

AMERICAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

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Remarks Prepared for Delivery

by

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.)

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Before the University of Wisconsin School for Workers  
Educational Institute for Steelworkers  
Madison, Wisconsin, Monday Evening  
August 3, 1959

It's a pleasure for me to have the chance to discuss some of the problems facing America with a group such as this, a group of workers and of students interested in a lasting solution to these problems.

To one of these problems, there is no simple answer and that is the overriding question of our relations with Russia. Our problems with Russia represent a clash of ideologies, a conflict between a nation dedicated to freedom and the rights of the individual, and a nation like Russia, where the life of the individual and everything he does is subordinated to the welfare of the state.

In a state such as Russia, there can be no freedom as we know it. For example, Russia has its labor unions -- at least they are called that. But we wouldn't recognize them as such. In Russia, labor unions are a tool of the state, used mainly to increase productivity of the worker. There is no machinery for the settlement of grievances through collective bargaining such as we use in the United States.

The struggle between Russia and the free world, however, is not entirely ideological. While it is a political and social struggle, it has become -- and will become more so in the future -- an economic struggle. What makes this aspect of the struggle even more ominous is that economic decisions in Russia are not the decisions of free men and women.

No, indeed. Every economic decision in Russia has its political and ideological motivation. And because of a tight control over the life of the nation by a top ruling clique, Russia is readily able to make and carry out politically-motivated decisions without regard for the views of the people.

We in the free world are playing for high stakes in this struggle. One of the most urgent requirements is that our economy expand at a much higher rate than at present.

Statistics show us what the problem is.

Russia's present and planned annual rate of economic growth is estimated at nine to ten percent. Over the last half decade, the overall U. S. rate of economic growth has been less than two percent. You don't need a slide rule to figure out that if this continues Russia will pass us in the next 10 to 20 years. They already claim to match us in some areas of industrial activity -- in tool production, for instance.

By 1965, the Soviet Union will be producing the equivalent of 85 to 90 percent of America's 1957 output of steel, about 70 percent of our 1957 output of electrical power and fuel energy and about half again as much cement as we produced two years ago.

Just think of it -- in less than 50 years the Russians will have accomplished the economic growth it took the U. S. almost 200 years to attain!

Soviet coal output is about 70 percent of ours. Their steel production is about half what we produce, but for a short time last year the combined steel production of Soviet Russia and Communist China exceeded the steel output of the U.S.!

Steel represents power, steel represents strength. I never thought I would live to see the day when the Soviet Union and the so-called backward country of Red China would produce more steel than mighty America.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency reports that Russia last year produced only one automobile to every 10 produced by the U.S., but in the same year she produced four machine tools for every one produced here. In the long run, of course, machine tools contribute far more to the growth of an economy than automobiles.

In brief, Soviet production has expanded greatly. Since our administration changed in 1953 Soviet economic growth has been at a rate roughly three times that of the U.S.

These facts are ominous. The Soviet economy is a forced-draft economy controlled from the top. Centralized political decisions determine priorities of effort and resources.

Leaders in the Kremlin have the power to slice the national income pie any way they wish. The Soviet rulers determine how much the population will be allowed to consume. Then they plow back into the economy the unconsumed resources in the form of capital to guarantee maximum economic development consistent with ambitious national objectives.

It is an experience to sit across the table from Mr. Khrushchev -- as I did last fall -- and to listen to him tell of the future plans of the Soviet Union. He says he will "bury us" and says it with almost arrogant confidence.

I do not share the pessimistic view that Khrushchev will bury us. Yet it is discouraging to see in this country an administration which shrinks from the Soviet challenge instead of rising to meet it, a government so obsessed with balancing the budget at whatever price that it tells us we cannot afford to build schools or decent houses or dams to harness the energy of our great rivers. But the penny pinchers in Washington are the greatest wastrels of all, for they are wasting America's human and natural resources. And that is the kind of waste no country can afford.

In the early days of our history, a Paul Revere rode through towns and villages, warning them the Red Coats were coming. Who today will warn not that the Red Coats are coming, but that the Reds are on their way -- on their way to greater and greater world power? I have had the opportunity to see with my own eyes the mammoth strides Russia is making, and I intend to do what I can to arouse America before it is too late to face up to the challenge.

That challenge is not merely military, even though of course, that is one aspect of the struggle. The struggle is economic, political, it's social and it's ideological.

Among the Russian people there is great misunderstanding of the United States. There is great fear of our motives, mainly as a result of their rulers' propaganda which unceasingly depicts us as a nation of war-mongers, intent on destroying the Soviet Union.

I have seen people taken in by their own propaganda before, and I feel, after my visit to Russia, that some of the Russian rulers are so taken in. There may be some of this in the United States, too.

It would help greatly to minimize this misunderstanding if we were to deliberately encourage mass travel and contact between the two countries. Such things as the two fairs -- Russia's in New York, ours in Moscow -- can help, and I am proud to have introduced the bills that made those fairs possible.

I am for more such direct contacts between the two nations, right on up to the top. What can be lost by an invitation by the President to Khrushchev to come to America to see for himself, to talk directly with Americans in all walks of life, official and unofficial? What do we have to be afraid of?

An improvement in Russian understanding of the United States is perhaps more important than is an improvement in U.S. understanding of Russia. This is true because the Russian people have been fed more propaganda and need more "unlearning" to correct the false image they have of the U.S. Further, the Russian leaders are doing more sabre rattling and we must reach the ordinary Russian people with our message.

The U.S. fair in Moscow displays the wonders of America, depicts some aspects of American life, and these steps are all to the good.

But how much more helpful it would be if more and more Russian people could see democracy in action -- factory parking lots crowded with cars; refrigerators, washing machines and TVs operating in houses, highways, a political campaign; the wide variety of churches in which we can worship with complete freedom; a collective bargaining conference, and even a strike by free workers such as that in steel at the present time.

Some of this would be puzzling to the Russian, but from it he would learn. From learning, we hope, would come understanding. And from understanding should come greater trust and confidence.

We must show the Russian people the America they do not know. And from that we all would benefit.

On our side we should strive harder to understand the Russians. Their way of life is different from ours, but it is their way of life and they have made great economic strides under it.

Some of us tend to downgrade the Russian effort, to close our eyes to the very real advances they have made.

Others of us give the Russians more credit than they deserve. These people look at the Russians as though they are all ten feet tall.

I saw no supermen when I was in Russia last fall. Khrushchev himself is no superman. In fact, I would welcome the chance again to sit across the bargaining table from him -- at a Summit meeting, or anywhere else for that matter.

The ideological, social, economic and political aspects of our relations with Russia are closely related. If Russia bests us in some scientific field -- as she did when Sputnik I went into orbit, Russia's ideological and political prospects are bolstered.

If Russia shows a rapid increase in her standard of living -- as she has already done -- she strengthens her hand in dealing with the uncommitted peoples of the world.

This massive challenge to the free world can best be met by making our own democracy work in these areas.

We won't do it by doing what the steel companies are doing, forcing idleness on half a million production workers to protect record profits.

We will do it by having an ever-expanding standard of living, by bringing us closer to the goal of eliminating poverty.

And we will do it by helping the underdeveloped peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America to move toward these same goals -- and far more rapidly than they are now doing.

As the free world battles with Communism it is vital that we strive to maintain a basic unity. We can argue and debate with other NATO nations -- in a free democratic manner -- but after this give-and-take -- we must present a united front. Firmness is necessary.

At the moment unity and firmness are most needed in the Berlin negotiations. We must explore freely and negotiate constructively while yet remaining firm. We must realize that the British, the French, the Germans all have interests in the Berlin situation and all have points of view. We must recognize these points of view.

We can do all these things in a democratic way. Free discussion of our differences is a measure of our strength, not a weakness.

The weak cannot expose their differences without exposing their weakness. So they conceal them -- and remain weak. I am sure that in the process of reviewing and reconciling our differences we will emerge even stronger.

But we must seek unity, not just within the NATO nations. The United Nations must play its significant role. No objective is more important than that of mobilizing the support and cooperative effort of the many nations that share our concern for security and justice.



Last winter when I was in West Berlin I pledged my support of a policy of firmness on the Berlin question. This is the position and policy of our government. It is NATO's position. We will not surrender. We will not be pushed out.

Firmness, however, is not enough. Firmness must be matched by imagination and a willingness to negotiate.

Standing firm and a willingness to negotiate are not, as some suggest, contradictory policies. Rather they are complementary policies. We can negotiate successfully only if we are prepared to stand firm. And we command the political support necessary for success only if our negotiating position is clear, consistent and realistic.

Military preparedness is also vital.

Carl Sandberg once said: "The cockroach is always wrong when it argues with the chicken."

The weak always invite trouble when they negotiate with the strong.

We need less self-congratulation and more self-examination -- and if necessary, greater sacrifice.

It is time we resolutely faced some searching questions now being asked about the adequacy or inadequacy of our present military strength.

If the Western community of nations is to endure, we must do what is necessary to maintain military parity with the Soviets.

To meet the challenge of the Soviets will not be easy. It will require effort and sacrifice from all Americans. But can anyone who saw America respond to the total challenge of World War II and Korea doubt her capacity to respond again today?

Our country needs leadership and vision. I am convinced that the American people long to be called to greater action in order that this nation may realize her full potential here and abroad.

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*Ec  
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*Econ Decisions  
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Report



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We can & will do it by building, expanding and ~~not making ever more~~ efficient the American industrial system.

We can & will meet the Russian challenge by improving & expanding our Educational System.

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7/30/59



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