

The Beginning of the End ...



Having grown up during the Cold War, I am glad to see that the nuclear arsenals that the two superpowers are nearly dismantled. In 1981, I had the chance to stand an arm's length away from a SLBM with three MRV warheads each having a 70 kt boosted yield. It was a sobering experience and made me wonder how humanity got to a point that in a space of a single afternoon we could extinguish civilization.

It has been nearly two decades since the Christmas gift of 1991, the end of the Soviet Union, that many brave souls had worked so courageously to achieve. This momentous event, was some 45 years after Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech and Lester Pearson's expounding of the "Pearson Doctrine" – the philosophical heart of the North Atlantic Charter Organization. We now live in a world much changed. Old adversaries are now tentative friends.

However, time is not a journey along one road. It is a journey with many potholes and branch spurs. At any moment a mistake can return us right back to where we started... right back to old animosities. Russia flying nuclear armed bombers into northern Canada is just one such mistake. This is not what friends do! The "Pearson Doctrine" outlived the Soviet Union. If need be it will also outlive a nuclear armed Russia.

In 1947 Canada declared that while we had the technical wherewithal to develop nuclear weapons we as a nation would not do so. We were the first country to declare that nuclear weapons would not be part of our national identity. Over six decades we have fostered constructive engagement within the context of the United Nations and regional organizations like NATO to diminish the role that nuclear weapons play in the political life of the world. Having been present at their creation and seeing them become a central feature of the Cold War, Canada has always asked that nuclear weapons be considered secondary compared to the philosophical heart of Statecraft. They serve no useful purpose, even when they sit at the ready. They also eat away at the heart and soul of nations, robbing them of the lifeblood needed to provide for the basic needs of their citizenry. This is what ultimately killed the Soviet Union, the burden of nuclear weapons. This is also what will kill Russia if the new kings of the Kremlin are reckless.

Russia is no longer a cold war superpower. Young mobile Russians, in particular professional, are voting with their feet, opting for a new life outside Russia not burdened with the remnants of the "old ways of thought." The population and infrastructure of Russia is aging and crumbling. With the latest economic downturn Russia, which depends on foreign sales of petroleum and primary resources, is imploding faster than a nuclear pit. If things continue, Russia will cease to be a modern country within a single generation.

Understand this, though. I do not care for a return to the old ways. My great grandmother was one of the faceless victims of the "old ways of thought." In 1939 she was taken forcibly from her home in south eastern Poland

by the NKVD and disappeared on her way to a Gulag. Her crime, having a son who was a sergeant in the Polish Army. My uncle would survive 1939 but his officers would all die at Katyn. He would survive the Second World War, being forcibly conscripted by the Soviet Union into the war against Nazi Germany. Back in Poland in the late 1940's and 1950's my uncle would help his cleric Karol Wotyła work for freedom and democracy. He would be forced to leave Poland and emigrate to Canada in the late 1950's after the Warsaw food riots and would live long enough to see his friend visit Canada in 1984 as Pope John Paul II.

As a young man I played my part to bring an end to the "old ways of thought." For instance, in 1984 writing a polite letter to a Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Canada to suggest a venue for a summit between President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev – the Citadelle in Quebec City. My letter began with, "Dear Prime Minister, Give us hope for the future. Continue in the fine traditional of your predecessors in support of the United Nations ..." I mentioned the 1943 Quebec Conference in my letter. In response, he would write that my letter had been discussed in Cabinet and that it was premature to meet with Gorbachev, but that he would organize a meeting with the US President Reagan.

The meeting would take place on St. Patrick's Day, 1985. I was honoured! On that day I was thrilled to see President Reagan stand at the same place on the ramparts of the Citadelle that President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King had stood at the 1943 Quebec Conference. That meeting, along with the Atlantic Charter, would eventually see the creation of the United Nations in 1945.

Historians have yet to understand that particular moment in world history and what it truly represented. Let me give you a clue ... two of the three founding countries of the UN Charter were walking away from the UN and it was left to the Good Offices of the Parliament of Canada, and its Prime Minister, to save this important institution. The Soviet Air Force had shot down KAL 007. South Africa stood ready to use nuclear weapons in its war in Angola and we were a split second from midnight. Today I am sad to see this same Rt. Hon. gentleman fodder for the neophyte political appetites in Ottawa.

Subsequent to the "Irish Eyes Summit", I was encouraged to hear President Reagan say that "there was unfinished business" and that it was time to dismantle the Soviet Union and to let its people's be free to choose their own destiny. Mr. Reagan had a special place in his heart for Franklin D. Roosevelt, something I knew when I wrote my letter suggesting the venue. Looking across the St. Lawrence President Reagan had a change of heart and would return to the United Nations during his second term in office, such was his respect for the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

We are once again at a fork in the road regarding nuclear weapons. At the IAEA there is a power struggle between those countries who hope for non-proliferation and those

who want to proliferate. The two candidates for the top job at the IAEA are on two sides of the coin. Given its spotty record, I do not know how choosing a candidate from South Africa will help non-proliferation efforts. And at the other end of the world, North Korea flaunts international law by continuing to test ballistic missiles, and nuclear weapons. A few hours after the conclusion of the Strasbourg meeting of NATO and a few hours before an important non-proliferation speech by the new US President at Prague, North Korea unsuccessfully launched a long range missile. It is not California or Alaska he is aiming at. I am of the opinion that Dictator Kim wants a missile he could use to launch nuclear weapons against Midway Island or Pearl Harbor. I reach this conclusion weighing the present balance in the world and reviewing past events.

On January 23rd 1968 North Korea seized the USS Pueblo so that the Soviet Union could get their hands on US Navy code machines. Reading the intercepts of the time, using secrets passed onto them by John Walker, a faction within the Soviet Politburo attempted to change the course of human history through the use of nuclear arms. On March 7th 1968 a Soviet Golf class submarine K-129 attempted an unauthorized launch from 400 nautical miles north of and against Pearl Harbor. The missile, with a 3 Megaton thermonuclear warhead, safe detonated as it left its launch tube, sinking the submarine and killing all aboard. A piece of hardware that the US had shared with the Soviet Union, the Permission Action Link, self-destructed the missile, preventing its unauthorized launch. The North Korea leaders of the day were aware of this attempted launch from a rogue Soviet submarine. In assessing the present North Korean stratagem of the son of the man who authorized the USS Pueblo seizure, it is hard not to reach the conclusion that Pearl Harbor is what President Kim's missiles are ultimately aimed at.

The new kings of the Kremlin most realize that it is not nuclear weapons that make a country strong but the citizens of a country. If their old ways prevail, young Russians will continue to vote with their feet and countries of Canada will continue to welcome them with open arms. And what of Russia ... it will go the way of the old and cease to be and we will all sleep more soundly at night. Yes ... kings of the Kremlin just continue to fly nuclear armed bombers into northern Canada. As for North Korea, be under no illusions, the next time they launch, the payload may land exactly where he wants it ... but by then it may be too late.

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