

## **From July 4, 1776 to June 12, 1990**

June 12<sup>th</sup> for Russians is to some extent the equivalent of July 4<sup>th</sup> for Americans when the former colony of the British Empire has declared its independence. “Russia Day” commemorates the adoption in 1990 of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the [Russian Federation](#) that eventually led to the collapse of Soviet empire and [Russia](#) becoming one of the new 15 independent states.

This was the time of high expectations when freed from communism [Russia](#) was ready to join the West and become one of the most valuable and important American and European allies.

Even before that day, both Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin had been sending strong signals about their desire and readiness to move in this direction with the maximum speed.

I know this from personal experience since starting from October 1988 when for the first time I was allowed to return to the homeland and bring along dozens of American delegations. These included members of Congress, foreign-policy experts, businessmen, university presidents and faculty, and even famous Russians émigrés like writers Vassily Aksyonov, Vladimir Maximov, Aleksander Zinoviev; sculptor Ernst Neizvestny; human rights activists Vladimir Bukovsky and Edward Kuznetsov. During these visits we had absolutely open and frank discussions with officials in high places, intellectuals, students, ordinary folks, and the media.

One of the high points came in April 1989 when Mr. Alexander Yakovlev who was Gorbachev’s right hand man told our group that included two U.S. Senators - Phil Graham (R-TX) and Bob Kasten (R-WI) - and two U.S. Ambassadors - Frank Shakespeare (Vatican) and Faith Whittlesey (Switzerland) - that any Warsaw Pact country that wanted to leave this bloc was free to do just that.

A prominent Washington insider, Paul Weyrich, who became a frequent participant in these exchanges had direct access to President George H.W. Bush, and after one of these trips he went to the White House to hand the president the report on the

imminent collapse of the USSR, urging the president to develop a plan for [Russia](#)'s integration with the West.

Weyrich told me after the meeting that Mr. Bush listened attentively until Condoleezza Rice had walked into the room and practically dismissed this report. According to Rice's intelligence data the Soviet Union was there to stay and we were all wrong to think otherwise.

What happened afterwards is only too well known.

On Aug. 1, 1991, Mr. Bush went to Ukraine and made his famous "Chicken Kiev" speech, saying that "we will maintain the strongest possible relationship with the Soviet government of President Gorbachev." Less than five months later, the Soviet Union was no more, but the United States was not prepared for that moment. A historic, once-in-a-century chance to bring [Russia](#) into the Western fold was lost.

Clinton administration policy took the turn from bad to worse. It was marked by hundreds of American advisers who rushed to Moscow to "help" Boris Yeltsin's team perform the 'miracle' of transforming [Russia](#)'s planned economy inherited from the USSR, into a market-based model. The result of their advice was so devastating that, according to a [2000 congressional report](#) "[Russia](#)'s Road to Corruption: How the Clinton Administration Exported Government Instead of Free Enterprise and Failed the Russian People", they lead [Russia](#) to an economic collapse and the crippling financial default of 1998.

President Clinton also started a process of NATO expansion that many experts, including U.S. Ambassador George Kennan, denounced as a tragic mistake and the start of a new Cold War.

George W. Bush's [Russia](#) policy was no less devastating. He ungratefully repaid Vladimir Putin's help during the 2001 U.S. invasion into Afghanistan with unilateral abrogation of the ABM treaty, promotion of "color" revolutions in post-Soviet space, and a push for further NATO expansion, including into Ukraine and Georgia.

President Obama's "reset" policy was supposed to bring some positive changes, but very quickly moved to the same old direction by orchestrating the February 2014 Ukrainian regime change which led to the 6-year civil war that continues today.

This was on top of destroying one of the most prosperous African countries by turning Libya into a hub of multimillion flows of refugees from Africa and Middle East to Europe.

One of the major factors that helped Trump to win the 2016 elections was his pledge to stop the endless wars that have destabilized the world's security while inflicting huge human and material losses on the Middle East and America itself. Trump has also pledged to improve relations between the two major nuclear powers U.S. and [Russia](#) thus largely enhancing the security of both nations and the rest of the world but, regrettably, none of this has yet happened.

As a result of Trump's inability to attain his stated goals, more and more people in the know talk about the new nuclear arms race that might bring the world closer to Doomsday than at even the most terrifying moments of the Cold War.

Trump can rightfully blame the "adults in the room," the "Deep State," the "Washington swamp," or the "Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank complex" - MICIMATT - (term suggested by the former leading CIA Soviet analyst during Reagan years Raymond McGovern) for the failure of his foreign policy but this does not make us feel safer.

To summarize:

During the 1775 – 83 War for Independence Russia was on American side. Russian Empress Catherine the Great had rejected the request of King George to send Russian troops to support Great Britain. She also turned down the King's bribe to gain Russian assistance when he offered the island of Menorca in the Mediterranean Sea in exchange for convincing France to exit the war and thus forcing the American rebels to fight alone.

As it is shown above when the [Russian Federation](#) was born Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and yes, contrary to his pledges and right instincts, Donald Trump, did just the opposite.

This is not the American fair game but it also contradicts Trump's right thinking that "Getting along with [Russia](#) is good for America."

It remains to be seen if Trump can do a better job going forward – if the voters give him another chance. His recent idea to reshape the G-7 to G-11 by adding [Russia](#), India, South Korea and Australia is certainly the move in the right direction although G-12 configuration with China would be a smarter road.

- *Edward Lozansky, President, American University in Moscow*