

6 July 1981

A WORD FROM THE FAMOUS

(For editors who wish to adorn their comments on Poland)

By Vladimir V. Kusin

In a supratemporal encounter of the intellectual kind, assisted by the existence of that marvellous invention of mankind, literature, the following multiple interview has been concocted, with scrupulous literality of form but of course a somewhat spurious interpretation:

Question: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE POLISH STRIFE?

Answers:

Edmund BURKE (1729-1797): I am not one of those who think that the people are never in the wrong. They have been so, frequently and outrageously, both in other countries and in this. But I do say, that in all disputes between them and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people. (1)

Winston CHURCHILL (1874-1965): There are few virtues that the Poles do not possess - and there are few mistakes they have ever avoided. (2)

Robert BROWNING (1812-1889): A minute's success pays the failure of years. (3)

John Stuart MILL (1806-1873): When society requires to be rebuilt, there is no use in attempting to rebuild it on the old plan. (4)

William MORRIS (1834-1896):

What is this, the sound and rumour? What is this  
that all men hear,  
Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm  
is drawing near,  
Like the rolling on of ocean in the eventide of fear?  
'Tis the people marching on. (5)

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- (1) Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770)
  - (2) House of Commons, 16 August 1945
  - (3) Apollo and the Fates (Prologue)
  - (4) Dissertations and Discussions, Vol. I (1859)
  - (5) Chants for Socialists (1885), "The March of the Workers"

Jonathan SWIFT (1667-1745): These unhappy people were proposing schemes for persuading monarchs to choose favourites upon the score of their wisdom, capacity and virtue; of teaching ministers to consult the public good; of rewarding merit, great abilities and eminent services; of instructing princes to know their true interest by placing it on the same foundation with that of their people; of choosing for employment persons qualified to exercise them; with many other wild impossible chimeras, that never entered before into the heart of man to conceive, and confirmed in me the old observation, that there is nothing so extravagant and irrational which some philosophers have not maintained for truth. (6)

TACITUS (A.D.55 or 56 - c.120): These times having the rare good fortune that you may think what you like and say what you think. (7)

VIRGIL (70-19 B.C.): This success encourages: they can because they think they can. (8)

Question: WHAT SHOULD THE POLES BEAR IN MIND CONSIDERING THEIR PRESENT PREDICAMENT?

Answers:

Edmund BURKE (1729-1797): Liberty, too, must be limited in order to be possessed. (9)

CICERO (106-43 B.C.): The good of the people is the chief law. (10)

ST.AUGUSTINE (354-430): Love and do what you will. (11)

Francis BACON (1561-1626): Men must pursue things which are just in present, and leave the future to the divine Providence. (12)

Johann Wolfgang von GOETHE (1749-1832): Without haste, but without rest. (13)

(6) Voyage to Laputa etc., Chapter 6

(7) Rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet. Histories, Part I, 1

(8) Hos successus alit: possunt, quia posse videntur. Aeneid, Part V, 231

(9) Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol (1777)

(10) Salus populi suprema est lex. De Legibus, III, iii, 8

(11) Dilige et quod vis fac. In Epist.Joann.Tractatus, VII, 8

(12) Advancement of Learning, XXI, 11

(13) Ohne Hast, aber ohne Rast. Motto.



HORACE (65-8 B.C.): To have begun is half the job: be bold and be sensible. (14)

Immanuel KANT (1724-1804): Finally, there is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is Categorical ... This imperative may be called that of Morality. (15)

Jean de la FONTAINE (1621-1695): Help yourself, and heaven will help you. (16)

Henry Wadsworth LONGFELLOW (1807-1882):

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act, - act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead! (17)

John Stuart MILL (1806-1873): A party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life. (18)

Theodore ROOSEVELT (1858-1919): Every reform movement has a lunatic fringe. (19)

William SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616): Come not between the dragon and his wrath. (20)

George Bernard SHAW (1856-1950): Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it. (21)

(14) Dimidium facti qui coepit habet: sapere aude. Epistles, II, 40

(15) Endlich gibt es einen Imperativ, der, ohne irgend eine andere durch ein gewisses Verhalten zu erreichende Absicht als Bedingung zum Grunde zu legen, dieses Verhalten unmittelbar gebietet. Dieser Imperativ ist kategorisch ... Dieser Imperativ mag der der Sittlichkeit heissen. Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Section II

(16) Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera. Fables, VI, 18. Le Chartier Embourbé

(17) A Psalm of Life

(18) On Liberty, Chapter 1

(19) Speaking of the Progressive Party, in 1913

(20) King Lear, I, i, 124

(21) Maxims for Revolutionists, "Liberty"

MONTAIGNE (1533-1592): One should always have one's boots on, and be ready to leave. (22)

OVID (43 B.C. - A.D.17): A middle course is the safest for you to take. (23)

VIRGIL (70-19 B.C.): O you who have borne even heavier things, God will grant an end to these too. (24)

Question: ANY COMMENT ON THE SOVIET-POLISH RELATIONSHIP?

Answers:

Pierre-Jean de BÉRANGER (1780-1857): Our friends, the enemy. (25)

Daniel DEFOE (1661?-1731): In trouble to be troubl'd  
Is to have your trouble doubl'd (26)

Thomas HOBBS (1588-1679): They that approve a private opinion, call it opinion; but they that mislike it, heresy: and yet heresy signifies no more than private opinion. (27)

John LOCKE (1632-1704): New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common. (28)

Friedrich NIETZSCHE (1844-1900): He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you. (29)

Eugène POTTIER (1816-1887): Reason is rumbling in its crater, and its final eruption is on its way. (30)

Friedrich von SCHILLER (1759-1805): With stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain. (31)

Oscar WILDE (1854-1900): A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies. (32)

(22) Il faut être toujours botté et prêt à partir. Essais, I, xx

(23) Medio tutissimus ibis. Metamorphoses, II, 137

(24) O passi graviores, dabit deus his quoque finem. Aeneid, I, 199

(25) Nos amis, les ennemis. L'Opinion de ces demoiselles

(26) Robinson Crusoe, The Farther Adventures

(27) Leviathan, Part I, Chapter 11

(28) An Essay concerning Human Understanding, dedicatory epistle

(29) Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehn, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einem Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein. Jenseits von Gut und Böse, IV, 146

(30) La raison tonne en son cratère, c'est l'éruption de la fin.  
1 Internationale



Question: WILL THERE BE A MILITARY INTERVENTION?

Answers:

CICERO (106-43 B.C.): May the gods avert this omen. (33)

Francis BACON (1561-1626): The remedy is worse than the disease. (34)

Benjamin DISRAELI (1804-1881): What we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expected generally happens. (35)

NAPOLEON I (1769-1821): There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous. (36)

Tom PAINE (1737-1809): The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime, makes the ridiculous; and one step above the ridiculous, makes the sublime again. (37)

Tom STOPPARD (1937-): The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means. (38)

TERTULLIAN (A.D.c.160-c.225): As often as we are mown down by you, the more we grow in numbers; the blood of Christians is the seed. (39)

OVID (43 B.C. - A.D.17): Far be that fate from us! (40)

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(33) Quod di omen avertant. Philippic, III, xiv, 35

(34) Essays. Of Seditions and Troubles.

(35) Henrietta Temple, Book II, Chapter 4

(36) Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas. To De Pradt, Polish ambassador, after the retreat from Moscow in 1812. Histoire de l'Ambassade dans le grand-duché de Varsovie en 1812, by De Pradt (1815, p.215)

(37) The Age of Reason, Part II, p.20

(38) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Act II

(39) Plures efficimus quoties metimur a vobis, semen est sanguis Christianorum. Apologeticus, 50, 13

(40) Procul omen abesto! Amores, I, xiv, 41

Question: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT THE RUSSIANS IN THIS RESPECT?

Answers:

Winston CHURCHILL (1874-1965): I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. (41)

Benjamin DISRAELI (1804-1881): Mr. Kremlin himself was distinguished for ignorance, for he had only one idea - and that was wrong. (42)

HORACE (65-8 B.C.): Force, if unassisted by judgment, collapses through its own mass. (43)

John Stuart MILL (1806-1873): A State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes - will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished. (44)

Maximilien ROBESPIERRE (1758-1794): Any institution which does not suppose the people good, and the magistrate corruptible, is evil. (45)

Leo TOLSTOY (1828-1910): I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by all possible means - except by getting off his back. (46)

Lev TROTSKY (1879-1940): Where force is necessary, one should make use of it boldly, resolutely, and right to the end. But it is as well to know the limitations of force; to know where to blend force with manoeuvre, assault with conciliation. (47)

Charles-Maurice de TALLEYRAND (1754-1838): They have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing. (48)

PYRRHUS (319-272 B.C.): One more such victory and we are lost. (49)

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(41) Broadcast talk, 1 October 1939

(42) Sybil, Book IV, Chapter 5

(43) Vis consili expers mole ruit sua. Odes, III, iv, 65

(44) On Liberty, Chapter 5

(45) Toute institution qui ne suppose pas le peuple bon, et le magistrat corruptible, est vicieuse. Déclaration des Droits de l'homme, 24 April 1793, Article XIX

(46) What Then Must We Do? Chapter 16

(47) Was nun? (1932, p.106)

(48) Ils n'ont rien appris, ni rien oublié. Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet du Pan (1851, II, p.196)

(49) Plutarch, Pyrrhus. After defeating the Romans at Asculum in 279 B.C.



Question: WOULD YOU PREDICT AN OUTCOME OF THE POLISH DEVELOPMENTS?

Answers:

Edmund BURKE (1729-1797): The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered. (50)

Anton CHEKHOV (1860-1904): When a lot of remedies are suggested for a disease, that means it can't be cured. (51)

Benjamin DISRAELI (1804-1881): Change is inevitable. In a progressive country change is constant. (52)

VOLTAIRE (1694-1778): If we do not find anything pleasant, at least we shall find something new. (53)

Guy FAWKES (1570-1606): A desperate disease requires a dangerous remedy. (54)

Herbert SPENCER (1820-1903): It cannot but happen ... that those will survive whose functions happen to be most nearly in equilibrium with the modified aggregate of external forces... This survival of the fittest implies multiplication of the fittest. (55)

TERENCE (c.190-159 B.C.): Fortune aids the brave. (56)

VIRGIL (70-19 B.C.): Surely as the divine powers take note of the dutiful, surely as there is any justice anywhere and a mind recognizing in itself what is right, may the gods bring you your earned rewards. (57)

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(50) Speech on Conciliation with America, 22 March 1775

(51) The Cherry Orchard, Act II, Scene i

(52) Speech in Edinburgh, 29 October 1867

(53) Si nous ne trouvons pas des choses agréables, nous trouverons du moins des choses nouvelles. Candide, Chapter 17

(54) 6 November 1605, after his arrest for plotting to blow up the House of Commons.

(55) Principles of Biology, Part III, Chapter 12

(56) Fortis fortuna adiuvat. Phormio, 203

(57) Di tibi, si qua pios respectant numina, si quid usquam iustitiae est et mens sibi conscia recti, praemia digna ferant. Aeneid, I, 603

Question: ANY GENERAL OBSERVATIONS?

Answers:

Edmund BURKE (1729-1797): An event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak, and impossible to be silent. (58)

Herbert SPENCER (1820-1903): No one can be perfectly free till all are free; no one can be perfectly moral till all are moral; no one can be perfectly happy till all are happy. (59)

George Bernard SHAW (1856-1950): The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man. (60)

John Maynard KEYNES (1883-1946): Marxian socialism must always remain a portent to the historians of opinion - how a doctrine so illogical and so dull can have exercised so powerful and enduring an influence over the minds of men, and, through them, the events of history. (61)

Thomas G. MASARYK (1850-1937): Marx and Engels should have investigated more carefully whether class conflict is really all that holds society together. (62)

PROPERTIUS (b.c.51 B.C.): Even if strength fail, boldness at least will deserve praise: in great endeavours even to have had the will is enough. (63)

HORACE (65-8 B.C.): Nothing is an unixed blessing. (64)

Count OXENSTIERNA (1583-1654): Dost thou not know, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed? (65) (66)

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(58) Speech on 5 May 1789

(59) Social Statics, Part IV, Chapter 30

(60) Maxims for Revolutionists, "Reason"

(61) The End of Laisser-Faire, Chapter III

(62) Masaryk on Marx (1972, p.166)

(63) Quod si deficient vires, audacia certe laus erit: in magnis et voluisse sat est. Elegies, II, x, 5

(64) Nihil est ab omni parte beatum. Odes, II, xvi, 27

(65) Letter to his son, 1648

(66) Most quotations from The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 3rd ed., London, 1979. Some quotes collected at random.