

Communications to a friend

by Phillip W. Weiss

Below is a series of emails sent to a friend on a variety of subjects

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

I watched the Trump-Putin news conference. Although I favor a policy of engagement instead of confrontation with Russia, I believe that Trump committed a major gaffe when he publicly placed blame on the United States for the current tensions between the US and Russia. No head of state should ever publicly invite blame on their own country for anything. It reminded me of our last meeting at the restaurant when I was trying to make conversation with you. I said something that obviously bothered you and made you defensive. In turn, not wanting to offend you, I went so far as to describe my own words as trite, when in fact I had done and said nothing wrong. What actually happened was that, for reasons unknown to me, you copped an attitude and I did not call you on it. The same thing can be said about Trump and Russia. The Russian government has an attitude problem. Why they have that problem is anyone's guess. Nevertheless, Trump did everything he could to avoid dealing with it because he did not want to make a scene. Now Putin is back in the Kremlin having a good laugh with his cronies, knowing that he got the POTUS to admit that the United States is the problem, not Russia.

By the way, Putin impressed me. He was calm and in control and his comments were clear and concise. In contrast, Trump seemed to have forgotten what had gotten him elected - a bombastic style that overwhelmed his opponents - instead opting for a conventional approach that seemed to more in line with "low energy" Jeb Bush.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [dmgordon](#) [Details](#)

Dave,

Greetings. I do not know what you're up to and won't ask. If u wanted me to know, you would tell me. Anyway, since 2016 Mr. Trump has been putting out the word that the Russian investigation is part of an elaborate hoax concocted by the Democratic Party to discredit him personally and delegitimize his election and presidency. I believed Trump, until I took the time to peruse the Mueller indictment and the DNI report. These reports chronicle Russian interference in the U.S. election process. These reports are about an elaborate conspiracy by a foreign country to meddle in the internal affairs of the United States.

According to the Mueller Indictment, Russian foreign nationals entered the U.S. under false pretenses, posed as Americans, stole identities, collected intelligence, failed to register as foreign agents, made campaign contributions without filing the proper disclosure forms, and "obtained visas through false and fraudulent statements." "The conspiracy had as its object impairing, obstructing,

and defeating the lawful governmental functions of the United States by dishonest means in order to enable the Defendants to interfere with U.S. political and electoral processes, including the 2016 U.S. presidential election."

source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/rosenstein-mueller-indictment-russia/553601/>

The DNI report asserts that Vladimir Putin ordered the "influence campaign" for the 2016 election. "Moscow's influence campaign followed a Russian messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations—such as cyber activity—with overt efforts by Russian Government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls." "

"We assess with high confidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election, the consistent goals of which were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump. When it appeared to Moscow that Secretary Clinton was likely to win the election, the Russian influence campaign then focused on undermining her expected presidency."

source: https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf

During his meeting with Mr. Putin, Trump had a tremendous opportunity to take the moral high ground and leave that meeting a winner and return to the United States as a hero. He had an opportunity to express his outrage and righteous indignation over Russia's meddling in the internal affairs of the United States and demand that all parties named in the Mueller indictment be turned over to the United States immediately and that refusal to do so would be interpreted as an attempt to protect criminals from American justice. Of course, that did not happen. Instead, Trump provided cover for Putin, and now Mr. Trump, and not Mr. Putin, is paying the price for what was, to me, the worst political gaffe since 1976 when, during the presidential debate, Gerald Ford said that Eastern Europe was not under Soviet domination, and 1988 when, during the vice-presidential debate, Dan Quayle tried to equate himself with President Kennedy.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
Dave,

I watched vids of Ronald Reagan's visit to Moscow in May/June 1988. They showed Pres. Reagan at his best. During the visit he met with Mikhail Gorbachev. During the meeting he directly raised the issue of the treatment of Soviet dissidents. The whole world expected Reagan to bring up the issue and he did not fail. That took courage. Upon his return to the U.S., Americans greeted with Reagan with cheers. He had done his job well. Donald Trump would have done well to have followed Reagan's example at his meeting with Mr. Putin. Instead, he demurred, refused to deal forthrightly the issue of Russian meddling, and lost a tremendous opportunity to take the high moral ground and amass huge political capital. That would have been like Reagan raising the issue of Soviet mistreatment of dissidents, and Gorbachev denying that that they were being mistreated, and Reagan saying "I believe him." In fact, Trump's failure was so complete that it brought both parties together in unanimous opposition to him. That is a situation that the POTUS must carefully avoid creating. If the Republicans lose control of Congress in 2018, they will blame Trump and his meeting with Putin.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
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Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

Based upon your lectures, I am convinced that Britain was responsible for creating the conditions to have a WW1. Britain could not compete with Germany. Knowing that, Britain did everything it could to isolate Germany & deny Germany a level playing field. That all but guaranteed geopolitical instability.

Also, I hope that during the semester you cover the topic of anti-Semitism as it relates to geopolitical developments on the European continent and drive home the point that antisemitism was not exclusively a German problem & that Jews were well on their way to becoming fully integrated into mainstream European culture.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
Re: yesterday's lecture.

European society transforming from feudalistic to modern unleashes the forces of nationalism across the continent. Entire peoples who were once subjects to autocratic rule now literally demand to be heard. Autocrats are taken aback, act to contain this direct challenge to their power and the existing social order, one that is rooted in feudalism, but can do nothing to reverse it. Even the Jews get into the act with their talk about re-creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The forces of nationalism re-stimulate the forces of anti-Semitism which perceives the Jews as a foreign element that has no place in the nationalistic aspirations of indigenous groups now demanding power. For them, the Jews must go. There is no compromising on this point. These changes heighten tensions as new political forces emerge that threaten the stability of a woefully outdated social order that can no longer govern but still wants to retain its power. Slovaks, Poles, Bohemians, Bosnians, Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Ukrainians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Montenegrins, Irish, Norwegians, and Hungarians, all following the examples of other ethnic groups - English, Germans, Italians, French, Spanish, Russians, Greeks, Danish, Dutch - who had achieved independence and many of whom dominate Europe, now want their independence too.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
Re: lectures.

Your lectures demonstrate that prior to WW1, European society had already undergone massive transformation. Yet the political structures lagged behind in the rate and degree of change. Perhaps the same can be said for the United States today. The USA of today bears virtually no resemblance to the USA of 1787, the year when the USA adopted the Constitution. Today the USA political system, still based on that same 1787 Constitution, is founded on concepts and structures that predate to the 18th century and even earlier. Now, in Europe it took a world war to finally eliminate the outmoded political structures that were impeding progress and which brought European politics more in line with the economic and social changes. The czar, the Kaiser and the emperor were gone, along with the political institutions that had propped them up. Even so, the results were deeply flawed. What followed was in many ways much worse. Hopefully, the USA can avoid what happened in Europe and update its political structures in a way that will avoid the pitfalls brought on by violent change.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

The problem with studying history is that what seems obvious to us today, such as the existence of political institutions that seem so rooted in the past, at that time when they existed was not understood as such. The kaiser was as relevant to Germany as the President has been relevant to the United States, both bestowed with legitimacy that made their continued existence seem a virtual certainty. There is no evidence that I know of that shows that anybody really believed that the autocracies that ruled most of Europe would soon be gone, and gone quickly and with good riddance. Nobody predicted that. Yet, today we talk about it as if it was inevitable. Well, it wasn't. It just worked out that way. There was no grand plan, no deliberate scheme to demolish entire institutions that had existed for hundreds of years or even longer. For anyone to believe otherwise is wishful thinking generated by a desire to control future events. Today the United States is governed based on institutions that are almost two and half centuries old. Yet, despite their age and the massive transformation of American culture into what it is today, the continuation of these institutions is taken for granted, that they will go on and on and on. The czars and kaisers and emperors and dukes and earls and barons and junkers and all the rest of that clique probably believed that their power would go on and on and on as well, and they're gone. There is no question that political institutions evolve. How, when, and why they evolve is another story that can only be told after it happens.

Phil

-----Original Message-----

From: pwnycny <pwnycny@aol.com>

To: [REDACTED] dmgordon@mindspring.com

Sent: Thu, Oct 4, 2018 4:01 pm

Subject: Classroom lectures

Re: lectures.

Your lectures demonstrate that prior to WW1, European society had already undergone massive transformation. Yet the political structures lagged behind in the rate and degree of change. Perhaps the same can be said for the United States today. The USA of today bears virtually no resemblance to the USA of 1787, the year when the USA adopted the Constitution. Today the USA political system, still based on that same 1787 Constitution, is founded on concepts and structures that predate to the 18th century and even earlier. Now, in Europe it took a world war to finally eliminate the outmoded political structures that were impeding progress and which brought European politics more in line with the economic and social changes. The czar, the Kaiser and the emperor were gone, along with the political institutions that had propped them up. Even so, the results were deeply flawed. What followed was in many ways much worse. Hopefully, the USA can avoid what happened in Europe and update its political structures in a way that will avoid the pitfalls brought on by violent change.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

Read parts the Tuchman and Hart's books. Tuchman seems to provide a somewhat fair account of the events leading up to the start of the war.while Hart, not surprisingly, is transparently anti-German. he lays all blame on the William, a position which is debatable. Both authors show that the British were doing everything they could to contain an expansionist Germany. The British reached out to the French, to Russia, even to Germany - anything to keep Germany in check. This was diplomacy at its most seedy and dangerous. William did not like it, and some some justification. Germany was now a major, no THE major power on the Continent and wanted to be treated accordingly. Hence, he fired Bismarck who had taken Germany far, but for William not far enough, on the road to super power status. By 1914 Germany was a major power. Then June 28, 1914. That date should rank with September 1, 1939 and December 7, 1941 as dates that will live in infamy. The future head of state of Austria-Hungary - and his wife - are killed by Bosnian Serbs who use politics to justify committing murder. That Austria-Hungary in the July Ultimatum gave Serbia 48 hours to reply to their ultimatum demonstrated tremendous restraint on Austria-Hungary's part. Serbia was inciting people to commit acts of terror against Austria-Hungary. Reason: to expand at Austria-Hungary's expense. For William not to fully back Austria Hungary would have sent unmistakable signal to every fanatic inside and outside of Austria-Hungary that Austria-Hungary was now fair game. To place all blame on William for starting the war is unfair. He didn't assassinate Ferdinand and he didn't ask the British to create a block of nations to encircle Germany. What did the British have in common with Russia or with France? These countries were Britain's main rivals until Germany emerged on the scene. Then all of sudden for Britain, Germany became the "bad guy" and Russia and France friends. What a flip-flop. The British replaced caution with expediency and brinkmanship as they kept doing things to provoke Germany, and William would have none of that.

Another point. Regarding Belgian and its neutrality. some criticize Germany for having invaded Belgium in violation of Belgium's neutrality. Yet, according to Tuchman, the French developed their war plans on the presumption that Germany would invade Belgium. So in a way the French were complicit in the violation of Belgium's status since they apparently knew what was going to happen and did nothing about it. Also, France wanted to recover Alsace-Lorraine, which gave Germany even more of an incentive to re-arm to defeat France again just in case France, which harbored animosity toward Germany, decided to start a war to recover Alsace-Lorraine and then invade Germany proper.

One more point. Russia. After Russia's humiliating defeat by Japan in 1904-1905, there was no reason at all for William to believe that Russia could provide any meaningful support to Serbia in event of war. In addition, Russia had no cause to go to Serbia's defense in a situation in which Serbia was deeply and directly implicated and in which Austria-Hungary was a victim.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

Excellent account of the battles, strategies, successes and blunders by all participants in the war. Germans shaped the way the war played out. The German plan for winning was fatally flawed from the start. It depended on fighting an enemy that would fold under pressure. It also required that they stick to the plan. The Russians were not quite the basket-case originally believed (e.g., Brusilov offensive). That's all due to failure of intelligence and belief in one's own propaganda about the the enemy. There was no way that Germany, bound by treaty with a much weaker Austria-Hungary, could defeat the combined strength of the Allies. That Germany lasted for four years is proof of Germany's strength. The British provoked Germany into war. The Germans could have done better to have ignored the provocations and settled with the British before the situation escalated. But that's easy to conclude in hindsight.

Liddell Hart pays tribute to the Germans. "Finally. whatever be the verdict of history on her policy, unstinted tribute is due to the incomparable endurance and skill with which Germany more than held her own for four years against superior numbers - an epic of military and human achievement." It took a combined effort of the most powerful nations on the planet to defeat Germany. A generation later, that same effort would be needed again, and on a much vaster scale.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

Based upon the readings and discussion in class, I believe that WW1 started on June 28, 1914 and that the Entente, of which Britain was a member, was fully responsible for starting the war. Entente member Russia backed Serbia which backed the fanatics who murdered Ferdinand and his wife, who were the first casualties of the war. That actual fighting did not occur for one month after the fanatics committed their crime is evidence of the restraint shown by the Germans and Austrians, the latter of whom was the aggrieved party. I don't even want to imagine how the US would react if a US head of state was assassinated by a foreign agent. Suffice it to say that the US would not wait 30 days to respond.

That Serbia raised any objections to Austria-Hungary's ultimatum showed the level of contempt the Serbs harbored for the Austrians. If Serbia had any respect for the Austrians and sincerely cared about preserving the peace, they would have agreed, without conditions, to ALL of Austria's demands, all of which were reasonable and legitimate, and would have shown a willingness to cooperate FULLY with the Austrian-Hungarian authorities who were, understandably, in no mood to negotiate.

Wonderful class. Keep up the good work.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

In the class one of the students mentioned the question of the reserves. Too bad that it was not expanded upon. In France, there was a huge debate - should they have a large active army and small reserve or a large reserve and small active army. A lot of this debate had to do with financing of the army. In this matter the French were following the lead of the Prussians who introduced a major innovation - upgrading the reserves into an effective fighting force. Wow, what an innovation. By upgrading the reserves a country could maintain a large army ready to defend the nation at lower costs. Of course, to upgrade the reserves meant to go against conventional military wisdom which considered the reserves little more than logistical branch of the "real" army, and if there was one thing that was certain about the French military, it was that they were adverse to anything that even smelled of innovation. Today the US military is based on the German model. The reserves are an integral component of the US military. They have a primary role in the defense of the United States. Only with great reluctance did the French opt to upgrade their reserves, and they did so only in response to German planning. By the way, I do not for a moment believe that in the years prior to the start of WW1, on June 28, 1914, that the French and Germans did not fully know each others military plans. If the Germans had succeeded in concealing their military plans from the French, the Germans would have demolished the French army in a week, or even sooner if they really meant business. Any country, such as France and Britain, that would seriously link themselves up with a military basket case like the Russian Empire was already in deep trouble. To do so was an act of sheer desperation based on a gamble that the Russians, who had been defeated in Crimea and throttled by the Japanese, could actually deliver, and that gamble was a long shot. As Liddell Hart points out, it was only with the appearance of the Americans that the Germans were finally turned back and stopped fighting. It took the Americans to close the St. Michel salient that the French could not do in 4 years. General Pershing's decision to resist placing American soldiers under French command was correct. In doing so he saved the American army from destruction and saved a lot of American lives.

Wonderful class. Thought-provoking.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

One correction: Pershing did transfer American soldiers to French command, but not command of the entire army.

PS: Trump's meeting with Kanye West.

Wow! Did that shake up the Dems. Message sent to Dems: do not take the "black vote" for granted.

-----Original Message-----

From: pwnycny <pwnycny@aol.com>

To: dmgordon@mindspring.com

Sent: Fri, Oct 12, 2018 9:42 am

Subject: The Reserves

In the class one of the students mentioned the question of the reserves. Too bad that it was not expanded upon. In France, there was a huge debate - should they have a large active army and small reserve or a large reserve and small active army. A lot of this debate had to do with financing of the army. In this matter the French were following the lead of the Prussians who introduced a major innovation - upgrading the reserves into an effective fighting force. Wow, what an innovation. By upgrading the reserves a country could maintain a large army ready to defend the nation at lower costs. Of course, to upgrade the reserves meant to go against conventional military wisdom which considered the reserves little more than logistical branch of the "real" army, and if there was one thing that was certain about the French military, it was that they were adverse to anything that even smelled of innovation. Today the US military is based on the German model. The reserves are an integral component of the US military. They have a primary role in the defense of the United States. Only with great reluctance did the French opt to upgrade their reserves, and they did so only in response to German planning. By the way, I do not for a moment believe that in the years prior to the start of WW1, on June 28, 1914, that the French and Germans did not fully know each others military plans. If the Germans had succeeded in concealing their military plans from the French, the Germans would have demolished the French army in a week, or even sooner if they really meant business. Any country, such as France and Britain, that would seriously link themselves up with a military basket case like the Russian Empire was already in deep trouble. To do so was an act of sheer desperation based on a gamble that the Russians, who had been defeated in Crimea and throttled by the Japanese, could actually deliver, and that gamble was a long shot. As Liddell Hart points out, it was only with the appearance of the Americans that the Germans were finally turned back and stopped fighting. It took the Americans to close the St. Michel salient that the French could not do in 4 years. General Pershing's decision to resist placing American soldiers under French command was correct. In doing so he saved the American army from destruction and saved a lot of American lives.

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France linked up with Russia because France's survival as a nation was at risk. They got beat badly by Prussia in 1870. Another war with a united Germany (which was a member of the Triple Alliance) would be catastrophic for France. So, the French entering into an alliance with Russia is understandable. It was defensive in nature. The same cannot be said for the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. By settling certain matters with Russia as it related to Iran (which in the process turned Iran against the West, the consequences of which the US is dealing with to this day), the British acquired a new ally who was ideally situated to pose a threat to Germany. This alliance also represented a fundamental shift in British foreign policy toward an accommodation with a former adversary. It also re-shaped international relations, producing the Triple Entente, Now two groups, the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance, were contesting for control of Europe. Germany formed the Triple Alliance in 1882 to settle certain issues with Austria-Hungary and smooth over tensions between Austria-Hungary and Italy. Germany wanted to secure its eastern borders. Bismarck went so far as to even try to bring Russia into the German sphere. Britain watched these developments with concern, even with alarm. Not surprisingly, William decided not to renew the German-Russian Reassurance Treaty.

In an era dominated by identity politics and racist ideologies, efforts to keep the peace through competing alliances were doomed to failure. What so sad, however, is that some European leaders sensed that something was wrong, that things were not going to work out. Proof of that is the frantic manner in which European countries were jockeying for position. One does not run for cover for nothing. Neither the Triple Alliance or the Triple Entente would survive WW1. Motivated by sheer expediency, European nations allied themselves with other countries if they thought it would gain them an advantage. That formula proved to be a disaster.

Without even first perusing the readings for next class, I already know that things only got worse, and the US couldn't stop it.

III Peace Making and European Tribalism

Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*

Bernard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and Its Fate, 1918-1939*

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

Regarding the Elizabeth Warren fiasco, let's not forget that based on family lore, Moses (a prince of Egypt) identified himself as a Hebrew and Jesus (who was baptized by his cousin) identified himself as the Messiah, Further, Hitler, an Austrian, identified himself with Germany, Napoleon, an Italian, identified himself with France, Stalin, a Georgian, identified himself with Russia, and Reagan, originally a Democrat, identified himself with the Republicans. My point: in politics, anything can happen, and that goes double for identity-based politics. Those in power are mocking Ms. Warren, but others may take her claims seriously. Trump called her bluff and she did not fold. She put her cards on the table, now she can demand from Trump the same. That she held a weak hand is irrelevant. One does not necessarily have to originate from a certain group to become that group's leader.

Re; the readings. After reading a few pages of the book, it became apparent that Wilson had no business going to Versailles. Reason: he lacked the clout to impose his program. If Trump had been POTUS, he would have blamed all the Europeans for having pulled the US into the war and would have told them to stop bullying Germany because a destabilized Germany could go Communist and Europe does not need another Soviet Union in the middle of Europe. In fact, in 1918 Trump would have found the Europeans at Versailles so incorrigible and fixated on identity politics that he would have bypassed Versailles and dealt directly with Germany and the Soviet Union. That may have curbed Poland's aggression against her immediate neighbors, i.e., Lithuania, the Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Frankly, Poland was lucky to be independent and survive the war with the Soviet Union. In 1939 Stalin partially settled accounts with Poland; in 1944-45, he completed the task.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

There was so much drama associated with the Paris (so-called) Peace Conference. There was so much anger, bitterness, hard feelings and no regrets. All contestants really wanted to keep fighting, and would have under the most flimsiest of pretexts. As evidence of just how badly Europe had regressed, whereas in the past kings, queens, emperors, and their ministers, all aristocrats, people who were BRED to rule, decided the fate of Europe, and the world, by 1919 it was ministers, civil servants, and politicians playing to the crowd, who now were calling the shots, and they kept missing the target. The angry Clemenceau, the shifty Lloyd George, the flighty Woodrow Wilson, and the horde of petty and conniving politicians interested only in settling old scores and creating new ones, a cast of shady characters the likes of which the most imaginative Hollywood screenwriter could have never concocted, now conspired to "make things right." Of course, motivated by ill-will and festering resentments, these sycophants, these dilettantes, these amateurs masquerading as statesmen, got everything wrong. And while these gentlemen, with their mistresses tucked away in some cozy hotel room, conducted business, from the sidelines two men carefully

observed the proceedings: Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. They noted everything, especially regarding Poland. What amazes me is how Poland even managed to survive intact until 1939. With the exception of fascist Italy, no country made more enemies more quickly than Poland (and what is so sad is that the Polish people, who never collaborated with the Nazis and tried their best to stay faithful to the West, deserved better). Placed within a broader historical context of the Versailles Treaty, the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact makes more sense. No matter what else may have set Germany and the Soviet Union against each other, they could agree on one thing: Poland is their enemy. I find it incredible that any country could maneuver to make enemies out of BOTH Hitler and Stalin. No way was Hitler and Stalin going to accept a Poland created at Germany's and Russia's expense, and without their agreement. The Versailles Treaty produced nothing good, only bad.

Glad u like the pics.

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
 Martin Malia and Robert Conquest's books are further proof of how Europeans were gluttons for self-inflicted punishment. As if WW1 and the Versailles Treaty (or diktat) wasn't enough to satisfy Europe's thirst to fight, the Russian Revolution was like icing on the cake. Instead of countries fighting each other, Russia, now re-cast as the Soviet Union, wanted to incite class warfare AROUND THE WORLD. This just incited other countries to become aggressive too (Malia, page 3). Russia lost millions of people, lost territory, even lost its sense of identity, yet STILL WANTED TO KEEP FIGHTING. Europe certainly was transforming, but not for the better. Russia (that is, the Soviet Union) became the role model for every radical, fanatic, and demagogue who had an axe to grind and was willing to use it. When Russia found that it couldn't ignite a world revolution, then the entire country vented its rage on itself, as Conquest so aptly documents. They engaged in political infighting at a level of violence that today is legendary. This kind of politics became the norm. This leads to a question: what defect or defects did European culture have that made it so prone or vulnerable to this kind of institutionalized self-destructive violence?

Phil

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)
 Derek Alderoft, *From Versailles to Wall Street, 1919-1929*

The author argues that WW1 was not responsible for the bringing on the 1929 downturn. Okay, fair enough. War or no war, the international economy was prone to business cycles. Then the author provides an exhaustive survey of the massive damage caused by the war. Those stats refute the author's thesis. The devastation was so massive that it could not but help create the conditions for a

major economic crisis. It just took ten years happen, and it was not part of any normal business cycle. The war hit Europe hard and Europe never fully recovered, Europe lost 7 percent of its pre-war population. Russia alone lost 26 million persons. There is no way that Europe and the entire world could sustain such losses and avoid serious economic consequences.

Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture*

This book refutes the stereotype of the Germans as a bunch of strutting militarists. Gay argues that the collapse of the Weimar Republic was not inevitable (page 2). Under Weimar, German culture, freed from the restrictive environment of monarchy, flourished. Good for Germany, but it wasn't enough to ensure the regime's survival. To me, Gay sums up why Weimar failed in this sentence: "There were thousands in Weimar - professors, industrialists, politicians - who hated the Nazis but did not love the Republic" (23). These "rational republicans" may have hated the Nazis, but they didn't act on that hatred. Instead they did nothing. They were too rational. They didn't accept the Weimar Republic. Neither did the Nazis, but unlike the rationals, the Nazis built their support through appeals to emotion, and it worked.

Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s*

First, the inside front jacket of the book contains a great map of central Berlin. It's easy to read and includes all the main attractions. Ditto for the map of Greater Berlin inside the back jacket. Friedrich provides a comprehensive and informative history of life in Berlin in the 1920s. This includes interesting insights into the lives of many of the historical figures associated with that period. For instance, we learn that Joseph Goebbels hated Berlin, that Albert Einstein played the violin (172), that in the 1930 elections, the Nazi representation in the Reichstag increased from 12 to 107, news that was the portent of doom for cellist Emanuel Feuermann (323), that Dr. Henry Lowenfeld, the psychoanalyst noticed that mental patients pretended to be Nazis (371), and that according to a Berlin woman, the inflation wiped out the entire middle class. All this happened in the midst of a spurt of cultural activity in the arts and sciences as the restrictions that existed under Kaiser-Germany disappeared. However, most noteworthy is Friedrich's account of the rise of the Nazi party as a major political force, starting in 1926.

pwnycny (pwnycny@aol.com)To: [REDACTED] [Details](#)

I read the text of an interview that a Soviet journalist conducted with General Vasily Chuikov. This interview is published in a book *Stalingrad: the City that Defeated the Third Reich* by Jochen Hellbeck (2015). Naturally, much of the interview covers details of the battle. However, Chuikov also devotes a lot of the interview to discussing his impressions people with whom he worked and commanded. The biggest problem was getting accurate information. People lied. He had to assign liaisons to verify the accuracy of reports. He was most

complimentary of the characters of the women who served in the army. He witnessed heroism and cowardice. The ethnic make up of the army was 70 percent Russian. The fighting became most intense in September and October of 1942, especially after Ribbentrop publicly announced the Fuhrer's intention to take the city. For much of the battle, the Germans controlled the sky. Chuikov asserts that the Germans dropped "a million bombs." What Chuikov does not discuss, and which to me is a key question, is: if the Red Army was strong enough to stop and then defeat the Germans at Stalingrad, 1,000 miles inside Russia, then how were the Germans able get to Stalingrad in the first place? Why didn't the Red Army stop the Germans at the border? How could the German Army demolish an entire Soviet army in the Ukraine but not do the same to another Soviet army at Stalingrad? Chuikov had a fourth grade education. He joined the Red Army in 1918, and rose up through the ranks. Before the war, he served in China; he also knew English. Based upon this interview, Chuikov was intelligent, resourceful, and ruthless. In Chuikov, Stalin chose the right person for the job of defending Stalingrad and defeating the Germans. The Germans threw everything they had at the Russians; the Russians held out, and whenever possible counterattacked. Most impressive.

According to Chuikov, the Germans attacked Stalingrad from two directions: west and southwest. They had artillery, tanks, and air support. They bombed the city and Red Army positions practically nonstop. Yet the Russians held on to the west bank of the Volga until reinforcements arrived. Chuikov was there, on the west bank of the Volga River, with his troops. Impressive person. Worthy of respect.

I hope you mention the battle of Stalingrad in your lectures.

Phil

Transcript of text messages to Dave.

July 5, 2018

Donald Trump is the most dominant politician in the US. Beside being the mass media's top star, he is driving the entire political debate. He is the one setting the agenda. Immigration, the economy, the economy, SCOTUS, taxes, national security, Russia, China, NATO, trade, you name it, all driven by Trump. Also, he is remaking the GOP. This from a landlord with no prior political experience.

The Dems r trying to reply to Trump, but in doing so they come off as angry and shrill and disengaged from much of the electorate whose primary concerns are personal security and the economy. Right now Trump owns those issues.

In June the Dems built political capital with the children separation issue. They put Trump on the defensive. However, the Dems soon squandered their advantage when they called for the abolition of ICE which gave Trump a great opportunity to regain the initiative, which is exactly what happened.

Finally, whatever remained of the Dems political capital disappeared with Maxine Water's irresponsible public comments which called into question the legitimacy of the Dem Party as a mainstream political organization.

The only thing that could erode Trump's dominance is a scandal so outrageous that it calls into question his fitness to govern. The Dems have been searching for such a scandal but so far with no success.

Now, with all this established, can the Dems gain control of Congress? In the Senate the GOP may gain 1 or 2 seats. In the House the Dems may gain 4 or 5 seats. However, this prediction is with the disclaimer that between now and election day anything can happen to alter the results.

Further evidence of Trump's political domination can be found in how he is going about selecting a new justice for the SCTUS. He is virtually marginalizing the Dems who can only reply with alarmist rhetoric.

Alarmist rhetoric drives voters away.

With one exception: appealing for law and order. The Dems forfeited that issue to the GOP a long time ago.

But the one factor that is to the Dem's advantage is that the American electorate is so divided along racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and generational lines that many different kinds of winning coalitions are possible.

The Dems have also forfeited the issue of the economy to the GOP. That leaves social issues as the only domestic issue upon which the Dems can build a coalition.

Hence, the 2018 elections may come down to deciding which party owns the issue of immigration.

On this issue, both parties have staked out positions so diametrically opposed that it provides the voters with a clear choice.

July 6, 2018

Choice 1: open borders, meaning letting people enter without visas. Choice 2: closed borders, meaning letting people enter only after being issued a visa.

Immigration has emerged as the main issue for 2018 because of one person: Donald Trump. He is directly challenging the Dems on an issue they have owned for decades. This is giving the Dems huge problems because Trump is forcing them to have to defend their position.

It seems that the Dems' defense of their position can be summarized as follows: we embrace all newcomers to the US, including those who enter without papers. Politically and ideologically this is a position that is not easy to defend, but as I have already mentioned, given the major divisions within the American electorate, that defense could resonate with enough voters to keep the Dems competitive.

The 2018 and 2020 elections will be de facto referendums on where the American voters are on the issue of immigration. Seldom has the American voter been given a clearer choice on an issue. This is because of one person: Donald Trump.

July 8, 2018

Re: SCOTUS. I would advise the POTUS 2 nominate a federal judge who was confirmed by both parties.

July 22, 2018

The Dem Party has the same problem with leftists as did organized labor after WW@. The strategy of the Left is to embed itself into a mass organization, then gain control and then purge all non-Leftists. This is consistent with Marxist ideology. A true Leftist demands ideological orthodoxy and have no interest in forming broad based coalitions.

Now the American Leftists are trying to gain control of the Dem party. That is to be expected.

October 6, 2018

With Judge K, the Dems threw everything they had @ Trump and failed.

October 7, 2018

There is only 1 principle I know of in politics – 2 win. The Dems lost in 2016, saw an opportunity to score political points, went 4 it & botched it up badly.

Just like the French army botched things up with Dreyfus.

Just like with the French army, the fallout 4 the Dems is all negative.

4 a smear campaign to succeed, it has 2 seem credible. The Dems should have found a victim who could produce a police report.

The most astute expert in the use of the smear was Joseph Stalin. His entire career was based on smears. Yet even Stalin knew that 4 a smear 2 succeed he had 2 back it up with lots of evidence, even if it had 2 b fabricated.

The Dems are in trouble. That's y they're making a lot of noise.

The confirmation of Judge K is one of the seminal events in modern American political history. It solidified Trump's position as the leader and shaper of the GOP and earned him a lot of political capital.

October 8, 2018

The news media came off so badly after Trump won not because they were so wrong but because they were so certain who would win, which they reported as news. Hence the label Fake News Media.

Whoever believes faithfully in the accuracy of what is reported does so at their own intellectual risk.

October 16, 2018

Re: Sen W. Her claim of being NA based on info given to her by relatives is similar to Moses' claim of being a Hebrew based on info given to him by his family. In the former a white woman believes herself to b a NA, in the latter an Egyptian believes that he is a Hebrew.

October 17, 2018

When reading the history of Poland during 1919-1939, I am amazed that Poland survived intact.

What especially amazed me was Poland's treaty with Hitler in 1934. That bought Poland 5 years.

October 18, 2018

One need not experience military service 2 appreciate the intellectual desert that is a bureaucratic staff meeting.

The golden rule when attending a staff meeting: speak only when spoken to, and when asked to speak, restrict your vocabulary to two monosyllabic words: yes and no.

October 28, 2018

I never gave czar N2 much, if nay, thought until hyour recent lecture. Lenin should have given the enture family a one way steamship ticket to NYC. Trotsky could have found them a place to stay in the Bronx, maybe near Yankee Stadium.

November 7, 2018

No Blue Wave. A Red wave with Blue ripples.

In the House, anti-Trump GOP reps r gone. GOP now united in support of Trump.

DJT = GOP

November 8, 2018

Because of DJT, the GOP has a majority in the Senate.

The biggest obstacle 2 DJT's program were the anti-Trump Reps. They r gone.

Cruz, Rubio, Graham now pay homage 2 DJT.

DJT cemented his position as GOP leader with the Judge K confirmation.

The Dems have a choice: fight DJT or cooperate with DJT. Their choice.

Yeltsin shaped Russian politics. DJT is re-shaping American politics.

November 9, 2019

If it wasn't 4 DJT, Nov. 6 would have been a debacle 4 the GOP.

The Dems r more aggressive, better organized & more ideologically committed than the GOP. They won control of the House because they earned it.

---Original Message-----

From: pwnycny@aol.com

Sent: Nov 18, 2018 10:00 AM

Dear Dave,

1. Currently the Republicans hold a 51-seat majority in the US Senate. Their majority could increase to 53. In the House, in the next Congress the Dems will have an approximately 35-seat majority.

2. Thoroughbred racing.

a. It's all about winning. That is the measure of success. E.g. Jockey A wins ten races, all claiming races, and earns \$400,000. Jockey B wins one race, a \$1 million stakes race, and earns \$650,000. Based on number of wins, Jockey A will be ranked ahead of Jockey B.

b. Odds are not predictive of results. Heavily favored horses can and often do lose. Long-shots can and do win. Past performance does not guarantee future outcome. E.g., On Nov 17, 2018, race 3, Sunset Ridge, winner of her last 4 races, finished second; race 7, Holiday Bonus, 45-1 long shot, finished first while the favorite, Uncle Mojo, at 3-2, finished last.

c. Picking a winner is based on two factors: 1. probability and 2. luck. Both are variables. That the contestants are animals makes outcome even more uncertain. There is no way that anyone can predict with absolute certainty how a horse will perform in a race.

d. Betting on a horse race is not the same as casino gambling. Whereas in a casino gambling, e.g., cards, roulette, dice, lottery, odds are fixed, in horse racing, odds are fluid and influenced by an almost infinite set of variables, not least of which is the horse itself.

3. God. I believe in the existence of a higher power. Period.

4. Anger. It causes premature aging, is corrosive and is a waste of energy. Yet it is part of human nature and so cannot be denied. Anyone who denies feelings of anger is denying a part of their self.

Phil