

RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES: THE PAST SHAPES THE
PRESENT

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Memorandum for the Record

Subject: "Russia: The Past Shapes the Present"

1. The following is provided to assist in the clearance and evaluation of a presentation I have been invited to deliver to the United States Industrial Coalition (USIC) on November 18, 1994 in Washington, DC. USIC is a chartered corporation (Delaware), and an important component of the Department of Energy's Industrial Partnering Program (IPP). IPP was established to (1) stabilize the technology base in the former Soviet Union; (2) support non-proliferation objectives by providing employment to former weapons scientists and engineers; (3) and identify technologies resident within Russian institutes which have commercial application in both Russia and the United States. Each of the DOE national laboratories has a direct role in the IPP process. PNL, for example, has six technology projects approved for funding. The November 18, 1994, conference will consist of over 200 government and industry executives who will meet to discuss cost-sharing procedures, ongoing initiatives, progress in identifying projects, etc. I have been invited to "set the stage" for the conference by offering a perspective on events in Russia.


2. **Background:** In 1976, the Department of the Air Force--concerned that its men and women understood virtually nothing about the Soviet Union--established a three-tiered training program to fill the void. One component focused on how the Soviets would wage air combat. The second reviewed and published open-source Soviet military writings. The third examined (via the "spoken word") Soviet/Russian politics, economics, culture, society, power projection, history, etc. It was designed not to magnify the threat, but rather offer an unbiased view of Soviet perceptions. The latter was an instant success, and over the years established a client base of over 200 government, industry, foreign, and academic organizations. Over 50,000 people were briefed annually. I directed the program from August 1987 to September 1990.

3. **Format:** The format was simple: Fast-paced speakers, no notes, no script, no pointer, no podium. For impact, the "lead-off" presentation was delivered in a role-playing format.

4. **Termination of Program:** Following a bitter and prolonged struggle to continue the program, the Air Force terminated it in 1990 because of budgetary pressures--despite the intervention of influential members of Congress, the director of the FBI, and the Presidents of numerous associations and organizations. The termination consisted of the virtual wholesale destruction or disposal of literally tens of thousands of slides, briefing notes, captured Soviet weapons used for display purposes, etc.

5. **Post-Termination Actions:** As a serious student of Soviet and Russian affairs, I retained a deep personal interest in the program. Purely as a personal hobby, I began in 1991 to restructure/rebuild a 55-minute presentation which combined some of the highlights of the program's 25 some-odd presentations. I changed the focus to perceptions of how capitalism and democracy have impacted Russia, particularly the military. Data was also incorporated reflecting political, economic, and social reform. I have delivered the presentation to selected audiences in the Washington area over the past three years, most notably the National Youth Leadership Forum's National Security and Defense seminars for high school students.

6. There is no "script" as such, since the use of a script would promote the appearance of memorization. I have talking points firmly committed to memory, each of which triggers the next point. It is a dynamic and "living" presentation subject to constant change. Some of the phraseology I use is the same as I used when I directed the Air Force program. My **delivery approach** is to be introduced as a visitor who "wears the rank of a Russian Colonel"; I then speak to the audience for about 40 minutes before coming out of character to explain the role playing and the "message."



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"Russia: The Past Shapes the Present"

Talking Points of Presentation by

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- Introduction (will vary by audience) (this version structured for PNL audience)
 - Changed nature of U.S./Russian relations—from confrontation to cooperation
 - Symbolized by visit of Russian officer to U.S. "weapons of mass destruction" complex
- Change
 - U.S. labs/Russian institutes are both seeking new missions—dual-use technologies
 - Driven by reduced threat, reduced budget, global economy, downsized military
 - Adversarial relationship just 3 years ago—"armed to the teeth" to destroy one another
 - *Today*, economic trading partners, joint exercises, joint peacekeeping missions
 - Review of profound changes over past 3 years
 - Communism—a false ideology, "the big lie"—only 3 nations still practice it
 - Berlin Wall destroyed—most visible symbol of division of East and West
 - Former Soviet military—now non-existent; split into 15 separate forces
 - USSR carved into 15 nations—separate military/political/economic systems
 - The Republics, or "near abroad" (or "New Independent States")
 - Sensitive issue of Russians who "remain behind" in the republics—"oppressed"
 - Russia condemned for "occupation"—but did not Soviets liberate from Nazis?
 - *Baltic* nations particularly harsh in criticism—"how quickly they forget!"
 - Capitalism and democracy euphorically embraced by Russia
 - Highly visible symbols ("Golden Arches, etc."), yet severe problems
 - "Get rich" scams like MMM fund which robbed millions of life savings
 - Capitalism today in Russia
 - Hyper-inflation
 - Growing deficit, with no discipline or structure to bring it down
 - "Depression-type" unemployment
 - Crime, homeless, drug abuse, suicides, "mafia"—unprecedented social problems
 - Factories idle, no demand for Russian goods, people fearful for jobs, homes, etc.
 - Those who promise to "lift Russia up off its knees" have broad appeal to populace
 - Impact of capitalism and democracy on military
 - Army—demoralized, largely a garrison force, quelling ethnic unrest, searching for role
 - Navy—former blue water force now largely maritime patrol; shortage of funds
 - Air Force—smaller, some weapons literally "stolen" by republics (Ukraine, especially)
 - Strategic Rocket Forces—only potent force (16,000 warheads and launchers to deliver)
- The Party and the "Big Lie"
 - Party lied to Soviet people for over 70 years—Gorbachev "confessed" the "lie" in 1988
 - Rewriting correct version of history a priority goal since Gorbachev era—recently completed
 - Must understand what the "message" was to appreciate complexity of rewriting history books
 - Why?—because it's still with the people, the government, institutions,
 - There is no "memory erase" button—it still shapes many of Russians' perceptions

- The “Zampolit” (or *Colonel Roganov*, the character assumed by Mr Houck)
 - A political indoctrination officer assigned under Soviet system to all levels of Soviet military
 - Ensured “political reliability” of officers, troops--surveillance, Party-mandated lectures
 - Assume role of “zampolit” to explain Party’s version of history, U.S., other issues
- Military roles and missions
 - Russia--international mission of peace and friendship; no bases encircling the globe
 - U.S.--international mission of exploitation, provocation, colonialism, encirclement with bases
- Ideology
 - Two profoundly different ideologies
 - Communism--distribution of wealth, workers and farmers own “means of production”
 - Capitalism--“monopoly capitalists control means of production
- “Evils of Capitalism”
 - Inflation
 - Unemployment
 - Recessions, depression
 - Homelessness, crime, drug abuse, and other social ills
 - Monopoly capitalists perpetuate the class struggle
- Communism
 - Soviet constitution “guaranteed” job, medical care, schooling, housing to all people
 - Means of production--the factories and the farms owned, controlled by the people
- The Revolution
 - Examination of root causes
 - The “First Imperialist War” (World War I)
 - Consolidation, followed by Civil War--the Whites and Reds
 - Attempt by West to strangle the “Bolshevik baby”
- Civil War
 - U.S. did not remain neutral during young Bolshevik state’s most critical hour
 - “Invasion” by Western (14 nations) forces
 - “Disguised” as attempt to protect vital war supplies
- Era Between the Two Great Wars
 - Continued effort to isolate the Soviet Union--U.S. diplomatic recognition not until 1933
 - Refusal to enter into treaty of friendship and cooperation to contain growing menace of Hitler
 - USSR had no choice but to enter pact of non-aggression with Germany--gave time to prepare

- The Great Patriotic War (World War II)
 - Up to 48 million Soviets killed—compare to U.S. losses of 435,000 at most
 - War was determined on what West called “Eastern Front”—Stalingrad, Moscow, Rostov, etc.
 - Outcome of war was determined *even before* landings at Normandy—why no landings in 1942?
 - Recent celebration of Normandy landings, but *no* Russians were invited to participate
- The “Horrors of War”
 - Western leaders emphasized need to avoid war, because of “horrors of war”
 - Western leaders, people, not qualified to discuss because they haven’t genuinely experienced
 - *No* nation ever lost 48 million war dead—none has experienced atrocities as did Soviets
 - Need for “secure borders” and eastern buffer zone must be viewed in this context
 - Massive cemeteries, museums, war memorials to honor war dead—still part of Russian psyche
- Efforts to Reduce Threat of War
 - Arms control treaties—significant progress thanks largely to Soviet initiatives
 - Yet, US continues with Stealth, theater high-altitude defense, other high-tech systems
 - Against whom? What is the threat which requires such weapons?
- Cold War Is Over
 - U.S. is only superpower
 - *Even though* Russia retains over 16,000 nukes and largest standing army in Eurasia
 - Is U.S. to assume role of “world policeman?”
 - Are there *lessons* for Russia from U.S. actions in Haiti, dispatch of troops to Gulf?
- The Fundamental Question—Why Should U.S. *Care* What Happens in Russia?
 - Too big and too important to ignore—how can a nation with 11 time zones be ignored?
 - Despite arms control, still the only nation with nuclear arsenal large enough to destroy U.S.
 - Prospect of civil war, including a “nuclear civil war,” if reform fails, ethnic unrest grows
 - Potential for unemployed Russian weapons scientists going to Baghdad, Tripoli, Pyongyang
 - West spent trillions over 50 years to prepare for war—only \$17.6 billion to help transition
 - Vast market and natural resources—at or near top in oil, coal, natural gas, gold, etc.
 - Outcome in Russia critical to other 14 members of the former Soviet Union
 - If reform fails and ultra-nationalists “prevail”, West will have no choice but to re-arm
 - Critical environmental issues in Russia—only U.S. expertise can solve
 - U.S. is only superpower left—Churchill said price of greatness is responsibility”
 - Resources
 - Largest producer of natural gas
 - Second largest producer of oil
 - Third largest producer of coal
 - Fourth largest producer of nuclear power
 - Strong science and technology base—potential for increased U.S./Russian cooperation

- The Internal Threat—Why “Euphoria” Has Turned to Cynicism
 - Only one in four Russians believe that rush toward market-based economy should continue
 - Perception that only criminal elements and remnants of party bureaucracy are succeeding
 - Inflation has made it impossible to purchase anything—the people are restless, apprehensive
 - Right-, and left-wing ultra-nationalists playing upon peoples’ fears
 - Privatization rate not 70 percent, but more like 30 percent at most
 - Perception among people that capitalism will not work out in long term—no visible progress
 - Will capitalism make empty promises like the Party? Another cruel joke on Russian people?
 - Bottom line—Communism may be dead in Russia, but capitalism may not be final successor

- What U.S. Can Do To Help
 - Increased assistance (or partnerships)—Russian people do not need or want a “handout”
 - Industrial Partnering Program of DOE’s national laboratories valuable, credible initiative
 - Institutional reform necessary
 - Structural reform (government, economy, institutions) necessary
 - Infrastructure reform necessary (crumbling in many instances)
 - Environmental, safety regulations, air traffic control safeguards virtually non-existent
 - First and foremost—treat with dignity and respect, not as a pauper

- The Russian People
 - 400 years as slaves under the Mongols; 70-years as slaves under the Communists
 - Obsession with authority, violence, cruelty, sudden change in behavior, policy
 - “Showboat” mentality, or the “Potemkin Village” syndrome
 - Contradiction between total inactivity and excess of activity
 - Stifling emptiness and boredom of life on the endless, treeless, windswept plains
 - Westerners have tried to decipher Russian character for hundreds of years
 - Love-hate relationship with the West
 - Tradition of authoritarian rule—most brutal have been non-Russians by blood lineage
 - Constant invasions from the West—is there not a valid need for secure borders?
 - Expansionism—concern over Russian expansionism did not begin with Communist Party
 - How 400 years of domination by the Mongols shaped psyche, fears, suspicions
 - Institutions (especially the Church) came from the East, not the West
 - Did not participate in Renaissance, Reformation, etc.
 - No tradition of rule by law
 - No tradition of a middle class or any class politically influential with authoritarian rulers

- Wrap Up
 - Capitalism will not flourish in Russia overnight—only prior experience was total failure
 - There is no quick fix or quick solution
 - Former Party members “running the show”—they want success because life is better for *them*
 - U.S. businesses in Russia must understand the background and customs of Russians
 - Inherently suspicious of the West, still! Largely from feeling of inferiority
 - Bribery, extortion, under-the-table money to middlemen is common
 - Large segment of the population yearn for the discipline, order that existed under Communists
 - Events continue to surprise the “experts”—many predicted Russia would be in civil war by now
 - U.S. has tremendous stake in ultimate outcome of events in Russia
 - Renewed “arms race” could cripple both U.S. and Russian economies