113th CONGRESS
2d Session

Printed for the use of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

FILM SCREENING OF "AGE OF DELIRIUM"

JULY 23, 2013

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Washington: 2015

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
234 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202–225–1901
csce@mail.house.gov
http://www.csce.gov

Legislative Branch Commissioners

SENATE

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, MARYLAND,
Chairman
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, RHODE ISLAND
TOM UDALL, NEW MEXICO
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT
ROGER WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, GEORGIA
JOHN BOOZMAN, ARKANSAS

HOUSE

CHRISTOPHER SMITH, NEW JERSEY,
Co-Chairman
JOSEPH PITTS, PENNSYLVANIA
ROBERT ADERHOLT, ALABAMA
PHIL GINGREY, GEORGIA
MICHAEL BURGESS, TEXAS
ALCEE HASTINGS, FLORIDA
LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER,
NEW YORK
MIKE MCINTYRE, NORTH CAROLINA
STEVE COHEN, TENNESSEE

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Helsinki process, formally titled the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. As of January 1, 1995, the Helsinki process was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The membership of the OSCE has expanded to 56 participating States, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

FILM SCREENING OF "AGE OF DELIRIUM"

JULY 23, 2013

WITNESSES

PARTICIPANTS

FILM SCREENING OF "AGE OF DELIRIUM"

July 23, 2013

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
Washington, DC

The briefing was held from 2:30 to 5:04 p.m. EDT in 210 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., Kyle Parker, Policy Adviser, CSCE, presiding.

Mr. PARKER. I'd like to welcome you all on behalf of Helsinki Commission Chairman Senator Cardin and Co-chairman Representative Chris Smith and all of our leadership to today's screening of "Age of Delirium."

We have a full length film ahead so I want to jump in and get this going right quick. We are pleased to be joined not only by my good friend and renowned Russian scholar David Satter, the filmmaker, but as well by Kevin Klose, President and CEO of RFE/RL, and my colleague Paul Carter from the Department of State. So we'll hopefully have a rich discussion following the film. I encourage you all to participate.

This is an on-the-record event and will produce a government transcript. And hopefully, following the film, there will be no shortage of topics to discuss.

There's handouts outside, bios and a few select articles. Our filmmaker, David, who I'll turn it over to in a minute to introduce his work, is really one of the deepest thinkers on Russia, he gets beneath the surface; has worked Russia for decades, was FT's correspondent—I think his seriousness comes across in the film. He's also a scholar at the Hudson Institute and a consultant to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. David produces incredible scholarship on Russia. And there's a piece out there from, I believe, 2008, called "Obama and Russia." I read it on the way over and it could have easily been written yesterday as well as the piece from today on the Navalny trial, which I assume an audience like this has read plenty about.

Without any further chatter, let me turn it over to David. And David, if you could say a few words about the film, and then we'll push play, and jump into the discussion following the movie.

Mr. SATTER. Well, thank you, Kyle.

The film is based on the first book I wrote about Russia, which is "Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union." A copy of the book is outside on the table, if anyone wants to take a look at it.

That book was the product of my six years as the Moscow correspondent to the London Financial Times, during which, by the way, I worked closely with another cor-

respondent, my friend, Kevin Klose, who at that time was the Moscow correspondent of the Washington Post. After the book was written, there were people who read it and said that it should be a film. And through a very circuitous route, I managed to complete it.

A friend of mine who works in opera said that in any production, the world has to come to an end three times before the production is complete. Well, with this, the world came to an end considerably more than three times. But we actually got it done.

We also have here the person who more than anyone else was responsible for the fact that it didn't end in a total disaster and was actually—became a finished film. That's my friend, Nenad Pejic from Radio Liberty, who is sitting next to Kevin there and whose good judgment and support in a critical time—in fact, every would-be artist needs someone who has good judgment. And Nenad has good judgment and saved the whole thing by lending it his support.

Well, I think that we should at this point watch the movie and not waste a lot of time on my talking to you, because after it's over, I hope we can talk about the film and what it means about history and for history and its implications for the present day because Russia continues to be important. The countries of the former Soviet Union could . . . their fates continue to have an impact on us. So without further ado, perhaps we can start the film.

Mr. PARKER. Enjoy the movie.

(Movie plays.)

Mr. PARKER. Thank you all. We're going to rearrange here in just a minute, pull the podium out and begin our discussion. When we move to Q&A, since we are transcribing the event, I'll ask you to state your name and be clear so we can get it into the record.

Mr. SATTER. I think I'll add that Kevin, unfortunately, has to leave for another engagement. So maybe he can say a few words first.

Mr. PARKER. Of course. And as I mentioned at the outset, we're honored to be joined by Kevin Klose. I didn't go too much in depth into his long and impressive bio at the beginning, but he's the present and past president of RFE/RL, a 25-year veteran of the Washington Post, former president of NPR, director of the International Broadcasting Bureau at the U.S. Information Agency. Kevin is also a professor of journalism at the University of Maryland, a Russia scholar, author of "Russia and the Russians: Inside the Closed Society."

We are really pleased to have you here. It would be great if you could kick off our reaction, share your impressions, perhaps an anecdote from your days with David working the Soviet beat.

Mr. KLOSE. Kyle, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here, first of all with you all, here in this great hearing room. And it's also a great honor for me to be here again with David Satter.

We've known each other since we met completely by serendipity in the newsroom of the Washington Post in 1967. That's quite a bit of time ago. We've had a lot of time together since then, and I'm very pleased to say he's now a consultant to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as we work with the Russian Service and the 27 other language services to bring us firmly into the digital age, the age of multimedia.

This film of David's to me is tremendously powerful, not just about the past but about what we face going forward in dealing with the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which is not, obviously, anywhere near its end. The radios that I'm now part of once again deal with these kinds of issues in the present day in the same way as we see it here today.

There are millions upon millions of people in the former Soviet Union who know things about what had happened in the immediate past, that unless these realities are brought forward and others can hear them, unless they can be borne witness to across the societies in all their variations and cultures, the future is going to be very perilous for them. I believe for the national security interests of all the democracies.

We are not immune to the issues that still need to be addressed in that part of the world. And there is no reason for us—no rational reason for any of us here today, drawn together to look at this film, which is a witnessing of the past, but the power of it is in the present. The moral of this tale is we must understand what has happened. We must dig deep, as deep as we can.

As a friend of David's and a great admirer of his work, I honor him for the work he's done to bring this forward in such a powerful and irresistibly persuasive way.

Those are the remarks I have. David, thank you.

Mr. SATTER. Well, thank you, Kevin. Perhaps just before Kevin goes, does anyone want to ask maybe one question directed to him, because he actually has a crowded schedule and has to leave us—we'll then I hope entertain questions from all—on all subjects, about the film, about the fall of the Soviet Union, about Russia today, anything you want to ask or anything you're interested in.

Mr. PARKER. We have a mic here if anyone has a question for Kevin Klose before he has to leave us.

Mr. KLOSE. I'm sorry. I should footnote that I spend most of my time now in Prague, which is where Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is headquartered. My time in Washington is relatively short, and so I'm really apologetic for having agreed to be here with you and then finding that my schedule is not going to let me do that. I want to thank you all for coming and the questions you have.

Mr. SATTER. There is a question in the back. Yes.

Mr. PARKER. Please.

QUESTIONER. Can I use the mic?

Mr. PARKER. Sure. That would be great.

QUESTIONER. Hi. I'm Shelly Han with the Helsinki Commission.

Mr. SATTER. Hi.

QUESTIONER. I was interested in hearing—please excuse my ignorance if this is something that's obvious—but what is your agency doing to help document what happened and perhaps creating that record and sharing that record with the citizens?

Mr. KLOSE. That's a very good question. As you may know, we're a private, nonprofit private corporation formed in the early 1950s. We're a grantee of the U.S. government and we're an independent source of uncensored news and information into the region of the former Soviet Union and parts of Eurasia.

First of all, prior to my return to the radio's management in the immediate past, support the production of this documentary and we assisted David with a great deal of technical support and production support, which is also a matter of creativity and intellectual continuity to bring hundreds of hours of tape that he has of his interviews.

For us, directly, I can tell you, for example, just in the past week, we were able to do live video from the courtroom where Navalny was first convicted and handcuffed and marched off to detention and the next day released in the same courtroom in Kirov, 1,000 kilometers from Moscow where there were demonstrations—they weren't huge but they were tense—on the streets of Moscow. We were there also with live video coverage, fully uncensored and fully made available to anyone who wished to use the content, which I will say to you was used in part by some independent minded Moscow television channels, which cut away to take live coverage and fully credit Liberty, Radio Liberty's Russian service for bringing this to them. They were not covering it themselves.

In addition more than a dozen services at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty also used live excerpts and produced excerpts afterwards to put out to their listeners, their viewers, their readers and their Internet interlocutors.

I think that's the wave of the future. This is attesting and bearing witness to history being made today. We do that very powerfully. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Kevin, again for joining us today. And our hats are off to you and all your colleagues at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for covering this important part of the world so well. The coverage is superb. The coverage has been indispensable. And it's something I look forward every morning, to the e-mails and the updates and the news stories that are posted on the site, really top-notch journalism.

Mr. KLOSE. Thank you so much. It's a delight to be here. And forgive me. I beg your pardon.

Mr. PARKER. Thanks again.

Mr. KLOSE. Thank you. David, congratulations.

Mr. PARKER. Before moving on, jumping into questions, I'd like to introduce our lead discussant, Paul Carter, who is currently serving as senior State Department adviser at the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

We'll be losing Paul in just a few short days. He'll be headed off to be the Director for Eurasia at the Assistance Office of the European Bureau at the Department of State. It's been a great year with Paul, he's really been an incredible asset to the commission. Paul has served in a number of interesting postings.

Most relevant for our discussion today is his service at Embassy Moscow as well as at the Department's Ukraine desk. And reaching back further into the past, in the mid-'80s, Paul was an exchange student, one of two American political scientists studying at Moscow's State University in 1985 and '86, where Paul began work that ended up as a book published on the ideology of Mikhail Suslov. So Paul is uniquely credentialed to help kick off our discussion today. Paul, will you take it from here?

Mr. CARTER. Thank you very much, Kyle. It is really an honor to be here with David for the showing of his film. What year was the film made, David?

Mr. SATTER. From 2006 until 2011, on and off.

Mr. CARTER. OK. I think it's a fascinating film. It really captures the sadness, the sometime horror and the always surreal quality of life in the Soviet Union.

As Kyle mentioned, I was an IREX exchange scholar in 1985–86; lived at Moscow State University, you know, the Stalin-scraper there in Moscow, and lived with the Soviet students and our other exchange scholars.

I always thought that, in so many ways, if one never lived in the Soviet Union or in a communist country, it's not something one can fully understand. It's something one must live through to see what it's about.

Now, David's film today, of course, offers a glimpse into that world—and the many people who testify and speak from the heart and from their own experience about what life was like, he captures it in so many different ways.

What's great for me is his approach to the ideology and to show it from so many different angles. My own academic work also was an approach at this but more from the top-down, as it were.

We saw many times in the film people talking about the ideology. Marxism-Leninism was in many ways a form of an ersatz religion, and I think we see that captured here. The Soviet Union was what we might call an "ideocracy," a system based on an ideology. We never really used to hear that much about the model of ideocracy back during the Soviet period when people were studying it in the West. A few scholars touched on this, but it wasn't widely accepted. Partly that was due to the fact that leftist scholars, Marxists, didn't want to accept the USSR as a legitimate version of Marxism.

And for others, it was a question of their focus on the question, did they believe the ideology or not? Many people would answer, no, they didn't believe it.

The real question though isn't really did they believe it or not because we don't know what the leadership at the time believed. We don't know what people like Brezhnev and Suslov, when they looked at the mirror at 3 o'clock in the morning, what did they really say to themselves?

More important was the question what role did the ideology play? And people, whether they've had an emotional attachment to it or psychological, the fact is that they had to act as if they believed.

In the end, the leadership lost the will to enforce that, to force people to act as if they believed. My own work, as Kyle said, was on Suslov, the chief ideologist of the party. Suslov died in January of 1982. Brezhnev died in November, eleven months later. I have argued that when Suslov died the ideology went with him. Suslov was the last enforcer who ensured people acted as if they believed in the ideology. After that, Gorbachev came in.

Gorbachev began to change the perspective and came up with the idea of reformed communism. I think Gorbachev himself was very deeply affected by Chernobyl and the fact that he wasn't getting information at the time. I was in Moscow when Chernobyl went up and we watched happy pictures on television of Ukrainian farmers plowing the fields and putting in the crop, you know, for a week, even though we were hearing on the short wave that the cloud of radiation was going all over the place. I think that Gorbachev himself was a victim of that big lie and didn't get that information. That influenced him to introduce the idea of glasnost, after which began a freer flow of information.

Then the system began to crumble. Molotov, one of Stalin's men, once said that there's a reformed communism and then there's real communism. Indeed, there's really

no such thing as a reformed communist. It can't survive and it fell apart. And in the end, it did. It collapsed, as David showed so well in his film.

Two takeaways from this that I see. One, as Kevin Klose talked about, was the overcoming of the Soviet legacy. Of all the things that the communists did to Russia, the terror, all the people that died, what they did to the economy, all these things, but the one lasting thing was the moral decay of the society.

The communists taught that there was no God, there was no religion, there was no morality other than what the party said. And eventually, that deteriorated into every person must kill, lie, cheat, steal, whatever to get along. And that legacy is very hard to overcome. It survives for many, many years. And Russia has not had an accounting, of a laying bare of the Soviet past. We still see people today who praise Stalin or look back with nostalgia on the Soviet era without having a real accounting of what happened.

But also, there is another lesson, not only for Russia itself, you know, to come to terms with these things, but also a lesson for the world. And that for me is the danger of ideology and ideological thinking. I really thought that when the Soviet Union collapsed that we would see the end of that kind of ideology and people being subject to that.

I think we have in the sense of these grand systems, of Marxism, etc., but yet, even today, in our own society, oftentimes people fall into ideological thinking and are quick to rush to judgment on things. And so it's always a lesson, the danger of that. The Russians were no different than anybody else in the end. And it could happen anywhere. So it's something that we have to always be on guard against.

And with that, I'm going to turn it back over and open it up to questions.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Paul. Let's open it up wide. Everybody's sat patiently, so please step right up with questions. Just identify yourself so we have it for the record. And also feel free to make a statement. We can be fairly loose on this and have some time to have a discussion. Katya, could you——

QUESTIONER. I'll be loud. Is this loud enough?

Mr. PARKER. You know, it might be loud enough. It's just that our transcriber is listening through a mic so it's better if you come up here.

QUESTIONER. It's a very different side of the room. Thank you. Very interesting briefing or screening.

I'm sorry, My name is Katya Migacheva. I'm the lead fellow on the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. In the interest of full disclosure, I'm also originally from Russia. Watching the film, I realized I'm very lucky to have been born in 1980 so I was of conscious age when the changes happened. And I had a good time in one system and good time in another system, meaning that I had time to be educated in one and time to be educated in another, and then, immigration to the United States, so all kinds of worlds. So I felt fortunate. I also felt very emotional watching the film. I greatly appreciate your efforts to dig deeper.

I have a question for you. You've lived in Russia, it sounds like, for a while. You studied Russia for a while—and both of you and also the previous speaker as well. In terms of your remarks about overcoming this heritage and moving forward despite it or with it.

What challenges do you think Russia has because of these challenges . . . in addition or besides the mentality that you have to cheat and lie that you just mentioned, which

is a whole other piece of propaganda, social propaganda when not only the survival piece where you have to cheat and lie and tell on your neighbor but also the piece when we are all contributing to the society. And that was—that was the one that was clearly taught. That was the one—that was the clear, clean message, not the hidden one. So that part we're losing as well with the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

How do we move forward with the grief of the lost system, because for many people, as you know, it's a huge loss? Even those who lost their parents and grandparents to the Stalinist regime, they still remember the system with nostalgia. I guess this is one of your points, we need to reveal these things, but also the idea that we need a strong grip. We need a strong fist to be able to survive in our society.

So I'm rambling a little bit, but putting all these things together, how do you see Russia moving forward? And how should we from the United States, what patience should we have? When should we expect results and what type of pressure should we apply reasonably?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Katya. David.

Mr. SATTER. Thank you, Katya. Actually, the answer is not so complicated. The problem with Russia, in my view, after many years of being there, is that the individual has no value, and particularly compared to the goals of the state.

Under those circumstances, the idealization of state power creates a situation in which individuals are treated as raw material for the achievement of political ends. That's the reason why everyone cheats and lies because they've been taught that their individual identity counts for nothing.

Into those circumstances, they don't feel a sense of individual obligation, of individual conscience, of individual identity. They don't believe that their personality is important, that they're in some way different, that they're in some respects inviolable.

So, after all, there's no logical reason not to just grab. That mentality can only be changed under conditions in which Russians and other people who lived in the Soviet Union realistically assess their history and abandon myths about the past and understand what they've come out of.

As for the U.S. or for the other countries in the West, we can be helpful to the degree that we help to clarify this problem, but the difficulty is that very few people in the West understand it either. I mean, they don't understand Russia because it's hard to extend themselves—it's hard for us, members of a pragmatic and a problem-solving society, to understand a society like Russia, in which millions of people are subordinated to some type of political ideal they don't understand.

So in effect, there's a certain amount of intellectual work that has to be done in both places. Most of all, of course, it's the responsibility of the Russians themselves to understand who they are and what it is. Russians don't understand the root of their problem. This is the difficulty. They understand that things are bad, but they don't understand why they're bad. And the best way to help them is to try to show them why things are bad. And the best way they can help themselves is to restore the position of the individual. And you can only do that if you really honor those who were victims of the regime and you face realistically the story of the past.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, David. We have another question over here.

QUESTIONER. Thank you. My name is Tanel Sepp, I'm from the Embassy of Estonia. And I'm going to say you have organized this event on a really historic day because 73 years ago then acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles made the declaration of not recognizing the occupation of the Baltic States. So congratulations on this.

I have a fairly simple question. In your view, what could be then the goal of the present Russian leadership? I mean, there are so many different variables there. And one thing that I absolutely agree with you is this—how we see it is a need to overcome the Soviet legacy, but at the same time, sometimes this is especially used in ideological terms.

Mr. SATTER. So what is the goal of the Russian leadership? What are they after?

QUESTIONER. Yes.

Mr. SATTER. That's actually a very easy question to answer. They're after——

Mr. PARKER. Or what should it be.

Mr. SATTER. Or what should it be is a different story; what it is and what it should be. They're after preserving their monopoly on power and wealth, and the entire foreign policy of Russia is organized on that basis. And they don't have any other goals.

All of their efforts to, you know, resurrect the myth of the great Russian state or resurrect the idea of the great Russian state is only because they fear that their selfishness and their greed will be exposed and they need something to convince people that something else is at stake and to distract them from the way in which they're misruled.

Mr. PARKER. Please.

QUESTIONER. Gerald Chandler. I'd like you to follow on that. How long will it last? Will it last one election, two elections, 25 years?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Gerald.

QUESTIONER. I will repeat the question. I'll state my opinion. People get tired of a government. We have Navalny there now representing some small fraction of the population who are tired of the government. Is it a fraction that is bigger than it appears, because there's many, many people who don't want to speak up, or how big is it? And how many years will it take until another Gorbachev comes along and the whole thing collapses?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you.

Mr. SATTER. I don't know—it won't last forever, but it, you know—because all of the tendencies toward disintegration. The regime is becoming more corrupt, not less. The ruling circle has become narrower—is becoming narrower. Positions of privilege and power are being passed on to the children of those who have them now rather than being opened up for general competition.

The atmosphere in the country is becoming more stifling. The level of political repression is becoming greater. At the same time, the country is becoming more educated, has more experience of the outside world. And a generation has grown up that is more capable of functioning in a democratic society than possibly any previous Russian generation.

So under those circumstances, an eventual collision is inevitable. When it will happen and under what circumstances is hard to predict. It will depend on many factors. But this regime, by virtue of its sheer greed and the many, many crimes and secrets that it conceals, cannot last indefinitely, and those people in power would like to rule forever, but they won't be able to.

Mr. PARKER. Please jump in, Paul.

Mr. CARTER. Yeah. If we can borrow a term from the Marxists—a question of contradictions here. We saw how the Soviet regime took a nation of essentially illiterate peasants and created an educated cadre of people, scientists and engineers and so on. And eventually, those people came to see that the ideology was just simply illogical and that created the rot at the core of the system.

Today, what we see is the growth of the Russian economy, a lot of it built on energy and so on, but other industries as well, and a new middle class is being created. But that middle class, at some point, as David says, they'll become fed up with the corruption at the top. And that's what Navalny and others are all about.

This is a very interesting phenomenon to see in the last two, three years or so. Before that, if you talked about opinion in Russia, you were talking about what's the Kremlin thinking about? But in the last two or three years, you've seen suddenly this—the streets of Moscow with all these people turning out and saying no. They aren't the ones that talk. That's not the only opinion. This is our opinion. And they're becoming disgusted with it.

Nobody knows how long change will take. That's the lesson of the Arab Spring, of course, that, you know, there's just these flash points and then things just spread.

Now we don't know whether that will happen in Russia. People before the Orange Revolution in Ukraine always said that the Ukrainians were a lot of sheep. They'll never do anything. And then, of course, that just took off. So you never know how these things will go. But at some point, the contradictions will catch up with them.

Mr. PARKER. Please.

QUESTIONER. First off, thank you very much for organizing this event. My name is Ali Down. I'm just a simple intern with the Office of Congressman Robert Brady. My question today is what if any aspects of Soviet society or Soviet era mentality continue to exist in modern day Russia?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you.

Mr. SATTER. Well, you know, I have a friend in Moscow by the name of Vladimir Voinovich. Maybe you've heard of him some of you. He's a writer, a satirical writer. He said there's nothing left of the Soviet Union except the Soviet man. And the problem—there's been tremendous change. I mean, Russia today is incomparably freer than the Soviet Union was.

But the same disregard for the individual, the same notion that the fate of a person is really unimportant compared to greater goals, the goals of the state, the goals of society, or even the goals of those in power who are anxious to accumulate wealth, and that's the same as it's always been. Until that changes, Russia will never really be free.

Mr. PARKER. Please.

QUESTIONER. Again, thank you all very much for this. It's absolutely fascinating. I'm Peter Hickman. I'm a former USIA Foreign Service officer, although I was never in the Soviet Union and that part of the world. But my question is hard to ask because I think it has a lot of answers but you've all touched on it in your answers. Putin made this famous statement when Soviet Union collapsed, something to the effect that it is the greatest socio-political disaster——

Mr. SATTER. Geopolitical. Geopolitical.

QUESTIONER. Geopolitical. And people in response to that said, no, the greatest geopolitical disaster was the creation of the Soviet Union. (Laughter.) But my question is and I think you've all answered it in parts, and Mr. Klose as well, what was the reaction to that statement at the time in the Soviet Union, and how is it today?

Mr. SATTER. In Russia—in Russia, no more Soviet Union——

QUESTIONER. Well, that's right. I mean, but——

Mr. SATTER. Soviet Union is gone.

QUESTIONER. Well, are you sure?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you.

Mr. SATTER. Well, nobody reacted much, but the Russian leaders love the word "geopolitical." They remind me of certain people in our country who also love the word "geopolitical." They use it constantly about everything, even though it has no relationship to anything. They love the word because as soon as they start talking about geopolitical, then the word "moral," "ethical," "legal," all those other words drop out because we're talking about geopolitical—something real, not all this namby-pamby stuff about obeying the law, respecting people, you know, not assassinating them, not torturing them, all of which is certainly, has nothing to do with the geopolitical interests of this or that.

And for that reason, when Putin said that the fall of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical tragedy of this country, he was being completely consistent and all of the listeners and the foreign policy apparatus of Russia, at least those who don't think much or at least who were, you know, anxious to make their careers, and all of their counterparts over here thought that, well, that maybe is a reasonable statement or maybe there's something to it. Of course, it's absolute nonsense.

But you know, in a sense Putin reflects what happened in the Soviet Union. When in a nation in which no one counts for anything, the only way in which people are distinguished from each other is their level of power. And once a person acquires power—first of all, he'll do anything to get it.

Second of all, once he acquires power, he won't recognize any limits on his acquisitiveness. Either his material greed, the tactics he's willing to use in order to stay in power, and all of this comes from the fact that, you know, a degraded individual really can't develop an ethical framework for himself, a sense of personal identity and conscience. And that's because that was the process to which millions of people were subjected in the Soviet Union.

You know, it's not surprising that if someone like Putin becomes president and he acts in a manner that is typical of someone who has no moral orientation at all, is just pursuing wealth, power, and self-preservation. And if we criticize him, we have to recognize the fact that there're millions of other people in his place who would—who—in the Soviet Union, who have gone through this, who would act in exactly the same way.

I think that there are nonetheless some encouraging things. Mostly the fact that despite all of these pressures, there are some people who didn't succumb to them, and there's a growing number of people in the Soviet Union, in Russia, other countries of the former Soviet Union who, nonetheless, despite all this pressure, have developed a moral sense and are willing to support and fight for decent values. And I've argued in what I've written that it ought to be a principle of American foreign policy in dealing with that part of the world to support them.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, David. Your moral clarity is always refreshing and sometimes even entertaining.

Mr. SATTER. I try.

Mr. PARKER. Especially your exegesis on the empty word geopolitical. I couldn't agree more.

If I may just share a few reactions. This is my second or third time watching the film and a few different things stand out. For me, it starts somewhat nostalgic as I see these pictures of the '70s because, you know, I married into the Soviet family, and so some of those photos of camping and the beach during the Brezhnev era, they almost evoke a pleasant feeling for a past I only know through pictures and stories.

Then there's this stark, just gruesome, fearful image of this 11-year-old boy on the roof eating weeds in famine-stricken Ukraine, millions dead. Or as Paul mentioned the legacy of Stalin and sort of the glorification of him now in certain quarters, and even, perhaps most disturbingly among the youth. I guess this runs a little counterintuitive to those who naively thought that the Internet or the iPhone or whatever modern gadget would somehow bring morality.

But what to me is even more disturbing, that moment in the film when Shatravka—when he confronts the nurse. It's two Russias staring each other in the face and looking completely past each other. And to me this is all the more disturbing for its insidiousness. It's hidden. This nurse doesn't even understand what he's talking about. She can't grasp the depth of pain in Shatravka who's essentially confronting the killer of his brother, a woman who might be a neighbor who is free, just walking around. Again, David, your commentary in the end about how are these people to be held to account, about what is appropriate, just.

I remember my own confusion up in Arctic Russia where I spent some time in Vorkuta, in Ukhta, which was essentially a big prison camp. And I asked questions, again, to people like that nurse, and they couldn't even understand. Others, of course, were happy to tell about the rehabilitation of their relatives and share their files. But those people who didn't understand, who remembered, but weren't moved—I guess for me it's confusing.

So David, this is my question to you, the truth is available in Russia and it is not the 1930s. And yet, it isn't—in some areas, it really isn't very good and in some areas you can even attempt to draw certain moral comparisons. I think back to the 1999 apartment bombings, which many and serious people believe were orchestrated by the regime as the pretext to start the second Chechen war, the rise of Putin, the underpinnings of the modern Russian state, which was most recently our reset partner, though I guess we don't use the term. We do seem to have stuck largely to the policy though.

We're talking here about deliberate murder of hundreds of Russians in their sleep. And I'm not prepared to say it happened that way, but I know there are very serious people who've examined the evidence and the fact is it remains a big open question. Does this not approach something of the morality of the 1930s and the willingness to commit such crimes.

My question is why wasn't this truth that is out there if you looked for it more powerful? You can find books and you can read these things, and it almost seems to have lost its power. Why wasn't it the cleansing wave that washed everything away and made everything anew?

Mr. SATTER. Yeah. Well, first of all because it was partial and it was basically used—the truth in Russia was used for political purposes. In the late '80s, people were fascinated by history and anxious to learn the truth about history when it could be used as a weapon against the old regime, which was the communist regime.

Once that regime fell, independent interest in commemorating the victims or investigating the past almost disappeared. In the late 1980s, there were pedestals and plinths established all over Russia, in Russian cities, saying on this site there will be a memorial to the victims of Stalinism, the victims of communism. Now there's nothing left, just the pedestals, just the plinths. The memorials were never built.

As far as the apartment bombings are concerned, I'm one of those who, as you may or may not know, who has argued that, in fact—and I believe the evidence in reality is overwhelming, that it was through an act of terror that Putin came to power. And that's not the only act of terror. What about the decision to open fire with heavy weapons on the children who were the hostages in Beslan in 2004, or the decision to pump a theater with 1,000 hostages full of lethal gas without making any effort really to prepare to rescue the victims?

It all stems from the same thing, that the individual just doesn't count for anything. And in particular—and he is particularly insignificant compared to the goals of the regime. So therefore, if it's necessary—of course, we are not dealing with a situation such as that, which existed in 1937, nearly a million people were shot straight out, and another—well, it was 700,000 and then another equal—were shot—and roughly the same number were arrested and sent to labor camps, where they quickly died.

It's not that scale, but the situation could, given that mentality, become very bad in the future. Right now, the regime is not seriously threatened, but as the situation deteriorates, given that mentality, anything is possible.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you. I certainly don't mean to draw a direct comparison to the sheer numbers of murder victims of the 1930s. I guess to me, though, to avoid the danger of proportionalism, the notion that a person who kills 1,000 is much worse than the person who's prepared to kill 100—certainly, in terms of the sheer volume of human suffering visited on the people. But the willingness to cross those lines, the notion that the person is not important enough, a means not an end that can be sacrificed for other goals.

I've mentioned just how profound—and it's on great display here today—David gets on Russia. You know, when I'm not reading David's work or maybe Leon Aron's work, I often find myself reading our very own Librarian of Congress, Jim Billington, himself a renowned Russia historian and scholar. I brought along his book from—I don't know, maybe it's already about a decade ago, "Russia in Search of Itself."

This passage comes to mind as relevant to our discussion. I'll read it into the transcript as perhaps an appropriate way to end, maybe on a dark note, an acknowledgement that there's no easy answer. Dr. Billington's talking here about denial and this painful history. "The only part"—he says, and I quote—"the only part that has been fully acknowledged and honored by public monuments is the suffering caused by foreign foes. Yet just as much suffering was inflicted on them by themselves, and over a longer period of time.

"This condition of denial impacts on a society in ways that can never be understood, let alone remedied, by roundtable discussions—even those that may someday be convened after all the mass graves and buried documents have been unearthed. Words alone will never provide a roadmap into a happy future for those who once thought they stood on

a mountain. They now know there is no easy way out of their valley and that the shadow of massive, innocent death still hangs over it." End quote.

These are haunting words and capture the difficulty of this moment where the people of Russia find themselves and how to deal with this shameful, ugly, confusing and not even fully known past. And so we add yet another roundtable discussion, as it were, to this attempt.

It's 5 o'clock comrades, and everybody looks a little tired. So I think I'll wrap it up.

Again, I want to thank you all for coming and participating. I want to especially thank Jackie Cahan, who helped David and I to put this event together. I also suggest to all of you to keep an eye on our website. We have other interesting events coming up. We'll take a little bit of break in August, as it's customary up here on the Hill, but should have a robust program in the fall, particularly on Russia.

I hope we'll finally have a serious Russia hearing and as well other briefings. One we have planned is a survey of U.S.-Russian relations over the centuries. This should provide an interesting perspective here in Congress on the hills and valleys and understand what we've seen before and where we've been before in this important relationship with Russia.

With that, I close the record and thank you all for coming.

○

This is an official publication of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

★ ★ ★

This publication is intended to document developments and trends in participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★

http://www.csce.gov @HelsinkiComm

The Commission's Web site provides access to the latest press releases and reports, as well as hearings and briefings. Using the Commission's electronic subscription service, readers are able to receive press releases, articles, and other materials by topic or countries of particular interest.

Please subscribe today.