

"Перед Клинтоном стоит огромная проблема"

Отрывок из статьи в "Гардиан", 12 марта 1993 г., автор Мартин Уолкер

...Билл Клинтон сейчас стоит перед лицом первого в своей президентской работе большого международного кризиса. В Белом доме забегали туда-сюда команды службы безопасности, происходит оживленный обмен телеграммами на высшем уровне, а также дипломатической почтой, из этого становится ясно, что в сравнении с нынешним кризисом в России трагедии в Боснии, Сомали и на Гаити кажутся второстепенными.

В своем послании лидерам Большой Семерки Борис Ельцин попросил Запад о неофициальной поддержке, о постоянной политической и экономической помощи даже в том случае, если ему придется восстановить диктатуру в России, приостановить деятельность парламента и управлять страной посредством декретов.

Неожиданно перед Клинтоном встала острая дилемма, связанная с проблемами бюджета его собственной страны, ее отношения с Японией и Европой, и с затянувшейся ядерной угрозой, и с судьбами мировой экономики, и с нравственной проблемой - поддержать ли предложение Ельцина, который намеревается разрушить демократию в России, с тем, чтобы эту демократию спасти.

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Clinton faces the big heat

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The stakes are enormous as Yeltsin provides the US President with his first major international crisis. Failure could mean a return to the cold war

Martin Walker

BILL CLINTON now faces his first big international crisis. From the sudden scurrying of the national security teams in and out of the White House situation room, to the surries of top-level cables and diplomacy, the current Russian imbroglio makes the Bosnian and Somalia and Haitian tragedies look like so many side-shows.

In a message to the G7 leaders sent to Germany's Helmut Kohl, Boris Yeltsin has asked the West for a blank cheque, for a promise of continued political and economic support even if he has to bring back a Russian dictatorship, suspending parliament and ruling by decree.

Suddenly, Clinton has been pitched into an acute foreign policy dilemma which brings in his own budget headaches, his relations with Japan and Europe, the lingering threat of nuclear weapons, the fate of the global economy and the moral question of whether to support Yeltsin's suggestion that he destroy Russian democracy in order to save it.

If Clinton muffs this one, the stakes are enormous. Failure could mean a return to a kind of cold war with the one country in the world which can still threaten the US with nuclear attack. It would leave America facing four years with a chastened and hamstrung leader. And it could widen the

deepening trade tensions with Japan into a serious strategic row that could take the world's second biggest economy out of the G7 process.

History gives few second chances, but Clinton now has the opportunity to succeed where George Bush failed. Through parsimony, obsession with Iraq and a general failure of vision, Bush failed to nail down the grand strategic bargain which would have thrown the economic weight of the West behind Mikhail Gorbachev's bid to reform the Soviet Union.

Now Boris Yeltsin returns with an even more acute form of the same fundamental question. From 1945 until 1990, American leadership built the great economic tripod of Japan, Europe and North America into a distinct strategic entity which became the West, able to coordinate their policies over the long haul under the threat of war and communist expansion.

Can that strategic unity be maintained when the threat appears so much less mortal, and when the challenge is to build something rather than defend themselves, and when the old habits of strategic deference among allies are being overtaken by the commercial squabbles between trading rivals?

From Clinton's White House, the perspective is that they have three separate but inter-linked issues to deal with. The first is the underlying crisis which began in 1989, when what Russians call Mikhail



Gorbachev's "good" perestroika began to splinter out of control. There were two crucial moments, when Gorbachev ducked the chance to achieve a genuine political legitimacy by fighting and winning a free presidential election, and then when he dropped the 500-day Shatalin plan for economic reform in October, 1990.

Yeltsin has now fallen into the same trap. He has the legitimacy of election, but presiding with uncertain powers over a basically communist constitution and a parliamentary legislature that still reflects the power bases and prejudices of the old regime. And with the dropping of the free-marketier Yegor Gaidar and the stalling on the International Monetary Fund's economic programme, Yeltsin is also now without a coherent strategy of economic reform.

The second crisis is the immediate one that began late last week when Helmut Kohl received that letter. Yeltsin's appeal for Western backing if he disbanded parliament and launched a period of personal rule dominated the talks between Presidents Clinton and Mitterrand and provoked their new call for a quick emergency session of the G7 international economic summit to coordinate a Western response.

This leads to the third per-

ceived crisis, which is the nature of the G7 process itself, and whether these annual summits with their traditionally anodyne communiques are still the right vehicle for international consensus, and whether they have the authority to commit the seven main industrial governments to first subsequent action.

The immediate reaction of Clinton, Major, Mitterrand and Kohl, the West's big four, is that their priority is to sustain Russian democracy, without getting trapped into pinning their policies upon the single figure of Yeltsin. That is the mistake Clinton believes that Bush made with Gorbachev.

With both Italy and Canada in the middle of political difficulties and transition, it is assumed that they will follow whatever line the Big Four agree. But that leaves Japan, whose single-party government is now plunged into its own crisis of political legitimacy as the country grapples with the first serious experience of economic recession. Japan is seen in the White House as the main danger to the G7 process for three reasons.

The first is Japan's trade policies and surpluses. The second is Japan's insistence at the Houston G7 summit in 1990, a year after the Tiananmen Square massacre, on resuming

its aid and trade credits with China as matter of national priority which outweighed the need for G7 consensus. And the third is Japan's insistence that Russia return the Kurile Islands, occupied in 1945, before Tokyo joins any new international effort to sustain the Russian economy.

Complicating all this, but also offering a way out, is the latest intervention by Michael Camdessus, director of the International Monetary Fund. In a long and rather moving paper which quotes Vaclav Havel on the nature of patience and defines Russia as "the challenge of the decade for the IMF and the international community", Camdessus calls for another stab at the Grand Bargain. If Russia puts a credible economic reform plan in place and stabilises its legal and administrative chaos, Camdessus argues that the West must be prepared to respond dramatically.

This could be the way ahead — with three big ifs: if Japan can be cajoled to go along; if Clinton can persuade a Congress in budget-cutting mood to find the money; if the political civil war between Boris Yeltsin and his angry parliament can be persuaded into a truce and then carve into constitutional stone the legal and economic reforms the West requires.

So far, the rights of private

property are legally sustained only by flimsy presidential decree. Western private investors are understandably shrinking from a Russia where their tax status shifts from week to week and region to region, and where their profits and investment are utterly unpredictable and their contracts unenforceable. The IMF says it cannot cope with the hyper-inflation which threatens the rouble, and a central bank which seems answerable neither to political authority nor to the rules of capitalist banking.

One cause for hope is the quality of Clinton's key aides on Russian policy. Tom Pickering, the Ambassador to Moscow, had the reputation of the State Department's best diplomacy even before his impressive stint as George Bush's man at the United Nations. Tom Simons as the new aid coordinator was another State Department star before his brilliant term as the last US Ambassador to Poland. And Sirobe Talbot, in addition to Clinton's ear, has the confidence of Yeltsin and the other Russian leaders he met as a top Time magazine journalist and cold war historian.

They are working on a package for a new round of international relief on Russia's \$84 billion debt, and a \$10 billion fund to provide a social safety net for the unemployed, the pensioners and the new poor of Russia's transition.

At the IMF and in the White House, a plan is falling into place. Its fate will depend on events in Congress and in Tokyo and above all in Moscow. But as Boris Yeltsin prepares for his first summit with Clinton in Vancouver in three weeks time, he might be unwise to consider himself the only game in town for the G7. They made that mistake before.

A Russian leader with a solid democratic and constitutional political base for reform could be worth the biggest gamble of Clinton's Presidency. A Kremlin dictator ruling by dubious decree is something else.

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