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"Exit Communism, Cold War and the Status Quo" *Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Former Ambassador to the United Nations*

Editor's Preview: *These remarks by former U.N. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick were delivered at Hillsdale College's FreedomQuest Gala on September 11, 1990.*

It is exciting to be here at Hillsdale College. I was pleased and honored when Hillsdale presented me with the Freedom Leadership Award in 1984. As a speaker for the College's off-campus programs for some years, I was also happy to share some of my views about the importance of Hillsdale on the College's recently released FreedomQuest campaign video, but this is my first visit to campus and, like Charlton Heston, who preceded me during this program, I'm impressed with what I see. I'm impressed with the hundreds of loyal and interested supporters who are here too, who share the sense that what goes on here—indeed, the very idea of this college—is important to our country, our values and our culture. So I congratulate you, Hillsdale, and I thank you for inviting me.

How 1989 Changed the World

I'm here to talk a little bit about the world of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The year 1989, in particular, was one of the most extraordinary periods in modern history. The most important lessons this year has taught are, first, that we must expect the unexpected, and second, that we must stand firm for what we believe. The old adage that if we have patience and persist, things will get better turned out to be true.

There was a very direct relationship



between the patient and persistent policies from President Truman to President Reagan. With his rebuilding of American strength in the 1980s, and his unembarrassed defense of democratic ideals at home and abroad, Reagan encouraged the remarkable changes that have occurred in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union and are indeed still occurring.

In truth, 1989 changed the world. At the beginning of that year, the world was much as it had been for the previous four decades. It was the post-World War II status quo: Europe was divided by a cold war created by a real Soviet threat, as evidenced by the brutal occupation of Eastern Europe and by continuing Soviet expansion into five continents. Soviet dominance extended into our own backyard, not only in Nicaragua, but by the threat of its attempted expansion into El Salvador, Guatemala, Columbia, Peru, Grenada, and Jamaica.

It is difficult today even to recall the situation of the world in 1980, which remained nearly unchanged up until 1989, when there was what the Soviets call a "change of the world correlation of forces." This change had been brought about by the resurgence and renaissance of American strength, and by the continuing decline of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was and still is the only industrial power in the world whose living standards are declining rather than increasing, whose average life expectancy is declining (from 74 years for Soviet males to 71 years over a period of about five years in the last decade) while infant mortality rates are rising.

A "Crisis of the Soul"

By 1989, it was undeniable that the Soviet Union was in a decline that was incredible by any standards, and it was equally evident that such a decline had created a kind of "crisis of conscience," or, perhaps, that the crisis of conscience had created the decline. We don't usually talk about conscience when we talk about Soviet leaders and Soviet policy. I've been discovering of late some fascinating facets reading the speeches of some of Mikhail Gorbachev's principal advisors. Let me share with you a few words from the text of Aleksandr Yakovlev, for example. Yakovlev is the man whom almost everyone thinks is Mikhail Gorbachev's closest advisor. Yakovlev has emphasized intellectual and spiritual factors in Soviet changes. One of his statements about the Soviet people that has been widely quoted is: "we have suffered not only a crisis in economics but a crisis of the soul." This is Aleksandr Yakovlev on July 2, 1990:

"I am convinced that the time has come for truth. To speak of nobility, charity, honor, and conscience, even at a Congress of Communists, shaking from our feet the mud of enmity and suspicion that has built up over the decades. It is the very time for the party to take the initiative in the moral cleansing of our existence and our consciousness. This is why I am convinced of the historic correctness of the choice that was made in 1985 to establish perestroika."

He went on to remark on his activities in



the years since 1985, which went beyond advising Mikhail Gorbachev:

"A special sphere of my work in recent years has been the Commission study of materials relating to the repressions visited on our country in the past. I will tell you honestly; it is heavy, spiritually exhausting work when the ashes of millions of people constantly haunt you. The good names of almost a million people have been returned. But there has been falsification of such a scale. Repressions could not have been a matter of chance and could not have been the consequence of an evil will alone. [By] whom and how is the mechanism of repression created and set in motion? How did it function? Why did nothing stand in its path?"

Yakovlev then went on to discuss the Stalinist period. He paused over the collec-

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tization in the Ukraine, that horror about which Robert Conquest has written movingly and accurately in books like *The Great Terror* and *The Genocide of the Ukraine*, in which a manmade famine was visited upon the people of the Ukraine. Starving men, women and children were driven off their land, scattered, and killed.

Yakovlev says, "In my view that was the most monstrous crime when hundreds of thousands of peasant families were driven out of the villages, not understanding why such a fate befell them. They were driven out by the authorities they themselves had established. The dead cannot be brought back but their good names may be restored in history." And then Yakovlev added a line that has since become famous among his countrymen: "Let us remember not the empty shelves but the empty souls who have brought a change to our country which demands revolutionary change."

The reaction of Yakovlev, one of the most well-known public figures in the Soviet Union, is worth our serious attention. Unfortunately, his comments and those of others like him are being largely ignored or discounted in the West.

Yakovlev quoted Kant in early September: "Long ago, the great philosopher Kant wrote that there are two prejudices: 'to believe everything and to believe nothing.' But then again, he wrote there are also mysteries, the scarlet sky above us, and the moral law within us."

Imagine the second most powerful man in the Soviet Union talking about the moral law within us—and then imagine virtually all the major media outlets in the West ignoring his extraordinary pronouncement! Both are remarkable.

Yakovlev added, "according to the moral law, our society that is transforming itself into a free society has yet . . . in the process of transforming itself to overcome the obstructions of falsehood." He goes on to charge that the confidence of the people had been abused in the old communist system, and that "the people wished us merely good and the State responded with the evil of prisons and camps."

Yakovlev ends this comment with an extraordinary appeal, "Preserve me, Almighty, from calls for vengeance, from a new round of intolerance, that our society must know the names of the people who

committed these deeds in order to assess them according to moral criteria."

Soviet Reprisals: The Dog That Didn't Bark

I share these words of Aleksandr Yakovlev with you that I've been reading with growing surprise myself. I also want to share with you a sense of the depth of change that is taking place in the Soviet Union today. That change has, of course, already transformed the post-World War II world in which we had lived for over forty years. It was an uncomfortable world, because we were faced by continuous challenges, and because it imposed very heavy burdens on our country. Yet it was comfortable, because we knew it and were accustomed to it, and we knew what we should do—help defend the frontiers of freedom.

What happened in 1989 that was most remarkable was like the dog that didn't bark in Sherlock Holmes's famous mystery tale. What didn't happen was that the Soviet troops did not intervene to crush the liberation movements in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. I was in Poland in late August of that year. The first elected government since World War II had been installed. It was, naturally, largely Solidarity government, although you will recall that it included two communist ministers (who have only recently been fired). Those two communist ministers were in the Defense ministry and in the Interior. The newly-elected Polish Solidarity government had agreed to give the communists, who had been clobbered in the elections, the control over the armed forces and the police. Why? Because they thought they had to; because they feared that Soviet troops would crush their democratic movement.

At the time I was there last August, Solidarity's victory was still uncertain. No one knew what to expect; every step toward independence was taken courageously enough, but was attended by great misgivings. Two Solidarity leaders, ministers in the new government, confessed privately to me: "None of us forgets our years in prison." After all, they had been in prison less than five years before when Poland was under martial law and no one's rights were protect-ed. And it had been less than a decade since Father Popieluszko had been beaten to death for daring to speak about independence for his country.

The uncertainty existed for all Eastern Europe. No one knew what was going to happen in Hungary when its citizens announced that they were going to change the national

constitution and open the border with Austria. Even though it was rumored that they had the approval of Mikhail Gorbachev, no one, not even Gorbachev, could predict the results of such unprecedented reform. We know now that when the border did open, East Germans began to surge through in a kind of human tidal wave. We also know that this mass exodus began the process of the reunification of Germany.

No one knew what would happen when the citizens of Czechoslovakia went into the streets for the first time since 1968. Miraculously, they did not encounter tanks—just each other—and there, too, freedom at last was realizable.

The Challenge of Normal Times

The most important event of 1989 was really a non-event: the tanks that did not roll and the Soviet troops that stayed in their barracks. This was the end of the Soviet empire, and it disintegrated faster than any other empire in modern history. Obviously, the danger is not yet over—there are still Soviet tanks and troops in Eastern Europe, and there are tens of thousands of Soviet missiles. But the "will to empire" has disappeared. We can say of the year 1989 that history's most bold, daring and ruthless experiment in social engineering was effectively abandoned by the heirs of the men who began it.

Now, the question is, what will replace that experiment? Some Soviets like Yakovlev,

who lived in the West for nearly a decade, talk of building a free society. Gorbachev often says the same thing, and although I am not sure that he understands what such freedom really means, he is a very pragmatic man who understands that reform is in his and the Soviet Union's best interest. In the last few years he has begun to ask questions that the Soviet people were, to say the least, unaccustomed to hearing. For example, he asked if it were true old Bolsheviks were guilty of the crimes they had been executed for, and even went to the trouble of establishing two investigative commissions that discovered that some were wrongly accused.

"Is it true?"—that is not a Bolshevik question, as anyone knows who recalls the infamous Moscow show trials of the 1930s. And Gorbachev followed up with another uncharacteristic question about the Soviet economy. He asked, simply, "Does it work?" When Bolsheviks before him asked if the economy worked, what they really meant was, "Does it serve the Revolution?" To his credit, Gorbachev meant something quite different. He pointed to Soviet agriculture as an unworkable system and advocated following the practice of Hungary and China in leasing land to farmers. The state is still in control, of course, but once even half-measures of private ownership are introduced, the pressure for complete reform begins to build momentum.

Watching Soviet leaders like Gorbachev let go of power is a fascinating experience. The stops and starts, the infighting with other Soviets like Ligachev, the retrench-

ments and advances—these are all part of a historical drama. There has never been a totalitarian state quite like the Soviet Union, and there has never been one that was dismantled without great violence. Yet we seem to be witnessing a relatively peaceful transformation to a democratic political structure and a market economy in the USSR.

Ironically enough, our libraries are filled with books on the transformation from *capitalism* to socialism, but practically no books have been written about how to bring about the reverse. There are only one or two like the brilliant Peruvian Hernando de Soto's book about his country called *The Other Path*. They desperately need such books in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

In the West, we need books that will remind us that it has been democratic capitalism, not socialism, that has won the Cold War, lest we allow the former's few remaining adherents to convince us that socialism is the wave of the future. We also need to be aware, as we have been vividly reminded by the Persian Gulf crisis, that the post-Cold War world is not necessarily a more peaceful world. Military power and national resolve still count. In this less predictable, less "connected" world, there are many centers of power, and international politics has become much more complicated. The challenge ahead is not the same as it was during the Cold War; it is, rather, the challenge of "normal times," times in which the future is still uncertain. Let us hope that we will see more years like 1989.