

'World almost went to war'

The *Sunday Telegraph* of London on Oct. 16 purported to tell the story of how war almost broke out by mistake in November 1983. The story is based on the testimony of Oleg Gordievsky, a KGB defector who worked in the KGB's First Chief Directorate for espionage abroad. Gordievsky claims that then-First Chief Directorate head Gen. Vladimir Kryuchkov—who has just been appointed to head the KGB—called senior KGB officers together, to mobilize them in response to perceived Western war moves.

The moves Kryuchkov was talking about, Gordievsky said, were part of a Nov. 2-11, 1983 NATO exercise, code-named ABLE ARCHER. This was a command post drill, to enable the Western alliance to practice its nuclear release procedures. Gordievsky claimed that the Soviets responded to the maneuver by going into an "ill-founded panic," since they believed that "belligerent imperialist circles in the U.S.A. are getting ready for war, and are preparing new weapons systems which could render a sudden attack feasible." As a result of this "panic," Gordievsky claims, on or about Nov. 8-9, the world "really passed through a war danger."

The article claims that NATO monitors discerned that "something was going badly wrong. Instead of the monitoring normally to be expected from across the Iron Curtain, a sharp increase was registered in both the volume and the urgency of the Eastern Bloc traffic. The incredible seemed to be happening, namely that the Warsaw Pact suspected it might really be facing nuclear attack at any moment. Gordievsky was later to explain to the West that this was, in fact, far from incredible. The classic Soviet plan for an offensive against the West envisages that maneuvers will be used as a combined camouflage screen and springboard for the real attack. The Russians naturally assume that their adversaries would do the same."

The lesson which Gordievski draws from what he calls the Soviets' "ill-founded panic" at the time, is that the West must develop a policy of responsible détente toward the U.S.S.R., responding positively to what seem to be genuine concessions from the Soviets, but "meeting Gorbachov with straight talk." He advises: "Never fudge the basic differences between East and West. Above all, in the meantime, remain strong on the military and nuclear fronts."

necessarily war, beginning 1988.

7) The Soviet leadership may be evil, but it is not a collection of children in the matter of war. Why should it incur the terrible penalties of general warfare, if it could acquire its strategic goals as Hitler did up through the summer of 1939? Why force a powerful victim to resist, when one might induce him to surrender by psychological intimidation and subversion?

So, in 1983, there never was a danger of general war, from our side, or Moscow's. However, it was most useful to Moscow to induce the U.S. government to believe that such an immediate potential existed. As Moscow hoped, Washington and Western Europe "blinked." Moscow obtained everything it sought for the medium term, without firing a single Soviet missile.

Failures in Western analysis

The principal cause of failures of this sort in the Western governments and related establishment circles, are chiefly two. First, Western society has become what sociologist David Riesman described as an "other-directed society." Most people, especially the politically sensitized ones, do not act upon their own independently formed, rational opinions; they borrow what they imagine to be "approved opinions." Second, there is a powerful faction within the Atlantic establishment which is committed to a form of "world federalism" based upon global power-sharing arrangements with Moscow; they tend to assist Moscow in anything which seems to them to bring the world closer to their peculiar sort of goals of global power-sharing between the Anglo-American liberals and Moscow.

The cultural psychological flaw of "other-directedness" is the reason that nearly every liberal press and politician's interpretation of events in Moscow reminds us of a script from a TV soap opera. Everything is explained in terms of soap-opera-like explanations of interpersonal, who-hit-whom sorts of transactions among individual personalities and groups of personalities.

As I have stressed in earlier reports on the poor quality of most Western Sovietology, real history is no soap opera. Real history is shaped by the same principles we ought to recognize from such great classical tragedy as that of Aeschylus, Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare, and Friedrich Schiller. The essence of the U.S. government is that it is a real-life Greek tragedy. The Soviet Union is also a Greek tragedy, although a different drama than the U.S. one.

People's actions are governed by the way in which they think. Most people have almost no "free will" in the strict sense of the term; they act as they are habituated to react to events, often resembling the way a gold-fish swims in tight circles in a pool, after being released from a small bowl. "Free will" requires that we not accept blindly those usually unconscious axioms of thinking which cause us to choose the kinds of decisions we make in response to events. In other