

Cap: Don't trust Russian 'openness'

Remarks prepared for delivery by the Honorable Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, to the Navy League of the United States, Washington, D.C., Thursday, April 16, 1987.

Openness: theirs and ours

. . . [T]wo aspects of Soviet political behavior have become apparent to anyone who is willing to learn: First, the Kremlin, under General Secretary Gorbachov, has undertaken a major campaign of "openness" or what they call "*glasnost*." They have publicized a number of seemingly very radical initiatives ostensibly designed to liberalize their society and to stimulate better relations with the West. But at the same time, a second, more sinister and far more dangerous element of Soviet behavior is equally apparent. That is the continuation of a massive Soviet espionage campaign, which persists on a heavy scale here in the United States, in our diplomatic properties in the Soviet Union, and elsewhere throughout the world. This espionage campaign is designed to penetrate our most secure communications systems, steal our most secret plans, acquire our most important technologies, and, most ominously, to give the Soviets a decisive strategic advantage for surprise in the event of conflict. The American public must interpret Soviet public statements and the ongoing Soviet public relations campaign to demonstrate a most un-Soviet-like openness, in light of their massive espionage campaign. . . .

In February of this year, General Secretary Gorbachov addressed a so-called peace conference in Moscow. At this conference, politicians, scholars, journalists, and other glitterati gathered from around the world with free transportation provided by the Soviets' public relations apparatus, for what Mr. Gorbachov terms a "forum . . . of world opinion." In his opening remarks, Mr. Gorbachov called for a broad "democratization" of Soviet society. In this call for "openness," he stressed that his desire to make the Soviet Union better would hurt no one, with only the world gaining from this effort. The General Secretary then went on to catalogue the seemingly radical changes in Soviet internal and external policies which would implement "openness." He stated that revolutionary changes were occurring in the Soviet Union, including greater personal freedoms. He also urged increased international

cooperation and understanding, and a lessening of international tensions, for example, in the Middle East. At the same time, the Kremlin has offered a number of new arms control proposals and removed some obstacles from others. These proposals appear designed to further public perceptions of the Soviet Union as peaceful in its intentions and willing to negotiate.

What is behind all these calls for openness? Are we really seeing something different? Or does this public "offensive" have a somewhat more sinister cast? . . .

As a result of the systemic problems of Soviet society, Moscow today has been unable to adapt its economy to absorb high technology. Because of what they see and what they have stolen, the Soviet leadership recognizes that they are falling further and further behind the West in almost every measure of technological competitiveness. A most essential element of current Soviet strategy, then, is to lessen tensions with the West and thereby soften Western resistance to sharing with them the modern technologies which they so desperately need for economic modernization. . . .

This Soviet strategy also hopes to decelerate the pace of technological modernization of the West's military capabilities, and especially they hope to kill our Strategic Defense Initiative before we can deploy. Their goal is to appeal to wishful, *détentist* elements in the West, by posing the rhetorical question: "Why should you spend such burdensome sums of money when we are slowing the rate of military build-up?" Not surprisingly, Mr. Gorbachov's speech included a plea to "demilitarize the world." Finally, this Soviet strategy deliberately is designed to make it far more difficult for those of us in the West who strongly advocate the strengthening of our defenses. . . .

For Mr. Gorbachov's plan to be successful, for the new spirit of "*glasnost*" to work, for the Soviets to acquire and apply more of our new technologies to their modernization, and, most important, for the Soviets to ensure they will keep their military advantages secure during this process, they must know what the West is up to in order to compete. They must know our plans and policies. They must know and try to influence our positions on such sensitive issues as arms control and our military programs. And, in the event of conflict, they would want to administer a fatally disarming blow to us with little prospect of danger to themselves.

In their own policy councils the Soviets refer to us as the "main enemy." As a result of this perspective, which I believe is a far more accurate assessment of the way the Soviets really view the West than many of our people view the Soviets, they have mounted a massive espionage campaign against the United States and every other Western democracy. It extends from the roof of their embassy in Washington, to Silicon Valley in California, and from the administrative office of one of our aircraft carriers to some of the most sensitive rooms in our embassy in Moscow. They have stolen, they have seduced, and they have bought some of our

most sensitive secrets.

Soviet espionage is not new. It is, rather, the product of the Russian past, which, since the time of Peter the Great, has demanded absolute security. Every Western nation has felt the outrage of arrogant, intrusive Soviet espionage. . . .

Our democracy . . . depends on continuous criticism and the clash of ideas; on tolerance of different opinions and ideas, however unpopular or absurd or radical; and on open and spirited debate. This democratic debate, in turn, depends on the widest circulation of news, information, and opinion from all sources, and on the presumption that until proven otherwise, all participants are people of good will and honest intent.

There is, nevertheless, a dangerous tendency in the West to disregard the explicit evidence of Soviet espionage, as exceptions to the rules by which nations conduct their affairs, or as just one of the games all nations play with one another. Indeed, particularly egregious acts of Soviet espionage are frequently offset with timely supposed revelations, by the Soviets and those willing always to believe the worst about America, of seemingly analogous Western acts. All too often carefully chosen Soviet commentators are given direct access to U.S. television audiences immediately after the revelation to explain the Soviet case. While advertised as “independent, non-affiliated experts” or “newsmen,” they are in reality hand-picked state employees. . . . [M]ilitary attachés at an embassy are there to discover all they can about their host nation’s armed forces, and that their inquiries will probably not be limited to official channels or reference books. Similarly, diplomats assigned to embassies, consulates, and international organizations like the United Nations are expected to conduct the affairs of state in accordance with acceptable standards. But there is a world of difference between this diplomatically sanctioned activity, and the KGB’s undermining the prestige of diplomacy by systematically staffing their embassies and legations with trained spies, whose chief occupation is the subversion and bribery of citizens of their host country.

Similarly, as the Soviets know, the United States and other nations of the West give great access to journalists. Here in Washington, Soviet journalists—an oxymoron if I have ever heard one—have always been given broad access to Congress and the Pentagon, and the White House press rooms. In the Soviet Union, our journalists, who are anything but government employees, are harassed and arrested.

The freedoms of Western democracies are based on the moral principle that the conditions of man will be improved only by the free clash of ideas or ideas expressed and that only from this freedom will truth emerge. But the sense of trust in our fellow man on which this is based can become a dangerous vulnerability when it is betrayed. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the John Walker spy case. . . .

The harm caused to our national security by the Walker spy ring is of the gravest nature. We now know that the KGB

considered the Walker operation to be the most important operation in their history. The information stolen by Walker enabled the KGB to decipher more than 1 million messages. Averaged over John Walker’s career, this equates to Soviet decryption of more than 150 messages a day. The Walker case was handled by Department Sixteen of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB, which handles only the most sensitive exploitation of communications. So important was the Walker ring to the Soviets that KGB officers were assigned to the Soviet embassy in Washington solely to receive the information Walker was passing on to them. The KGB believed that the information obtained from Walker would have been “devastating” to the United States in time of war. This Soviet intelligence operation ranks as one of the greatest espionage losses in intelligence history.

John Walker’s greed provided the Soviets the keys to our message encryption systems, which revealed to the Soviets our future plans, ship locations and transit routes, military operations, intelligence activities, and the information on which we based our intelligence judgments. The Soviets gained access to weapons and sensor data, naval tactics, terrorist threats, surface, submarine and airborne training, readiness, and tactics. Most dangerously, they may easily have learned how we might plan to employ the U.S. Navy worldwide in the event of crisis or conflict.

John Walker’s violation, over almost two decades, of every value this nation holds dear, provided the Soviets insights into the very heart of our nation’s political and military objectives. The information he furnished, as well as that stolen by his friend Whitworth and his son, Michael, provided the Soviets with sufficient data to permit them to gauge the true capabilities and vulnerabilities of the U.S. Navy. We have clear signals of dramatic Soviet gains in all areas of naval warfare, which must now be interpreted in light of the Walker conspiracy. Beyond any doubt, they gave the Soviets an appreciation of our technological superiority, and the motivation to improve dramatically and positively their military posture with respect to U.S. capabilities. And the acquisition of our technology to improve their military posture is one of the goals of their “*glasnost*” campaign.

While the Walker conspiracy was a traitorous violation of the trust we place in our fellow Americans, the massive Soviet intrusion into our embassy in Moscow violated the established rules for the way nations conduct themselves. What is especially revealing about this Soviet intrusion into our embassy, which is by treaty inviolable for the nation which occupies it, is its massive nature. It seems to me to be quite comparable to Iran’s actions in seizing our embassy in Teheran. But as has been the case of Soviet disregard for other treaties—certain key provisions of the SALT II and ABM treaties come immediately to mind—the Soviets seem to believe that diplomacy is merely another form of espionage or at least a cover for it, and that espionage is the rightful adjunct to diplomacy. . . .