that time was on their side; that one needed only to align with Moscow to be on the winning team.

5. Were the Vice Chairman of the Soviet National Intelligence Council called in by the Kremlin's leaders, say in mid-1983, and asked for his evaluation, I believe he would have sung a very different song: "Comrades," he would have said, "something has gone wrong. The US is refusing to accept history!" Assuming our Vice Chairman were allowed to continue -- and this is a bloody big assumption -- he would have cited the following trends to support his downbeat analysis:

- The US economy is recovering, with the only argument focusing on the breadth and duration of the boom. (The vice chairman, who enjoyed the privilege of access to US business publications, could not understand their failure to discuss the awesome national-security implications of a 15-month, 64 percent rise in the Dow-Jones Industrial Average, combined with a lowering of the annual inflation rate to less than 4 percent.)
- US defense spending is up, with the debate in Congress and on the campaign hustings focusing only on the proper size of the increase. (The vice chairman had in his briefing book -- but chose not to read aloud -- a letter Dwight

Eisenhower wrote to General Lucius Clay in 1952: "One of the great and immediate uses of the military forces we are developing is to convey a feeling of confidence to exposed populations, a confidence which will make them sturdier, politically, in their opposition to Communist inroads."

- The flow of wealth from the West to the East is less than the Soviets had anticipated it would be by now. (The vice chairman took a deep breath and pointed out that Moscow's most audacious project, the Siberia to Western Europe pipeline, had been literally cut in half by US opposition; after all, the pipeline was originally to have comprised two strands, and lately no one either in Western Europe or the Soviet Union had even mentioned that second strand.)
- The flow of technology from West to East is less than the Soviets had anticipated it would be by now. In part, by reducing the flow of wealth the US also reduced the Soviet Union's ability to buy equipment and know-how. And the US-led crack-down on illegal technology transfers had put a crimp in that key effort. (The Vice Chairman thought sadly -- but did not take the liberty of complaining -- that the expulsions of roughly 100 KGB agents from Western countries, mostly on technology transfer-related charges, had wiped out the KGB's welcome home-party fund.)
- The Soviet mechanism for spreading power through the Third World, while still a considerable threat to Western security, has run into unexpected resistance. Soviet textbooks insist that anti-Soviet Third World insurgencies cannot develop. Yet in 1983 there are five of them -- in Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. Thus Moscow can no longer target a Third-World country and assume that no serious resistance will develop. Most worrisome of all is the shocking setback in Grenada. (The vice chairman bit his tongue to keep from pointing out that the Soviet Union believed deeply in the domino theory -- and that one of its own had just toppled over.)
- With deployment now certain of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, NATO is about to change the balance of power in Europe back to its favor. (The vice chairman had read in Pravda that a P-II's flight time to Moscow was 12 minutes -- which, he thought to himself, is roughly how long it takes some of the Kremlin's leaders to get out of their chairs, let alone to their shelters.)
- And most dangerous of all, by describing the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil" US President Reagan has singlehandedly deployed the one weapon for which the

Soviets lack even a rudimentary defense: the truth. (The vice chairman made a mental note to ask a friend at the USA and Canada Institute how it happened that the Republican Reagan had made good against the Soviets a threat made against the Republicans by the Democrat Adlai Stevenson in 1952: "If you don't stop telling lies about us, we'll start telling the truth about you.")

6. Whether or not such briefings actually took place, it's apparent that by mid-1983 Soviet leaders had sufficient evidence to conclude that US policy had fundamentally changed course, and was now moving in a direction highly unfavorable to Soviet national interests.

7. From Moscow's perspective, the immediate danger would be the taking hold of a perception among leaders and voters throughout the West, but particularly in the US, that this new course was not only right but also successful. Surely Western politicians -- especially those up for re-election -- would chortle: "You see, we were exactly right to stand up to the Russians. We are defending our own interests more effectively now, and it's working." The inevitable result of this approach would be precisely what Soviet leaders dreaded most: widespread public support for the new US course and, therefore, a continuation or even an acceleration of it.

8. If Moscow's chief objective were to knock the US off its course, Moscow's most likely strategy would be to discredit this course through the following tactics:

- Raise the level of violence, thus making the world a more dangerous place. (Keep in mind that US tolerance of violence has declined markedly during the last 10 years.)
- Attribute the increased violence and danger to the inevitable result of reckless US policies. (It could be safely assumed that members of the US media and other elites would swiftly pick up and amplify this theme.)
- Hope that voters will force a change of course, either by replacing the incumbent leaders or forcing them to adopt more "moderate" policies.

9. To implement this strategy, the Soviets would not need to commit each and every act of violence themselves. They would commit some, arrange for others to be committed by surrogates or allies, and generally create an atmosphere in which violence flourishes. This last element would be especially fruitful, for there are always those who stand ready to murder for one cause or another when the timing seems right.

10. Whether or not this Soviet strategy succeeds in the short term, I believe the current outbreak of violence is a harbinger of things to come. Let me begin with an assertion that seems startling, but that is accepted by

at least two dozen Soviet specialists and generally well informed individuals I know, whose political views and affiliations range across the spectrum: If the Soviet Union does not achieve its ambition to displace the US as the world's pre-eminent power within -- very roughly -- the next 20 years, the Soviet Union will never succeed. Among the analytic points supporting this assertion:

- The Soviet Union has failed utterly to become a country. After sixty-six years of communist rule, the Soviet Union remains a nineteenth-century-style empire, comprised of more than 100 nationality groups and dominated by the Russians. There is not one major nationality group that is content with the present, Russian-controlled arrangement; not one that does not yearn for its political and economic freedom. It's hard to imagine how the world's last empire can survive into the twenty-first century except under highly favorable conditions of economics and demographics -- conditions that do not, and will not, exist.
- The Soviet economy is heading toward calamity. With an average annual growth rate of less than 2 percent, and with defense spending going up at an average annual rate of 4 percent, something fairly drastic has got to give, and fairly soon. It's a matter of simple arithmetic. Moreover, sharply rising energy costs will make even current growth rates difficult to sustain. It is inevitable that if present economic trends continue, living standards will decline, perhaps to post-World War II levels. We have all been warned by the experts never to under-estimate the Russians' capacity for belt-tightening; I myself have published articles on this very subject. But there is a limit, and that limit is coming closer every year.
- The Soviet Union is a demographic nightmare. Today only about half the country's population can speak Russian; for an industrialized, technologically-advanced society, this is intolerable. Moreover, so low has been the Russian birthrate that in coming years the able-bodied working-age population of the Russian Republic -- which contains roughly two-thirds of the Soviet Union's total industrial production capacity -- will actually decline. This is not merely a drop in the growth rate; it is a drop in the total number of warm bodies showing up each morning, drunk or sober, for work. Moreover, high birthrates in the Moslem republics have begun to soak up vast amounts of investment for schools, hospitals, roads, and so forth. Thus, fewer and fewer Russians must work harder and harder to support more and more non-Russians. This sort of thing cannot go on indefinitely.

-- The East European satellites are becoming more and more difficult to control. Already economic growth rates in the key satellites are marginal, non-existent, or negative. These rates will decline further as the Soviet Union moves to insulate itself from the rising costs of empire by squeezing its satellites harder, for example by raising the prices of its raw materials and paying its satellites less for the finished goods the Soviet Union then buys. Economic trouble leads inevitably to political unrest, so the question is not whether Moscow's difficulties will mount but rather how bad things will get. We are all familiar with the situation in Poland. But other satellites may be closer to their own political boiling points than we realize. Romania has just announced massive cutbacks in electric power, including the shutting down of all schools for the month of January along with pressures on consumers to stop using vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and refrigerators. And in East Germany -- widely regarded as among the most stable and secure satellites -- the Communist Party daily Neues Deutschland, in an astounding ideological departure, published in its October 22 edition two letters from clergymen who expressed their fears about new Soviet missiles. In all, it seems likely that the Soviets will need to use raw military power somewhere in Eastern Europe before too long; they may need to use such power in several satellites at once.

11. The Soviet leadership simply cannot make the changes necessary to either reverse these trends or cope with them. Kremlin leaders could boost their country's economic growth rate only by slashing the defense budget or by enacting massive economic reforms. Either remedy would threaten the Communist Party's grip on power, thus neither remedy has the slightest chance of being administered. The demographic nightmare is equally difficult to end. Moscow cannot transfer industrial-production capacity from the Russian to the non-Russian, and especially non-Slav, republics. Doing so would give these republics more power over Moscow than Moscow is willing to risk. And Moscow cannot import workers to Russian factories from Moslem republics because these workers (a) don't speak Russian, (b) don't want to come, and (c) would be bitterly resented by Russian workers, who would be required to share scarce housing and food with individuals they view as racially inferior.

12. Two Kremlin actions provide a good measure of Moscow's domestic impotence. To boost the birth rate among Russian women -- who average six abortions, according to recent, highly credible research -- the Soviet Union has decided to offer Glory of Motherhood awards to women who bear large families. And to reform the world's second largest economy, Kremlin leaders just last month ordered the execution, for corruption, of the poor devil who managed Gastronome No. 1, Moscow's gourmet delicatessen. These feeble and pathetic actions are not those of a dynamic or even a healthy leadership responding to national emergency. They bring to mind neither Roosevelt in 1933 nor Reagan in 1981, but rather Nicholas II in 1910.

13. In sum, time is not on the Soviet Union's side. This assertion is now widely accepted among Western observers, as I've noted. But its staggering implications have scarcely been absorbed. To do so we need to make yet another leap of imagination, this one to consider the phenomenon of thwarted ambition:

14. We have all known individuals who have come to recognize that time is no longer their ally: the 45-year-old corporation vice president who realizes that he may never make chairman; the 35-year old childless woman who lies awake at night, listening to the relentless ticking of her biological clock; the campaigning politician who has confidently brushed aside polls that show him trailing his opponent by 20 points, and who now realizes that with just two weeks left before election day, that lead may be too big to close. The perception that time is no longer on one's side may take weeks or even years to develop, and often it is obvious to others first. But by definition the perception comes suddenly.

15. There are, in fact, just two ways to cope with the perception that time has become an enemy. The first is to accept the unpleasant reality, and to resign one's self to reduced expectations: life as a mid-level corporate manager isn't so bad, there are advantages to not having children, it'll be nice to leave public life for a while. This is quite often an honorable and perfectly sensible approach.

16. The second response is to go for it. That is, to refuse to meekly accept one's likely fate, and instead to work or even fight for whatever it is one wants. This, too, is quite often an honorable and perfectly sensible approach. But it is a phenomenon of human nature that from the moment one concludes that time is an enemy and that the proper response is to go for it -- all is changed. Ideas and actions that were unthinkable the day before are now quite thinkable and even appealing. Why? Because the alternative is failure, and this is judged to be unacceptable. Ambitious, seemingly defeated mid-level business executives who have taken desperate and daring measures populate our corporate boardrooms. They populate our prisons, too. The 35-year-old single woman who conceives a child before finding a husband has gone from a scandal to a national trend. And the history of desperate politicians in the final days of their campaigns is the stuff of Washington legends.

17. Now let us consider the implication of our assertion that if the Soviet Union doesn't take the West in the next 20 years or so, it never will: it means that if present trends continue, we're going to win the Cold War. That is, the US will continue to be the world's pre-eminent power and the Free World will both survive and flourish.

18. What matters here is not whether US observers believe this, but rather whether our perception is shared by Soviet officials. No doubt there are some in Moscow who view the future with confidence. And probably there are some who see trouble ahead, but who take an apres-moi-le-deluge attitude. But it seems to me inevitable that some Soviet officials --

possibly at the very top, more likely at the third or fourth level echelons -- now view their empire's future as bleak. And of those officials it seems equally inevitable that while some will opt to accept the inevitable, so to speak, others will be less fatalistic. Their argument would run like this: Ours is an unstable political system, held together solely by terror and military force. Peaceful political change is utterly alien to Russia. The alternative to moving forward is not standing still, but falling backward. Thus when we lose our forward momentum and begin to suffer reversals, our empire will crumble swiftly and violently. We who are the elite -- like every totalitarian elite that has come before -- will be swept away. And unlike the elite that we swept away in 1917 -- so many of whose members wound up driving taxis in Paris -- we will wind up swinging from lamp-posts in every city from Leningrad to Vladivostok.

19. They could decide to go for it: to launch one or a series of actions designed to change the correlation of forces before it is too late to do so. In this category I would include a grab for the Persian Gulf, and possibly even a conventional or nuclear bolt-from-the-blue first strike on Western Europe or perhaps on the US. I do not predict these actions. I merely predict -- and this is worrisome enough -- that to some Soviet officials such actions may no longer be too risky to contemplate.

20. It has long been fashionable to view the Cold War as a permanent feature of global politics, one that will endure through the next several generations at least. But it seems to me more likely that President Reagan was absolutely correct when he observed in his Notre Dame speech that the Soviet Union -- "one of history's saddest and most bizarre chapters" -- is entering its final pages. (We really should take up the President's suggestion to begin planning for a post-Soviet world; the Soviet Union and its people won't disappear from the planet, and we have not yet thought seriously about the sort of political and economic structure likely to emerge.) In short, the Free World has out-distanced the Soviet Union economically, crushed it ideologically, and held it off politically. The only serious arena of competition left is military. From now on the Cold War will become more and more of a bare-knuckles street fight.

20. We should be optimistic, for if present trends continue we will win. But we must also be on guard, for it is all too likely that incumbent or future Soviet leaders will not choose to await their fates quietly while their empire completes its shattering descent into history. The current outbreak of violence may thus be merely a prelude to the most dangerous years we have ever known.

Herbert E. Meyer
Herbert E. Meyer

NIC# 8640-83
30 November 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT : Why Is the World So Dangerous?

VC/NIC/HEMeyer:lht (30 Nov 83)



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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT : Why Is the World So Dangerous?

The dangers we face are not confined to military forces.

1. The level of global violence has risen ~~as~~ sharply and ~~as~~ suddenly as ~~a child's temperature~~. In just the last several months we have seen the shoot-down of KAL Flight 007, the assassination of Benigno Aquino, the murderous decapitation of South Korea's leadership in Rangoon, the terrorist bombings of US, French, and Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, the Libyan invasion of Chad, and the anti-Bishop coup in Grenada that ultimately triggered our own successful action on that island. What makes these acts of violence so especially disturbing is their common denominator: each has hurt the citizens, governments, or interests of the Free World.]

2. [Clearly, the world has become a much more dangerous place. We need to know why. Are these acts of violence somehow linked, or traceable to the same malevolent source? Or should we dismiss the present trend as a series of frightening, tragic, but unconnected events whose one-after-another timing is mere coincidence?]

merely part of

3. I believe the current outbreak of violence is more than coincidence. More precisely, I believe it signals the beginning of a new stage in the global struggle between the Free World and the Soviet Union. My contention rests on a perception that present US policies have fundamentally changed the course of history in a direction favorable to the interests and security of ourselves and our allies. What we are seeing now is a Soviet-led effort to fight back, in the same sense that the Mafia fights back when law enforcement agencies launch an effective crime-busting program. Let me concede right now that I cannot prove this -- if your definition of proof is restricted to intercepts, photographs, and purloined documents. Of course these things matter. They matter hugely. But to truly understand an alien phenomenon like the Soviet Union, one needs to go beyond a listing of facts; one needs also to make a leap of imagination:

4. ^{Suppose} If four years ago the Soviet leadership had asked ~~my counterpart~~ -- ^{my counterpart, Gromyko} call him Vice Chairman of the Soviet National Intelligence Council -- for his evaluation of the global struggle, ~~I believe my counterpart would have~~

Andropov, then chief of the KGB

He might

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replied: "Comrades, I'm delighted to report that the correlation of forces is moving steadily in our direction." He would have cited the following trends to support his upbeat analysis:

- The US economy was faltering.
- US defense spending was too low to truly assure the nation's security.
- The Soviet Union had established a mechanism for the steady flow of wealth from West to East.
- The Soviet Union had established a companion mechanism to assure the steady flow of technology from West to East.
- The Soviet Union, through the effective use of surrogates such as Cuba and Vietnam, had developed a technique for spreading its influence throughout the Third World by targeting fragile countries, destabilizing them, and swiftly taking over.
- Through the massive deployment of SS-20s, the Soviets were changing the balance of power in Europe.
- In more and more countries, policymakers, elites, and the masses were coming to accept the Soviets' long-standing claim that time was on their side; that one needed only to align with Moscow to be on the winning team.

Chairman Andropov today

5. Were the ^{chief of the KGB} Vice Chairman of the Soviet National Intelligence Council called in by the Kremlin's leaders, say in mid 1983, and asked for his evaluation, I believe he would have sung a very different song. "Comrades," he would have said, "something has gone wrong. The US is refusing to accept history!" Assuming our Vice Chairman were allowed to continue -- and this is a bloody big assumption -- he would have cited the following trends to support his downbeat analysis:

He could cite in support of KGB's thesis that

- The US economy is recovering, with the only argument focusing on the breadth and duration of the boom. (The vice chairman, who enjoyed the privilege of access to US business publications, could not understand their failure to discuss the awesome national-security implications of a 15-month, 64 percent rise in the Dow-Jones Industrial Average, combined with a lowering of the annual inflation rate to less than 4 percent.)

Now getting sharply

He might say say something like this:

- US defense spending is up, with the debate in Congress and on the campaign hustings focusing only on the proper size of the increase. (The vice chairman had in his briefing book -- but chose not to read aloud -- a letter Dwight

Eisenhower wrote to General Lucius Clay in 1952: "One of the great and immediate uses of the military forces we are developing is to convey a feeling of confidence to exposed populations, a confidence which will make them sturdier, politically, in their opposition to Communist inroads."

- The flow of wealth from the West to the East is less than the Soviets had anticipated it would be by now. (The vice chairman took a deep breath and pointed out that Moscow's most audacious project, the Siberia to Western Europe pipeline, had been literally cut in half by US opposition; after all, the pipeline was originally to have comprised two strands, and lately no one either in Western Europe or the Soviet Union had even mentioned that second strand.)
- The flow of technology from West to East is less than the Soviets had anticipated it would be by now. In part, by reducing the flow of wealth the US also reduced the Soviet Union's ability to buy equipment and know-how. And the US-led crack-down on illegal technology transfers had put a crimp in that key effort. (The Vice Chairman thought sadly -- but did not take the liberty of complaining -- that the expulsions of roughly 100 KGB agents from Western countries, mostly on technology transfer-related charges, had wiped out the KGB's welcome home-party fund.)
- The Soviet mechanism for ^{gaining} spreading power ^{over} through the Third World, while still a considerable threat to Western security, has run into unexpected resistance. Soviet textbooks insist that anti-Soviet Third World insurgencies cannot develop. Yet in 1983 there are five of them -- in Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. Thus Moscow can no longer target a Third-World country and assume that no serious resistance will develop. Most worrisome of all is the shocking setback in Grenada. (The vice chairman bit his tongue to keep from pointing out that the Soviet Union believed deeply in the domino theory -- and that one of its own had just toppled over.)
- With deployment now certain of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, NATO is about to change the balance of power in Europe back to its favor. (The vice chairman had read in Pravda that a P-II's flight time to Moscow was 12 minutes -- which, he thought to himself, is roughly how long it takes some of the Kremlin's leaders to get out of their chairs, let alone to their shelters.)
- And most dangerous of all, by describing the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil" US President Reagan has singlehandedly deployed the one weapon for which the

Soviets lack even a rudimentary defense: the truth. (The vice chairman made a mental note to ask a friend at the USA and Canada Institute how it happened that the Republican Reagan had made good against the Soviets a threat made against the Republicans by the Democrat Adlai Stevenson in 1952: "If you don't stop telling lies about us, we'll start telling the truth about you.")

6. Whether or not such briefings actually took place, it's apparent that by mid-1983 Soviet leaders had sufficient evidence to conclude that US policy had fundamentally changed course, and was now moving in a direction highly unfavorable to Soviet national interests.

7. From Moscow's perspective, the immediate danger would be the taking hold of a perception among leaders and voters throughout the West, but particularly in the US, that this new course was not only right but also successful. Surely Western politicians -- especially those up for re-election -- would chortle: "You see, we were exactly right to stand up to the Russians. We are defending our own interests more effectively now, and it's working." The inevitable result of this approach would be precisely what Soviet leaders dreaded most: widespread public support for the new US course and, therefore, a continuation or even an acceleration of it.

8. If Moscow's chief objective were to knock the US off its course, Moscow's most likely strategy would be to discredit this course through the following tactics:

- Raise the level of violence, thus making the world a more dangerous place. (Keep in mind that US tolerance of violence has declined markedly during the last 10 years.)
- Attribute the increased violence and danger to the inevitable result of reckless US policies. (It could be safely assumed that members of the US media and other elites would swiftly pick up and amplify this theme.)
- Hope that voters will force a change of course, either by replacing the incumbent leaders or forcing them to adopt more "moderate" policies.

9. To implement this strategy, the Soviets would not need to commit each and every act of violence themselves. They would commit some, arrange for others to be committed by surrogates or allies, and generally create an atmosphere in which violence flourishes. (This last element would be especially fruitful, for there are always those who stand ready to murder for one cause or another when the timing seems right.)

10. Whether or not this Soviet strategy succeeds in the short term, I believe the current outbreak of violence is a harbinger of things to come. Let me begin with an assertion that seems startling, but that is accepted by

It is some Soviet experts believe, + some of them may be in Moscow, that if

at least two dozen Soviet specialists and generally well informed individuals I know, whose political views and affiliations range across the spectrum: If the Soviet Union does not achieve its ambition to displace the US as the world's pre-eminent power within -- very roughly -- the next 20 years, the Soviet Union will never succeed. Among the analytic points supporting this assertion:

- The Soviet Union has failed utterly to become a country. *Of non Russian*
~~After sixty six years of communist rule, the Soviet Union remains a nineteenth-century-style empire, comprised of more than 100 nationality groups and dominated by the Russians. There is not one major nationality group that is content with the present, Russian-controlled arrangement; not one that does not yearn for its political and economic freedom. It's hard to imagine how the world's last empire can survive into the twenty-first century except under highly favorable conditions of economics and demographics -- conditions that do not, and will not, exist.~~
- ~~The Soviet economy is heading toward calamity. With an average annual growth rate of less than 2 percent, and with defense spending going up at an average annual rate of 4 percent, something fairly drastic has got to give, and fairly soon. It's a matter of simple arithmetic. Moreover, sharply rising energy costs will make even current growth rates difficult to sustain. It is inevitable that if present economic trends continue, living standards will decline, perhaps to post-World War II levels. We have all been warned by the experts never to under-estimate the Russians' capacity for belt-tightening; I myself have published articles on this very subject. But there is a limit, and that limit is coming closer every year.~~ *We should*
- The Soviet Union is a demographic nightmare. Today only about half the country's population can speak Russian; for an industrialized, technologically-advanced society, this is intolerable. ~~Moreover, so low has been the Russian birthrate that in coming years the able-bodied working-age population of the Russian Republic -- which contains roughly two-thirds of the Soviet Union's total industrial production capacity -- will actually decline. This is not merely a drop in the growth rate; it is a drop in the total number of warm bodies showing up each morning, drunk or sober, for work. Moreover, high birthrates in the Moslem republics have begun to soak up vast amounts of investment for schools, hospitals, roads, and so forth. Thus, fewer and fewer Russians must work harder and harder to support more and more non-Russians. This sort of thing cannot go on indefinitely.~~

-- The East European satellites are becoming more and more difficult to control. Already economic growth rates in the key satellites are marginal, non-existent, or negative. These rates will decline further as the Soviet Union moves to insulate itself from the rising costs of empire by squeezing its satellites harder, for example by raising the prices of its raw materials and paying its satellites less for the finished goods the Soviet Union then buys.

stat, ~~Economic trouble leads inevitably to political unrest, so the question is not whether Moscow's difficulties will mount but rather how bad things will get. We are all familiar with the situation in Poland. But other satellites may be closer to their own political boiling points than we realize. Romania has just announced massive cutbacks in electric power, including the shutting down of all schools for the month of January along with pressures on consumers to stop using vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and refrigerators. And in East Germany -- widely regarded as among the most stable and secure satellites -- the Communist Party daily Neues Deutschland, in an astounding ideological departure, published in its October 22 edition two letters from clergymen who expressed their fears about new Soviet missiles. In all, it seems likely that the Soviets will need to use raw military power somewhere in Eastern Europe before too long; they may need to use such power in several satellites at once.~~

11. The Soviet leadership simply cannot make the changes necessary to either reverse these trends or cope with them. Kremlin leaders could boost their country's economic growth rate only by slashing the defense budget or by enacting massive economic reforms. Either remedy would threaten the Communist Party's grip on power, thus neither remedy has the slightest chance of being administered. The demographic nightmare is equally difficult to end. Moscow cannot transfer industrial-production capacity from the Russian to the non-Russian, and especially non-Slav, republics. Doing so would give these republics more power over Moscow than Moscow is willing to risk. And Moscow cannot import workers to Russian factories from Moslem republics because these workers (a) don't speak Russian, (b) don't want to come, and (c) would be bitterly resented by Russian workers, who would be required to share scarce housing and food with individuals they view as racially inferior.

12. ~~Two Kremlin actions provide a good measure of Moscow's domestic impotence. To boost the birth rate among Russian women -- who average six abortions, according to recent, highly credible research -- the Soviet Union has decided to offer Glory of Motherhood awards to women who bear large families. And to reform the world's second largest economy, Kremlin leaders just last month ordered the execution, for corruption, of the poor devil who managed Gastronome No. 1, Moscow's gourmet delicatessen. These feeble and pathetic actions are not those of a dynamic or even a healthy leadership responding to national emergency. They bring to mind neither Roosevelt in 1933 nor Reagan in 1981, but rather Nicholas II in 1910.~~

13. In sum, time is not on the Soviet Union's side. This assertion is now widely accepted among Western observers, as I've noted. But its staggering implications have scarcely been absorbed. To do so we need to make yet another leap of imagination, this one to consider the phenomenon of thwarted ambition:

14. We have all known individuals who have come to recognize that time is no longer their ally: the 45-year-old corporation vice president who realizes that he may never make chairman; the 35-year old childless woman who lies awake at night, listening to the relentless ticking of her biological clock; the campaigning politician who has confidently brushed aside polls that show him trailing his opponent by 20 points, and who now realizes that with just two weeks left before election day, that lead may be too big to close. The perception that time is no longer on one's side may take weeks or even years to develop, and often it is obvious to others first. But by definition the perception comes suddenly.

15. There are, in fact, just two ways to cope with the perception that time has become an enemy. The first is to accept the unpleasant reality, and to resign one's self to reduced expectations: life as a mid-level corporate manager isn't so bad, there are advantages to not having children, it'll be nice to leave public life for a while. This is quite often an honorable and perfectly sensible approach.

16. The second response is to go for it. That is, to refuse to meekly accept one's likely fate, and instead to work or even fight for whatever it is one wants. This, too, is quite often an honorable and perfectly sensible approach. But it is a phenomenon of human nature that from the moment one concludes that time is an enemy and that the proper response is to go for it -- all is changed. Ideas and actions that were unthinkable the day before are now quite thinkable and even appealing. Why? Because the alternative is failure, and this is judged to be unacceptable. Ambitious, seemingly defeated mid-level business executives who have taken desperate and daring measures populate our corporate boardrooms. They populate our prisons, too. The 35-year-old single woman who conceives a child before finding a husband has gone from a scandal to a national trend. And the history of desperate politicians in the final days of their campaigns is the stuff of Washington legends.

All this ~~17. Now let us consider the implication of our assertion that if the Soviet Union doesn't take the West in the next 20 years or so, it never will; it means that if present trends continue, we're going to win the Cold War. That is, the US will continue to be the world's pre-eminent power and the Free World will both survive and flourish.~~

~~18. What matters here is not whether US observers believe this, but rather whether our perception is shared by Soviet officials. No doubt there are some in Moscow who view the future with confidence. And probably there are some who see trouble ahead, but who take an apres-moi-le-deluge attitude. But it seems to me inevitable that some Soviet officials --~~

possibly at the very top, more likely at the third or fourth level echelons -- now view their empire's future as bleak. And of those officials it seems equally inevitable that while some will opt to accept the inevitable, so to speak, others will be less fatalistic. Their argument would run like this: Ours is an unstable political system, held together solely by terror and military force. Peaceful political change is utterly alien to Russia. The alternative to moving forward is not standing still, but falling backward. Thus when we lose our forward momentum and begin to suffer reversals, our empire will crumble swiftly and violently. We who are the elite -- like every totalitarian elite that has come before -- will be swept away. And unlike the elite that we swept away in 1917 -- so many of whose members wound up driving taxis in Paris -- we will wind up swinging from lamp-posts in every city from Leningrad to Vladivostok.

19. They could decide to go for it: to launch one or a series of actions designed to change the correlation of forces before it is too late to do so. In this category I would include a grab for the Persian Gulf, and possibly even a conventional or nuclear bolt-from-the-blue first strike on Western Europe or perhaps on the US. I do not predict these actions. I merely predict -- and this is worrisome enough -- that to some Soviet officials such actions may no longer be too risky to contemplate.

20. It has long been fashionable to view the Cold War as a permanent feature of global politics, one that will endure through the next several generations at least. But it seems to me more likely that President Reagan was absolutely correct when he observed in his Notre Dame speech that the Soviet Union -- "one of history's saddest and most bizarre chapters" -- is entering its final pages. (We really should take up the President's suggestion to begin planning for a post-Soviet world; the Soviet Union and its people won't disappear from the planet, and we have not yet thought seriously about the sort of political and economic structure likely to emerge.) In short, the Free World has out-distanced the Soviet Union economically, crushed it ideologically, and held it off politically. The only serious arena of competition left is military. From now on the Cold War will become more and more of a bare-knuckles street fight.

20. We should be optimistic, for if present trends continue we will win. But we must also be on guard, for it is all too likely that incumbent or future Soviet leaders will not choose to await their fates quietly while their empire completes its shattering descent into history. The current outbreak of violence may thus be merely a prelude to the most dangerous years we have ever known.

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Herbert E. Meyer

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