

NATO Build-Up On Russia's Borders

Worst Treachery Since Munich 1938

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✖ Allow me to start off with a personal recollection. I accompanied Mikhail Gorbachev on his visit to the United States of America almost seventeen years ago, and attended, as another adviser, Gorbachev's meetings with George Bush Sr., and that gave me a rare chance to watch what historians of the future will surely be inclined to describe as the biggest breach of confidence and compare to the notoriously known Munich agreement between France and Britain, on the one hand, and Nazi Germany, on the other.

Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush Sr. focused on the reunification of divided Germany. President Bush saw the reunification of Germany as a fundamental factor of continental stability and global detente.

He repeatedly assured Soviet leader Gorbachev that the reunification of Germany would never take the North Atlantic Alliance closer to the Soviet border. I can still open my old notebook or play back an old tape to recall what he said: "The allied forces will not be inching closer to your border."

I'm sure that repeatedly reiterated pledge can still be found in President Bush's archives, and in the old files of the U.S Department of State because the then Secretary of State, James Baker, also attended that meeting - and is still with us, which makes the verification of what I say very easy.

The same kind of pledge was made by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and British Prime Minister John Major. But those political leaders prefer to keep mum now that the pledge they made on behalf of their Cabinets and countries is brazenly reduced to ashes.

The deployment of NATO forces in the immediate vicinity of Russia and the Pentagon's decision to station troops in Poland and the Czech Republic leave those highly respected gentlemen unperturbed in the happy oblivion of one not unimportant principle of international law - continuity of international commitments.

The arrival of NATO forces at the border of Russia translates into more than a threat to the Russian Federation. Russia will find a way to meet this threat. The American super-hawks had better remember that Russia remains a powerful country with impressive stocks of nuclear missiles.

If the perfidious disregard of that old pledge deals a blow to anything, it deals it to trust in relations between different members of the international community, trust which rests on respect of international commitments and all ground-laying norms of international law. An

old Roman dictum has reigned for more than two thousand years in the field of international relations – “pacta servanda sunt.”

Disregard of this principle, uncivilized and irresponsible attempts to ignore it may reduce international relations to uncontrollable chaos, which is unacceptable by definition and absolutely unacceptable in this age of nuclear weapons.

According to an old saying, a liar is not believed even when he happens to speak the truth. What kind of relations is Moscow supposed to maintain with Washington if it cannot rely on the word of an American President? If an American President felt free to go back on his word?

The world faces a number of complicated and thorny problems. International terrorism, environmental pollution, which puts a question mark over the human civilization, energy security and, last but not least, the hitherto unknown diseases which may hit the human race worse than the awful scourges of the past – plague and cholera – did centuries ago. No country, not even the cocksure United States of America, is capable of settling these problems by single-handed effort.

Close, enduring and, by all means, honest cooperation between the United States and Russia is a necessary condition for the settlement of the existing problems. But trust is a necessary condition for this kind of cooperation. The American disregard of important earlier-signed agreements will surely undermine trust in today's and future relations.

The Bush dynasty will sooner or later go off the political stage, but policy-makers to come will surely face the same kind of problems. Isn't it time for them to stop thinking in terms of their political affiliations and give, instead, serious thought to this consideration?

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