

PART 12 - Turning Points

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David Morphet, 1990

A Memory of Chernobyl

The disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant on 26 April 1986 raised a myriad of questions about the basic design of the reactors, their customary mode of operation, the specific actions which led to the explosion, the implications for the safety of other nuclear plant of the same design, the way in which the emergency had been handled, the containment of the highly radioactive nuclear residue in the destroyed reactor, the wide radiological consequences of the accident, and so on. The Russians undertook it to make a presentation at a Special Assembly of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA – the United Nations nuclear watchdog). This was convened in Vienna from 25–29 August 1986 and attended by hundreds of representatives of worldwide nuclear bodies and the press.

There was a widely held suspicion that the Russians would tell less than the full story, and in the UK, a group under the chairmanship of Lord Walter Marshall, Chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) and former head of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), prepared a memorandum of the questions to which we wanted answers. This ran to 24 pages. Lord Marshall and I were the joint leaders of the UK delegation to the Special Assembly, which included representatives of all branches of the UK civil nuclear industry.

To our surprise, the Russian presentation in August was so impressively detailed that we put our 24-page memorandum to one side. Walter Marshall and I had a private meeting with Valeriy Legasov, Deputy Director of the Khurchatov Institute for Atomic Energy in Moscow who made the presentation. He was an impressive individual, undoubtedly the most authoritative figure in the large USSR delegation, and surprisingly outspoken.

Two years later we learned that he had committed suicide, apparently following rejection of proposals for changes to the USSR nuclear regulatory system. The Russians blamed operator error for the disaster, but serious weaknesses of reactor design were inevitably highlighted.

Domestically, Chernobyl gave President Gorbachev a powerful opportunity to press his policies of perestroika and glasnost. The openness of the Russian account at Vienna was indicative of a significant change of political climate.

David Morphet was first trained in Arabic at MECAS in the Lebanon, then posted to Taiz, Doha and Madrid. He then transferred to the UK Department of Energy where he became in succession Under-Secretary of the Electricity, Energy Policy and Atomic Energy Divisions. Between 1983–85 he was UK Governor of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Paris and from 1985–89 UK Governor of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna.



Kevin Grant, 1988

**The arrival of the Internet: Afternoon thoughts in the
South Library**

3.00pm: After Napoleon

This wonder from the days of yore is
Iron-stepped and up two storeys
To epic tomes above, abundant,
Brass handrails curving up...redundant?
Great books, unvisited for ages,
Sages' unfrequented pages.
Dickens's relic Pickwick chair
Empty, just below the stair.
Gilded, cool, high, elegant,
Must this room end white elephant?
This dreamy chamber, lovely, rare,
Soon just a castle in the air?
All easier on screens below,
The newer, cruder means to know.

4.30pm: After Earl Grey

Farewell, beloved library.
Hello, CD-Rom.
The once United Kingdom
United king dot com.
Onsets a bleaker winter yet,
The bloody, bloody Internet
With dismal triple w
To trip and trap and trouble you.
Ten billion "facts", at finger-click.
All true? Some? Which? I'm feeling sick.
"Help" and "Upgrades" make things worse,
Just steepening my learning curse.
Old tides wet-ankled King Canute,
New flows strand me as nincompute.

*The opening poem of Deeps and Shallows – Verse captions to a minor life
published by Words Ink in 2007.*

Emeritus Professor Dan Cohn-Sherbok, 1985

All-American Sanity

At the beginning of my training to become a rabbi, all the candidates at the American seminary were individually summoned to an interview with a local psychiatrist. His office was located in the Jewish suburbs. Lavishly decorated with deep carpets, modern furniture and abstract paintings, it exuded affluence and culture.

When the psychiatrist arrived, I stood up and we shook hands. Small in stature, Dr Levinson suffered from a slight nervous twitch. 'Do sit down,' he gestured. Arranging himself across from me, he lit up a cigar. 'So,' he said. 'You want to be a rabbi?'

'Yes...I do.'

He let out a large puff of smoke. 'How long have you wanted to do this?' he asked.

'Ever since my bar mitzvah. I never really wanted to do anything else. My father's a doctor but I didn't want to follow in his footsteps.'

Dr Levinson looked at me quizzically, 'You don't like your father?'

'That's not what I meant,' I said.

'And what about your mother?'

He then proceeded to ask me a series of impertinent questions about family relationships. Then he went on to sex. It became quite clear that it was not permitted for rabbis to be homosexual.

He seemed satisfied by my answers. But then his twitch got noticeably worse. It was clear we were getting down to the main purpose of the meeting.

'Do you ever hear voices?' he asked.

'Well, I'm not deaf,' I replied. 'I hear voices all the time.'

'Don't play with me, young man. I mean religious voices. Voices in your head.'

'No,' I said. 'I've never heard those kinds of voices.'

'What about visions?', asked Dr Levinson. 'Have you ever had a vision?'

'You mean like Moses and the burning bush?' I asked. I was beginning to see where we were going.

'Well,' said Dr Levinson. 'Yes, something like that.'

'No,' I said. 'No visions. No voices.'

Dr Levinson's cigar had gone out. He began to relax. I felt my interview was ending. He picked up a pen and wrote something in a notebook. Then he stood up. 'Well, that's it. Thank you for coming. It's been a pleasure to meet you. Best of luck in your studies.' He opened the door and shook hands with me and grimaced. The door slammed shut.

Over the years, I often reflected on my encounter with Dr Levinson. All of us had been sent to a psychiatrist to test our mental health. We were to become rabbis in the affluent suburbs of America. Voices and visions were not what congregations wanted. All-American sanity and optimism were what were required. I fear Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and the other prophets of the biblical period would never have survived an interview with Dr Levinson.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok is Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Wales.

Professor Tom Foulkes, 2003

My Career Takes a Hammering

3 October 1990, a small town in Germany. Suddenly, my career takes a hammering. Throughout the previous year, it had been just possible for a young military engineer like me, whose professional life was totally focused on developing new weapons to counter the Soviet threat, to maintain a belief that the world was not really going to change that much.

I was a prisoner of hope. After all, the prospect of German reunification had been vigorously opposed in London, Washington and Paris. And in Germany itself, Gunter Grass was not alone in voicing concerns.

Yet, less than a year before, the Iron Curtain had been torn down in Berlin amid scenes of wild euphoria and rejoicing. Nobody could doubt that the tectonic plates of geopolitics had suddenly lurched in a new direction. However, in the months that followed, I observed a growing ambivalence amongst my German friends and a curious cocktail of ecstasy and angst. So, I allowed myself to believe that change might be gradual process, with the Army slowly evolving and my technical career evolving with it.

But Chancellor Kohl had other ideas. It was the springtime of expectation. And the West wanted its peace dividend now.

On that historic night, the little medieval town, which had garrisoned British troops since 1945, and where I now served, was organising a torchlit ceremony to celebrate the imminent *Einheit*. Invited to join the *Bürgermeister* and local dignitaries on the stage, I was listening to their impassioned speeches when it suddenly came to me, in a blinding flash, that all the old certainties had gone, reunification was already a fact, the Soviet threat was no more, and disarmament would follow. In transcending communism, democracy was finally delivering the dearly-bought boons of the Atlantic Charter: peace, freedom and prosperity for

the whole of Europe. Good news for the world, but somewhat unpromising for my military career. That was my rendezvous with destiny. Time and tide demanded immediate action: new commercial experience and civilian qualifications. That moment wasn't the end of history, but it did launch my second career.

The conversion took time. But I got there in the end.

After a distinguished military career in the Royal Engineers, Brigadier Tom Foulkes OBE has, since 2015, been an independent consultant. His current non-executive positions include Visiting Professor at the University of Surrey – Civil Engineering Department, Governor of Clifton College and member of the Steering Group at the University of Cambridge – Centre for Smart Infrastructure and Construction.



Marjorie Shiona Wallace, Countess Skarbek, 2002

Crestfallen, We Had to Retreat to Soho

I have never quite outgrown my resistance to rules. At school I was a quiet but consistent rebel, especially where compulsory exercise was concerned. So, any institution resembling a school or college would involuntarily trigger that urge to slip away, passing the teacher's eye to be found writing poetry in the fields or hiding under a piano.

It was not so easy to evade the eyes of the staff on duty at the Athenæum. In my first days as a member I was evicted three times, much to my embarrassment and the surprise of my guests. I arrived with an eminent gentleman of the Royal Household only to be told I would not be allowed in. Why? What had I done wrong? I had paid my subscription and had never held a riotous party. It turned out that I was inappropriately attired. Coming from a colonial background I am all in favour of dressing for occasions (and definitely not in favour of the dress-down code recently adopted by the English National Opera). I also never wear sloppy jeans. That day, I was particularly pleased with my new Calvin Klein trouser suit that was unfortunately made from denim, a material equated with jeans. Crestfallen, we had to retreat to Soho and the more louche Groucho Club.

Marjorie Shiona Wallace CBE BA Hon DSc Hon FRC Psych is an award-winning investigative journalist, writer and broadcaster, founder and chief executive of mental health charity SANE.

Paul Tempest, 1981

1971 – Independence in the Arabian Gulf

*This way Sinbad trapped between
A phosphorescent bauble wake
And cold eternal stars
Had wondered if he would return
From where
Astern Miss Universe
300,000 tons of crude
In a fat fifth of a mile of steel
Is closing fast at 15 knots –
Beware ...*

Recessional, England, 1971

*... It may be when more solemn musics blend
precise a European hymn, we tend
no ear, as gulls full-circling overhead
which on a rising storm turn inland, we
ignore the nomad, spurn the refugee;
Know then you island children English yet
waifs dazzled by the moon lest you forget
how once the broad sad canvas filled – in our
drab cities, barracks, careworn mills it bends
to desert airs and free wild ocean winds.*

These two extracts are taken from Of the Desert and the Sea - an illustrated Guide to the Arabian Gulf by Paul Tempest published in June 1972. This book expressed then, as now, his conviction that, whatever the impact of multiple external interference, the vast wealth from huge resources of oil and gas, and rapid economic development, these states had and still have a trump card. Their lively awareness of their own tribal origins and the preservation of ancient forms of leadership, consultation, administration and hospitality are the key. They remain, despite new and unforeseen external threats, a hidden source of strength and regional peace.

Jasper Rootham, 1954

Affirmation

Opening Words

Wrong, I now see, the time when I was born
 in a tearing world soon to explode
in the first of two deadly wars
 and even a Black Death
of the spirit conceived and born in Petrograd
 in nineteen seventeen.
Sorrow has been part of my small portion
 Since I could speak or walk.
Nevertheless there still may be a place
 for a scribe like Pimen, the old Russian monk,
to tell, amid the horrors, of the beauty and the hope,
 the unchallengeable smile
 of courage climbing the sheer cliff
out and up through a dirty moraine of bad
 onto good glaciers, shining under a clean blue sky.
This, as I watch the hoods of the distant woods
 bright slanted against the setting sun
 I shall try to do.
God will perhaps forgive me when I fail.

A Visit to Hitler's Bunker

One of the more chilling memories
is a visit to Hitler's Bunker

 where in the twilight of his reeling gods
 he blew out his demented brains
 and Eva Braun had crunched the pill of death;
where Goebbels had poisoned his wife and all his children,
 doing himself in last,
 whence Martin Bormann had stumbled out
 in the dark and disappeared.

 The run-up was almost comic. Richard Dimpleby –
 giant among War Correspondents –
 was required to file a story for Auntie BBC,
 the first, he hoped, from the Western World
 about that place of ashes.

 The party was led by a General whose name I don't remember
and, in it, two Russian speakers,

 a Lieutenant and myself.
 There was, of course, a Russian sentry
 who when we demanded entry
 loosened his safety-catch and said
 " You must find Major Platónov"
 and when we asked " But where?"
 pointed to a long concrete ramp
 and said " He will be there."

 The Lieutenant and I walked down it,
 pushed at an unlocked door
 to find ourselves in a subterranean corridor
with offices marked Keitel, Goering, Doenitz –
 then realised where we were.

In the last, stone dead Headquarters of the German General Staff.

Then down into the Bunker, surrounded as it was
by the stink of ruin and of death
destruction, churned-up mud.

Inside, a stuttering electric pump
kept the invading water
at about one inch depth.
Otherwise only silence.
The rooms were very small;
some had rather bad paintings
hung crooked on the wall.
A crooked cross of disaster
a symbol of vision run mad
and careering into fantasy.
Bad; bad, bad, bad, bad.

At least we were Successful with Operation Stork
in an overdue lifting of the moral scale.
We exported most of the pregnant mothers
(who would otherwise have died)
with their sometimes half-Russian foetuses)
West to where there was more food and warmth,
and above all organisation.
Today it may seem a little thing
but then to many was a flame
flickering low but there to show
that pity and human charity
were not forever dead.

Jasper Rootham, 1954

Editor's Note

Jasper St John Rootham (1910-1990) proceeded from Tonbridge School to St John's College, Cambridge where he obtained a First in Classics and then joined the Civil Service. Promotion was rapid. Thanks, he told me, to an ability to remain upside down with his feet in the air whenever he needed time in the office to think through difficult matters. He was soon picked out to serve in the Prime Minister's office through the period of Chamberlain's attempts to negotiate a non-aggression pact with Hitler. On the outbreak of World War Two in 1939, he joined up immediately. He was tasked with parachuting into Yugoslavia to join the partisans led by Mihailovic until he was abruptly informed that the Allies had ditched Mihailovic in favour of Tito. A perilous escape to Allied forces in Italy was arranged from a makeshift runway in a light American plane that was found on landing, he had told me, to be carrying an uprooted peach tree entangled in the undercarriage.. Later he worked with Russian Armed Forces acquiring a high degree of fluency in Russian and a deep regard for the bravery and suffering of the Russian people through the War and its painful aftermath.

Jasper joined the Bank of England in 1946 and retired as Chief of Overseas Department in 1967. In 1982 I received from Jasper a warm note from Crag House Northumberland and a copy of *Affirmation*, 5000 lines, about 40,000 words over 125 pages. It remains since then at my bedside, my most precious and best-loved book.

In 1963-64, with the Governor's decision and Jasper's support I was seconded for 14 months as the Bank's young man in the Bank for International Settlements in Basle, a posting established in its foundation in 1930 and only interrupted during the years of World War Two. Jasper came out with the Governor to the monthly gathering of Central Bank Governors

in Basle and for other reasons. We often found time for a quiet meal together. Another bond was that we were both frequent supporters and contributors to the Bank's sumptuous quarterly literary journal, *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street* founded by Lord Norman in March 1921.

The dedication of *Affirmation* is to Jasper's (lead-ballerina) wife, to Martyn Skinner "whose poetry he deeply admired and whose constant counsel helped him to finish the work as soon as he did", and also to good friends who also read it in manuscript. No one else. In weekly E-mail, No. 16, titled Snapshots of Europe, I include Jasper's brief account in verse of the Victory Parade in Berlin in 1945. I hope you like it as much as I do.

Finally I draw your attention to the last line of *Affirmation* addressed to his many friends in the Athenæum which he loved so much.

"The owls hoot, and it beckons cold".



2. GEOPOLITICS TODAY

Professor Jeremy Black, 2007

Geopolitics and the China Question

Geopolitics nicely demonstrates the conceit that Social Sciences are scientific if the latter is to be understood in terms of its ideology of empirically-based rational argument. Instead, intensely political, geopolitics owes much to the rhetorical use of argument, and not least when concepts and terms such as geographical determinism, natural interest, and strategic culture are sprayed around as if they were not each inherently subject to debate. And what I, or others, can offer is no different, but should be understood as intended as a spur to thought, including crucially disagreement. Only a fool believes that their work is somehow definitive.

Much of the discussion of the present proclaims abrupt changes, whether focused on President Trump, or the South China Sea, or a 'Covid-19 world'. In practical terms, of course, China has become more of an issue because of a combination of longer-term trends, notably economic growth, but also its move from isolation in the early 1970s. The Sino-American axis saw each participant profit from the weakness to derive strategic benefit: both in terms of their adversarial relations with the Soviet Union, and for each in navigating out of difficult encumbrances of the 1960s: the Cultural Revolution and the Vietnam War.

Western strategic mastery in part subsequently rested on Sino-Soviet division, so that the key strategic disaster of the early 2000s for the West was not al-Qaeda but the pace of Sino-Russian reconciliation. During the 2000s, the American navy both planned for confrontation with China and also advocated what in effect was an alternative strategic prioritisation and different foreign policy. While the American government, army, air force and marines were focused on Iraq and Afghanistan, the navy regarded this as at best a second-order priority (a view shared by Chinese policymakers), and, instead, urged the need to focus on the waters off East Asia. That underlay Obama's 'Pivot toward Asia' and, as in so much else, and to a degree that neither man wishes to acknowledge, there is continuity between Obama and Trump, as

there would have been between McCain/Romney and Hilary Clinton. That, however, is not to underplay marked differences in tone between leading American figures, differences that may become more apparent as the 2020 presidential campaign gathers pace.

In part, this situation poses a major problem for Britain. For political 'show' reasons, there is the deployment of naval assets off East Asia, but Britain can in practice contribute relatively little there, not least as America's crucial regional partners are Japan, followed by Australia. Instead, the value of 'Europe,' that most curious, indeed in many respects implausible of military units, is in the wider geopolitical challenge posed by China.

For any military focus on China is challenged by the need also to address Russian prospects; and vice-versa. That also explains the issue of Britain's role, and, indeed, that of 'Europe' as a whole. Despite the claims of some British navalists, the major value of Britain in any confrontation with China, or deterrence toward it, is not going to be provided by the dispatch of HMS Elizabeth to the South China Sea. Indeed, as one former First Sea Lord put it to me, it would be 'every submariner's dream' to sink that carrier, which would be highly vulnerable, not least in the South China Sea. There are uneasy parallels there with the disastrous vulnerability of the coalition navy to Japanese attack in the Battle of the Java Sea in 1942.

The value of Britain, instead, is to be part of the deterrence to Russia which poses a challenge to Atlantic security. Thus, there is a new version of the military challenge of the Cold War, one possibly better countered at sea to the submarine and anti-submarine capabilities of that period than by the attempt to force an equation of power on China based on what Britain (and the United States) have in the form of a count of carriers.

Of course, a full-spectrum Chinese challenge includes hybrid warfare in its various forms, notably cyber-warfare, the encouragement of dissidence, and a range of unconventional and/or irregular forms of conflict. The nature of the current world economic crisis will help China far more than any individual weapons programme. The increase in unemployment will be only one of the more obvious crises of hope, and this offers much to China, a power with a range of strategic means. Thus, for China many opportunities are in prospect.

The Western strategy, transposed from that of the 1950s, was containment, but the present situation offers China the possibility of leapfrogging containment, rather as the Soviet Union was to do with Egypt, Cuba, Ethiopia et al. This forces Western powers to consider the possibility of China exploiting developments that might not otherwise seem to be anything to do with that country.

In these circumstances, the prime strategic deterrent to China would be better relations between the West and Russia. That appears unlikely given the shared interests of China and Russia in revisionism, but, at the same time, there is an uneasiness in their relationship.

The alternative idea, of a reliance alone on the strengthening of the West underrates the tensions within the West, and, indeed, within individual countries. Consistency in alliance is scarcely an easy remedy given the divisions within Europe and the extent to which American policy is so obviously dependent on electoral results. The divisions within Europe are such that it is easier to propose an approach toward maintaining deterrence toward Russia, via NATO. That suggests that the burden of defence against China is likely to depend on America's existing Pacific system. Its resilience in the face of China's ambitions is uncertain.

So far we have essentially treated states as abstractions, which is an abiding flaw of much geopolitical work, as well as the means of so much political rhetoric. However, the question of 'national' moves so often is a product of the unpredictability of partisan alignments, political moves, and individual perception. And so at present. Britain's China policy is in part a product of debates within the government, dissension within the Conservative Party (which has helped weaponise the issue politically), and acute service rivalries. Other states are no different, and only a fool would consider China a monolith. The need for strategic awareness is abundantly clear, but alas it is all-too-easy to throw complexity aside for the sake of the clarity of polemic.

A Senior Fellow at Policy Exchange and the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Jeremy Black is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Exeter. His books include Geopolitics, Military Strategy, War and Technology and Air Power. A Global History.

Professor Kathleen Burk, 2015

The Economic Weapon: The USA and China

For the past two centuries, the relationship between the United States and China in its various incarnations – Chinese Empire, Republic of China, People's Republic of China – has been one of attraction and repulsion. The current relationship is troubling, because military conflict, whether accidental or intentional, is now distinctly possible. This arises from the aggression of a China determined to assert its growing power and clashing with a US which, somewhat belatedly, recognised what was happening and is scrambling to develop the strategic and tactical tools necessary to push China back, or, at the very least, to contain it.

President Trump is utilising economic power as his major weapon. The US approach towards China has been somewhat different from that in use against Iran. China is too powerful and its economic system too strong to be destroyed; the most that the US can hope to accomplish is to contain it. Trump went through a period during which he emphasised that the Chinese President and he were friends. He hoped to achieve by negotiation the modification or removal of a number of Chinese trade policies and practices which he believed injured the US. These included the manipulation of the exchange rate of the renminbi to lower the selling prices of Chinese exports; the 'theft' of intellectual property; the requirement for technology transfer by foreign firms operating in China; and the dumping of goods at below cost price in order to gain substantial market share. Some progress came from negotiations: the manipulation of the currency lessened, and the Chinese promised to buy larger quantities of American agricultural produce.

The President finally decided that the Chinese response was not enough, and the imposition of ever higher import tariffs began. China retaliated with the imposition of its own high tariffs and other restrictions. It has not yet, however, used its own financial weapon against the US, which

is the substantial selling of US Treasuries (debt securities) from its reserves. At the end of May, these Treasuries totalled \$1.3 trillion, fully one-third of Chinese foreign currency reserves. The sale of a large proportion of them would cause a dangerous plunge in the value of the dollar. China itself would pay a price, given the substantial, although slowly decreasing, proportion of its own reserves held in dollars: it would be selling against itself. If the value of the dollar falls, so does the value of China's reserves. Political gain versus economic loss would require careful calculation, and it is not likely to happen anytime soon.

Yet the Chinese moves to suppress the autonomy of Hong Kong have led the President to begin to impose further trade and now financial sanctions on China through Hong Kong. At the end of May, he announced the revocation of Hong Kong's special status, predicated on the existence of the rule of law and of civil liberties. This status allowed the free interchange of US and Hong Kong dollars, preferential treatment on trade, meaning low or no tariffs, and visa-free travel between Hong Kong and the US. This threatens the position of Hong Kong as the regional centre for international business and finance. Furthermore, there are bills in Congress designed to forbid American pension funds from investing in Chinese companies and to delist Chinese companies on American stock exchanges.

The ultimate purpose of sanctions is to force important policy changes on an adversary, to the extent in extreme cases of causing it to self-destruct. But it would be wise for both China and the US to remember Adam Smith's comment that 'There is a great deal of ruin in a nation', and to consider exit strategies from their trade and sanctions war before events get out of control. Economic sanctions are two-edged swords, and both countries will increasingly suffer. It is probable that the 'winner' will be the country that can successfully endure the most pain.

Kathleen Burk is emeritus Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at University College, London.

John C. Q. Roberts, 1982

‘Russia – A riddle wrapped in a Mystery’

For nearly twenty years I have been going back and forth to Russia, building bridges between politicians, professional people, those who work in the media and the arts - in short, the opinion-formers. Years ago I, a former British Ambassador to Moscow wisely postulated that if we in the West believe in the superiority of our system, with its built-in mechanisms such as a free press and periodic elections for tackling its imperfections, then we can only ‘win’ encounters with any opposing system. Therefore, the more contact, the better. However, in the Twenties and Thirties many respectable and respected British intellectuals, despairing of solutions being found to the social problems of the time, sought to find answers in the world’s first socialist state.

One of them, for a time, was Constance Garnett whose translations of the great Russian writers had introduced Russia to the consciousness of many of us. It is to her great credit that she, rather earlier than some, grasped the reality of Soviet Russia. Irritated by passages in a *New Statesman* review of a book written by someone who had suffered Soviet ‘justice’ and had survived to tell the tale, Constance Garnett wrote to the reviewer, Leonard Woolf, in November 1933: ‘I do hate what is being done in Russia. I do dread the spread of ‘communism’. I rejoiced in 1917. Only very slowly and reluctantly, step by step, have I been driven by the desire to face the facts into my present position. ... Communism is a fanatical religion. ... Its theories make a strong appeal to the brutal, envious and ignorant. ... Your review gives the impression that you think the material achievements of the Soviet Government so immense as to outweigh the spiritual degradation and mental distortion that accompany its terrorism.’

I have just returned from Moscow, where I was the guest of the All-Union State Library for Foreign Literature². Earlier this year it had been the first state-owned library to open a non-atheist religious reading room.

Was it just a coincidence that it was on this library's photocopiers that *The Moscow Independent* (whose presses had been closed by edict of the junta) was defiantly printed; rushed from there up the hill past the KGB HQ under the bronze eye of Felix Dzhzhzhinsky, its founder, whose statue would within twenty-four hours be toppled from its pedestal; downhill past the Bolshoi Theatre opposite the Karl Marx memorial bearing the revised dictum 'Workers of the World, Forgive me!'; on past the Column Hall where the great treason trials of the Thirties were held; past the end of what was Gorky Street, now once more bearing its pre-revolutionary name; along past the Kremlin and uphill through the underpass where a Jew, a Christian and a Moslem lost their lives that day in confrontation with the tanks? Finally to the square to be distributed free amongst the crowds protecting their Russian Parliament, defying the attempted reimposition of rule by 'the brutal, envious and ignorant'.

In his October 1939 broadcast Churchill had prefaced his famous dictum, from which I have borrowed a title for this article, with the words: 'I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia.' Nor can I. There will surely be political and economic turmoil ahead. It may be decades before they begin to master, rather than just acquire the arts of democracy. As I left Moscow, the words 'Forgive me' were being removed from Marx's plinth. If they have enough solvent they may try to remove what I saw daubed on the empty pedestal up the hill - 'Felix, forgive us!' Or will they? Watch that space!

John Roberts was for many years Director of the Foreign Office supported Great Britain-USSR Association, later renamed the Britain-Russia Centre.

Professor Kathleen Burk, 2015

The USA: The President and the Governors

The American Civil War of 1861 to 1865 was fought over several issues, but arguably the most important was the question of the rights of the states as opposed to those of the federal government. This has been an issue of profound importance since the writing of the Constitution in 1787, through the Civil War, to, more recently, civil rights, gun law and the legalisation of marijuana. Now under President Trump, the question of states' rights has emerged again. Until recently, climate change – is there one, should it be ignored, what to do about it – and immigration have dominated the debate as to what should be done and by whom. Can the President, i.e., the federal government, tell the states what to do? Now there is another issue, one of life and death: coronavirus.

President Trump has taken various stances on coronavirus. First of all, he said that there was no issue. Whilst his pronouncements were not quite of the calibre of President Bolsonaro of Brazil, who shrugged whilst saying 'So what?' when told that people were dying, he nevertheless denied that there was a problem. A few weeks later, he announced that he had known there was a pandemic from the first. Thus, if there is a pandemic, what should the federal government do about it? On the one hand, the government tried secretly to buy the complete output of a vaccine produced by a German company, an attempt which was apparently blocked by the German government. This was denied by the company but confirmed by its largest investor and German government ministers. As well, it moved to commandeer ventilators ordered by a state which were re-directed to states which supported Trump. Indeed, he stated that state governments seeking federal aid to combat coronavirus needed to be nice to him: 'If they don't treat you right, I don't call.' On the other hand, he has said on more than one occasion that it was the duty of the states, not the federal government, to deal with health issues and thus the pandemic.

Where does that leave the states? In this period of crisis, it is the President who is insisting that their decisions, and their ability to implement them, particularly if they go against his wishes, are their responsibility. The states themselves agree, but are insisting that formulating and implementing a national strategy is the duty of the federal government which should then share out resources equally. Those which have been badly hit, such as New York, California, Michigan and Illinois, are primarily states with Democratic governors, who, the President has hinted, must grovel to him before he would consider sending them any help. Those which have not been badly hit have been primarily Republican states, some of which, such as South Dakota, have refused to enforce any lockdown.

One result has been the emergence of strong governors who have mobilised the resources of their states, including their populations, to fight the virus. Gavin Newsome of California, Andrew Cuomo of New York, and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan have attracted wide public notice and, mostly, plaudits for their organisation of resources and attempts to enforce lockdowns. Many of the states are going their own way. Indeed, regional groups of states are agreeing pacts to co-ordinate the re-opening of their societies: on the Pacific coast, California, Oregon and Washington state and in the north-east, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

There have been other regional pacts in American history, most notably that of the southern states who came together as the Confederacy in 1861, but this is an unhelpful precedent. The current imbroglio has stimulated comments as to the desirability of having presidential candidates who have administrative and managerial experience, and attention has turned to governors. At the end of May, Democratic governors of some of the swing states who took decisive action have seen their poll ratings surge. Normally, governors of states with high populations are automatically considered as possible candidates, but managerial and administrative experience which is perceived to have been successful may in the future have considerable importance in assessing their desirability.

A consequence now is that not only are sick people in danger, but that the

constitutional question of states' rights and responsibilities versus those of the federal government has been intertwined with the dangerous political and cultural conflict between the pro- and anti-Trump factions. Constitutionally, states do carry the responsibility for health issues: the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution states that 'The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.' The President, however, continues to assert that he can tell the states what to do. He cannot, of course, but the loyalty to the President of some states and the disregard of the President by others means that the US is a patchwork of reactions and rules regarding the virus. It is arguable that not since the Civil War has this country been such a Disunited States.

