

Ladies and Gentlemen: OCT -9 PM 4:48

I am grateful to the P.E.N.-Club for giving me the opportunity to discuss with a Norwegian gathering of this nature some of the questions of East-West relations; because, as some of you may know, my views on these subjects have diverged significantly from those of much of the political establishment in my own country, and to some extent in other NATO countries; and the nature of this divergence has not always been made fully clear in the reports that have found their way into the European press.

I thought, for this reason, that it might be helpful to you this evening if I would try to describe to you just what, as I see it, this controversy has been about --, and to do this, not so much with a view to persuading you of the correctness of my own opinions (although I would not be human if I could resist entirely the temptation to do just that) but rather in the hopes of clarifying for you the issues over which the controversy has occurred. There is reason, I think; to do this; because while my view is a minority view in America, at least so far as the government is concerned, and while there are perhaps few people who would share it in its entirety, there are a great many who would share it in part--enough of them, in any case, so that the view has a certain justifiable claim on European attention.

Looking back over the whole course of these differences between my own view and those of my various critics and opponents in recent years, I have to conclude that these differences have been, essentially, not ones of interpretation of phenomena over the reality of which we all agree, but rather over the nature and significance of the observable phenomena themselves; -- not, in other words, differences about the meaning of what we see, but rather, about what it is that we see in the first place.

Let me illustrate this first on the example of our respective views of the nature of the Soviet regime itself.

My opponents, if I do not misinterpret their positions, see the Soviet leaders as a group of men animated primarily by a desire to achieve further expansions of their effective power, and this at the expense of the independence and the liberties of other people -- at the expense of the peace, if not the stability, of international life. They see these men as pursuing a reckless and massive build-up of their own armed forces -- a build-up of such dimensions that it could not be explained by defensive considerations alone and must therefore, it is reasoned, reflect aggressive ones. They see them as eager to bring other countries, in the Third World and elsewhere, under their domination, in order to exploit them as pawns against the United States and other countries of the western alliance; and they see the situations today existing in such places as Angola and Ethiopia and Afghanistan as examples of the dangerous success of these endeavors.

My opponents reject the suggestion that Soviet policy might be motivated in any important degree by defensive considerations. The Soviet leaders, in their view, do not feel politically encircled or in any other way significantly threatened. And while it is recognized that Moscow faces serious internal problems, it is not considered that these problems impose any very serious limitations on the freedom of the regime to pursue aggressive external objectives and intentions.

What emerges from this vision is of course an image of the Soviet regime not greatly different from that of the Nazi regime of recent memory, as it existed shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. This being the case, it is not surprising that the conclusion should be drawn that the main task for Western statesmanship at this juncture must be to avoid what are now generally regarded as the great mistakes of the Western powers in the late 1930's -- to avoid, that is, what is called "appeasement", to give a low priority to the possibilities for negotiation and accommodation, and to concentrate on the building-up of military posture so imposing and forbidding, and a Western unity so unshakeable, that the Soviet leaders will perceive the futility and the danger of their aggressive plans, and will accept the necessity of learning to live side by side with other nations on a basis compatible with the security of those other nations and with the general requirements of world stability and peace.

I do not question the good faith of American governmental personalities when they say that once this new relationship of military and political power has been established, they will be prepared to sit down with their Soviet counterparts and discuss with them the prerequisites for a safer world; but I fear that they see the success of any such discussions as something to which the Soviet leaders could be brought only reluctantly, with gnashing of teeth; and this seems to me to be a poor augury for the enduring effects of any results that might be achieved.

Now all this, as I say, is what I believe my opponents see when they turn their eyes in the direction of the Kremlin. What I see is something quite different.

I see a group of troubled men, elderly men, for the most part, whose choices and possibilities are severely constrained. I see them as the prisoners of many circumstances: prisoners of their own past and their country's past; prisoners of the antiquated ideology to which their extreme sense of orthodoxy binds them; prisoners of the rigid system of power that has given them their authority; but prisoners, too, of certain ingrained peculiarities of the Russian statesmanship of earlier ages: the congenital sense of insecurity; the lack of inner self-confidence; the distrust of the foreigner and the foreigner's world; the passion for secrecy; the neurotic fear of penetration by other powers into areas close to their borders; and a persistent tendency, resulting from all these other factors, to overdo in the creation of military strength.

I see here men greatly preoccupied, as were their Tsarist-Russian predecessors, with questions of prestige -- more concerned in many instances with the appearances than with the realities. I do not see them as men anxious to expand their power by the direct use of their armed forces, although they could easily be

frightened into efforts that would have this appearance. I see them as indeed concerned -- and rather naturally concerned -- to increase their influence among Third-World countries. This neither surprises me nor does it alarm me. Most great powers have similar desires. And the methods adopted in the Soviet case are not too different from those employed by some of the others. Besides, what has distinguished these Soviet efforts, historically viewed, seems to have been not their success but precisely their lack of it. I see no recent Soviet achievements in this direction what would remotely outweigh the great failures of the postwar period: in Yugoslavia, in China, and in Egypt.

But beyond that, a wish to expand one's influence is not the same thing as a wish to expand the formal limits of one's power and responsibility. This, I do not think the Soviet leaders wish to do at all. Specifically, I have seen no evidence of any disposition on their part to invade Western Europe and thus to take any further parts of it formally under their authority. They are having trouble enough with the responsibilities they have already undertaken in Eastern Europe. They have no reason to wish to increase these burdens. I can conceive that there might be certain European regions, outside the limits of their present hegemony, where they would be happy, for defensive reasons, to have some sort of military control, if this control could be acquired safely and easily without too much disruption of international stability; but there is a far cry from this to the assumption that they would be disposed to invade any of these areas out of the blue, in peacetime, at the cost of unleashing another world war.

It is my belief that these men do indeed consider the Soviet Union to have been increasingly isolated and in danger of encirclement by hostile powers in recent years. I do not see how they could otherwise interpret the American military relationship to Iran in the time of the Shah or the more recent American military relationships with Pakistan and China. And these, I believe, are not the only concerns that would limit the freedom of the Soviet leaders to indulge themselves in dreams of external expansion, even if they were so inclined. They are obviously very conscious of the dangers of a disintegration of their dominant position in Eastern Europe, and particularly in Poland; and this, not because they have any conscious desire to mistreat or oppress the respective peoples, but because they see any further deterioration of the situation there as a threat to their political and strategic interests in Germany -- interests which are indeed highly defensive in origin.

I believe, too, that internal developments in the Soviet Union also present a heavy claim on the attention and the priorities of the Soviet leaders. They are deeply committed to the completion of their existing programs for the economic and social development of the Soviet peoples; and I am sure that they are very seriously concerned over the numerous problems that have recently been impeding that completion, the perennial agricultural failures; the many signs of public apathy, demoralization, drunkenness, and labor absenteeism; the disbalance in population growth as between the Russian center and the non-Russian periphery; the growing shortage of skilled labor; and the wide-spread economic corruption and indiscipline. They may differ as to how these problems should be approached; but I doubt that there are any of them who think they could be solved by the unleashing of another world war. I must emphatically reject the primitive thesis, drawn largely from misleading and outdated 19th

century examples, that the Kremlin might be inclined to resort to war as a means of resolving its internal difficulties. Nothing in Russian history or psychology supports such a thesis.

In saying these things, I do not mean to deny that there exist, interwoven with the remaining pattern of Soviet diplomacy, certain disquieting tendencies which oblige Western policymakers to exercise a sharp vigilance even as they pursue their efforts towards peace. I believe these tendencies to reflect not so much any thirst for direct aggression as an over-suspiciousness, a fear of being tricked or out-smarted, an exaggerated sense of prestige, and an interpretation of Russia's defensive needs so extreme - so extravagant - and so far-reaching - that it becomes in itself a threat or an apparent threat, to the security of other nations. While these weaknesses probably affect all Soviet statesmen to one extent or another, the evidence suggests to me that they are concentrated particularly in certain specific elements of the Soviet power structure -- notably, the military and naval commands, in the vast police establishment, and in certain sections of the party apparatus. So far, these tendencies do not seem to me to have dominated Soviet policy, except in the case of the decision to intervene in Afghanistan -- a decision which was taken in somewhat abnormal circumstances and is now, I believe, largely recognized, even in Moscow, as a mistake. But there will soon have to be extensive changes in the occupancy of the senior political position in Moscow, and Western policymakers should consider that a Western policy which offers no encouragement to the more moderate elements in the Soviet hierarchy must inevitably strengthen the hands, and the political positions, of those who are not moderate at all.

So much, then, for our differences of view with respect to the Soviet regime. It is not unnatural that anyone who sees the phenomenon of Soviet power so differently than do certain others should also differ from those others in his view of the best response to it.

It is clear that my opponents see the Soviet regime primarily as a great, immediate, and growing military danger, and that this conditions their idea of the best response.

I have no argument with them about the existence of a great danger. I do differ from them with regard to the causes of this danger. I see these causes not in the supposed "aggressiveness" of either side, but in the weapons race itself. I see it in the compulsions which this, like any other weapons race between sovereign powers, engenders for all the participating parties. I see it in the terrible militarization of outlook to which this sort of competition conduces: a species of obsession which causes those who have succumbed to it to direct their vision and their efforts exclusively to the hopeless contingencies of military conflict, to ignore the more hopeful ones of communication and accommodation, and in this way to enhance the very dangers against which they fancy themselves to be reacting.

Leaving aside for the moment the problems of nuclear weaponry, let me say a word about the military balance in conventional weapons. An impression has been created that there has recently been a new and great build-up of Soviet conventional strength on the European continent, changing the balance of forces in this respect strongly to Western disadvantage. This view has found its reflection in the statements of a number of distinguished Western figures.

I cannot flatly deny the correctness of this thesis. I am only a private citizen. I do not have access to all the information over which the governments dispose. But with all respect for the sincerity and good faith of those who advance this view, I am disinclined to accept it just on the basis of their say-so. I am so disinclined, because I think I have made a reasonable effort, in these last few years, to follow such information as appears in the press and the other media about the military balance; and I find this body of information confused, contradictory, statistically questionable, and often misleading. Most of it appears to derive from data leaked to the media by one or another of the Western military intelligence services; and one cannot avoid the impression that it reflects a tendency to paint an exaggerated and frightening picture of Soviet capabilities and intentions -- a so-called "worst-case" image.

This is done, no doubt, partly for reasons of an excessive professional prudence, but partly, too, I am afraid, with an eye to the reactions of various Western parliamentary bodies, which require to be frightened (or so it is believed) before they will make reasonable appropriations for defense. I can only say that if the NATO governments really wish us, the public, to believe in the reality of a recent dramatic increase in the Soviet conventional threat to Western Europe, they will have to place before us a more consistent and plausible statistical basis for that view than anything they have given us to date. Neither in terms of the number of divisions, nor of total manpower, nor of any of the other major indicators, does the information now available to the ordinary newspaper reader prove that the balance of conventional military strength in Central Europe is significantly less favorable to the Western side than it was ten or twenty years ago.

To say this is not to claim that this present balance is satisfactory. That is not my contention. Of course, there is a preponderance of strength on the Soviet side. Such a preponderance has existed since World War II. Of course, it is not desirable. I myself favour a strengthening of NATO's conventional capabilities, particularly if this strengthening be taken to mean an improvement of morale, of discipline, or training and alertness, and not just the heaping-up of fancy and expensive new equipment which we do not have the manpower to operate or the money to maintain. But if this strengthening is to be effected, I think it should be presented and defended to the public as a normal policy of prudence -- a reasonable long-term precaution in a troubled time -- not as something responding to any specific threat from any specific quarter. Our governments, in particular, should not try to gain support for such a program by painting on the wall an exaggerated and unnecessarily alarming image of Soviet intentions and capabilities. This procedure represents, in my view, an abuse of public confidence, and one which, in the end, invariably revenges itself.

So much for the conventional weapons. Now -- with a sigh and a sinking of the heart -- for the nuclear ones. Here, I am sorry to say, I have differences with every single one of the premises from which my government, and some of the other NATO governments, seem to depart in designing their policies in this field.

First of all, my opponents seem to see the nuclear explosive as just another weapon, like any other weapon, only more destructive; and they think that because it is more destructive, it is a better and more powerful weapon.

I deny that the nuclear explosive is a proper weapon. It corresponds, in my view, to none of the criteria traditionally applied to conventional weapons. It

can serve no useful purpose. It cannot be used without bringing disaster upon everyone concerned. I regard it as the reflection of a massive misunderstanding of the true purposes of warfare and the true usefulness of weaponry.

My opponents see the Soviet Union as having sought and achieved some sort of a statistical superiority over the NATO powers in this kind of weaponry. I myself have not seen the evidence that they have achieved that sort of superiority; nor do I see any reason to assume that it is this that they would like to do. The evidence seems to me to suggest that they are striving for what they would view as equivalence, in the statistical sense, -- not for superiority.

My opponents believe that differences of superiority or inferiority, in the statistical sense, are meaningful: that if you have more of these weapons than your adversary has, you are in a stronger position to stand up against intimidation or against an actual attack. I challenge that view. I submit that if you are talking, as all of us are talking today, about what are in reality grotesque quantities of overkill -- arsenals so excessive that they would suffice to destroy the adversary's homeland many times over -- statistical disparities between the arsenals on the two sides are quite meaningless. But precisely that -- the absurd excessiveness of the existing nuclear arsenals -- is the situation we have before us today.

My opponents maintain that we must have the nuclear weapons because we would not be able to match the Soviet Union in a conflict with the conventional ones. I would say: if this is true, let us correct the situation at once. Neither in terms of manpower nor in terms of industrial potential are we lacking in the means to put up conventional forces fully as strong as those deployed against us in Europe.

My opponents say: we must have these weapons for purposes of deterrence. The use of this term carries two implications: first, that it is the Russians who have taken the lead in the development of these weapons, and that we are only reacting to what they have done; and secondly, that they are such monsters that, unless deterred, they would assuredly launch upon us a nuclear attack, with all the horrors and sufferings that would bring. I question both these implications; and I question in particular the wisdom of suggesting the latter one thousand times a year to the general public, thus schooling the public mind to believe that our Soviet adversary has lost every semblance of humanity and is concerned only to wreak unlimited destruction for destruction's sake. I am not sure, furthermore, that the stationing of these weapons on one's territory is not more of a provocation of their use by others than a means of dissuading others from using them. I have never been an advocate of unilateral disarmament; and I see no necessity for anything of that sort today. But I must say that if we Americans had no nuclear weapons whatsoever on our soil today instead of the tens of thousands of nuclear warheads we are now said to have deployed, I would feel far safer for the future of my children and grandchildren than I do at this moment; for if there is any incentive for the Russians to use such weapons against us, it surely comes in overwhelming degree -- probably, in fact, entirely -- from our own massive deployment of them.

Finally, there are many people who consider that it is useless, or even undesirable, to try to get rid of these weapons entirely, and that satisfactory solutions can somehow be found by halfway measures of one sort or another -- agreements that would limit their numbers, or their destructiveness, or the areas of their deployment. Such speculations come particularly easily to a government such as my own, which has long regarded nuclear weapons as essential to its defensive posture, and has never been willing to contemplate a future without them.

I have no confidence in any of these schemes. I see the danger not in the number or quality of the weapons, nor in the intentions of those who hold them. I see the danger in the very existence of weapons of this nature, regardless of whose hands they are in. I consider that until we consent to recognize that the nuclear weapons we hold in our own hands are as much a danger to us as those that repose in the hands of our supposed adversaries, there will be no escape from the confusions and dilemmas to which such weapons have now brought us, and must bring us increasingly as time goes on. For this reason, I see no solution to the problem other than the complete elimination of these and all other weapons of mass destruction from national arsenals; and the sooner we move towards that solution, and the greater courage we show in doing so, the safer we will be.

There, my friends, you have a condensed version of the views that have brought me into intellectual conflict with so many of my American and English friends.