A TREMBLE OF EUROWEENIES

Some of my favorite words in the English language are "collective nouns," the colorful names for groups of animals going back to the 15th century that every kid had to know to go hunting with his dad. Not knowing them was laughable ignorance.

We would laugh today if someone said a "herd of fish" instead of a school, or a "flock of cattle," instead of a herd or drove. We know it's a pride of lions, but it's a leap of leopards, a crash of rhinos, a shrewdness of apes, a skulk of foxes. Perhaps you've heard of a murder of crows or an exultation of larks, but it's an unkindness of ravens, an ostentation of peacocks, a bouquet of pheasants, a parliament of owls.

Collective nouns were applied to groups of people as well. We still call it a congregation of churchgoers, but it's an impatience of wives, a boast of soldiers, an impertinence of peddlers, an illusion of painters. I love the one for prostitutes: a flourish of strumpets.

It's a *tremble* of cowards. That certainly was the appropriate designation for the French-German Euroweenie portion of participants at the Paris conference I attended earlier this week.

It was a conference on Global Security organized by the French Ministry of Defense, the US Department of Defense, and NATO. It had a dual focus: on the threat of Russian aggression in Ukraine, and on cybersecurity.

Held in the King's Council Chamber of Les Invalides, among the 40 some attendees were ministers of defense and ambassadors from several countries, high level EU and NATO officials, Pentagon generals, and key executives from major defense and cybersecurity companies. I attended as the geopolitical strategist for one of the conference sponsors.

There was no press, and no attribution for anything said was permitted. Given that restriction, here is what happened.

The opening address was by a 4-star General in the French Army very high in the command structure of the EU. He was a virtual caricature of Euroweenie-ism: "It is not through military means that the Russia-Ukraine crisis can be solved... the only way to peace is cooperation and partnership."

My comment that "the only way to peace is through superior firepower," was not appreciated by him. It was, however, particularly enjoyed by attendees from Eastern Europe.

The French General was followed by one of the highest ranking diplomats in the Russian government and one of Putin's closest advisors. It was a sickening attack on the "coup d'etat" as a Western plot to overthrow the "legitimate" government of Ukraine, without of course the slightest

interest in or reference to the people of Ukraine.

I asked if it wouldn't be in Russia's best interests to, instead of trying to recapitulate the Soviet Empire, focus on real threats to Russian territorial integrity - such as the increasing inevitability of Siberia east of Irkutsk becoming Chinese.

This gained the rapt attention of the two attendees from China - while the Russkie could only sputter something about China being Russia's ally and friend.

Refreshing counters to this were the very high level diplomats from Greece, Georgia, Poland, and Romania. They all laid into Russia, saying that "Russia's aggression in Ukraine is a direct challenge to the security of all Europe undermining the entire international security system."

This aggression is the "direct consequence of Russia's annexation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia in 2008 which NATO allowed to happen without resistance. As a result, we see the same annexation in Crimea and being attempted in eastern Ukraine. What Russia is doing today is a threat to all of us, to all of Europe."

The most sobering lesson we must learn is that, "We thought Russia would join the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union - but now after Georgia and Ukraine we see it doesn't want to. Instead, Russian has chosen to become a major threat to the international system of how nations behave."

Then came the diplomat from Ukraine. In dispassionate diplomatese, he explained that after the Cold War, former Soviet colonies from the Baltics to Bulgaria were given the opportunity to make a "social leap" to the West, to join NATO and the EU. It is Ukraine's tragedy that this opportunity was prevented by Russia.

"When," he continued, "Ukraine finally insisted on this opportunity starting late last year, Russia responded with military force. The resulting crisis now goes much deeper than Ukraine. Thanks to it, no one can trust Russia's promises and agreements again, no one can cooperate with a state that lies about everything, that denies every truth."

Alas, next came a 4-star German General who was the commander of a major portion of NATO forces - and he was a blowhard who loved the sound of his voice but conveyed very little information. So my question to him:

> "General, the Cold War was won by President Reagan via his Reagan Doctrine strategy of identifying and exploiting the Soviet Union's most critical weaknesses and vulnerabilities. For all of Russia's efforts in eastern Ukraine, it has only been able to seize one half of one region, Donetsk. The other half, plus all of Kharkiv and almost all of Lugansk remain in Ukrainian hands. Mighty Russia has so far been unable to defeat the tiny Ukrainian

> military. What then are Russia's military weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and how best do we exploit them?"

He couldn't answer the question.

Worse than him by far, however, was a former Defense Minister of France. He delivered an apologia for Russia and dismissal of Ukraine as "an invented country," that was a talking points memo straight from the Kremlin. I concluded he was one of the large number of government officials, politicians, academics, journalists and political activists on Putin's payroll.

I had the opportunity to bring this up when a Brit spoke who was a key expert on energy policy for NATO. He was very sharp, explaining the various ways Ukraine and Europe could diversify energy supplies and thus reduce dependency on Russian gas.

I asked him to comment on the massive bribery operation conducted by the Putin Kremlin to bribe everyone from EU officials in Brussels to journalists and political activists all over Europe to be against fracking.

He instantly agreed. "It is massive and pervasive. They even made fracking illegal in Bulgaria and here in France. Europe has enormous frackable supplies of natural gas that could make it free of any need for Russian gas. That's why Putin has to demonize it, and pay a lot of influential people a lot of money to do so."

The Russians there remained silent while the two Chinese furiously took notes.

There was a panel on cybersecurity, but when I asked them about the cyberwar Russia was conducting on NATO governments - the attacks on Estonia being the most publicized - they clammed up.

The most pathetic was a French lady who headed cybersecurity for a French defense institute. There were so many "difficulties," she argued, with "active defense" measures in cybersecurity - attacking the attackers - that such measures should never be undertaken.

That said, there were a number of extremely bright folks there who in no way suffered from testicular atrophy. The Greek diplomat along with his Eastern European colleagues, a pair of Italian cyber specialists, the Brit on energy, a knighted Brit who is a former British Minister of Defense, and yes, the Americans.

The Americans in private industry were sharp as any tack you'll find. They all told me they loved my questions. Even the Pentagon and State folks did, although a bit nervously. When a US Army General spoke, he opened by telling the audience, "My goal in this talk is to explain DOD cyber

policy - and avoid getting any tough questions from Dr. Wheeler."

Everyone laughed - and I complied.

A good time was had by all, I learned a lot and made a number of friends. What nagged me was that it was all about problems and not solutions. What nagged me most was the resistance to do what it takes to solve the problems - particularly by the French and Germans.

The Germans remain traumatized by their parents or grandparents being Nazis, which neutralizes them when facing Russian aggression, be that military such as in Ukraine, economic such as being held hostage to Gazprom gas, or cyber with Russian massive hacking attacks.

The French live in a permanent state of ressentiment, an attitude of arrogant inferiority towards the "Anglo-Saxon" world (America and the Brits) for leaving them in the dust of history. They long for the *gloire* (glory) of long ago. The king of the King's Council Chamber where we met was Louis XIV (1638-1715), the Sun King who built Les Invalides. A huge famous painting of him towered over us on one wall.

Les Invalides is where Napoleon (1769-1821) is buried. His tomb is completely over the top in grandiosity. He was a mass murderer responsible for the slaughter and death of millions, yet the French worship him as if he were a demi-god. They admire him for trampling and subjugating most of Europe. No wonder they admire Putin and kowtow to him.

The people of Ukraine, of Poland and Eastern Europe, of Georgia and other former Soviet colonies wish to be free of him instead. There are plenty of people throughout all of Europe, in fact, who have a growing contempt for Putin's Russia and his bullying. Their impatience with the Tremble of Euroweenies afraid of standing up to him - or being paid off not to - is growing.

"Russia is dying," I commented to the two Chinese attendees at our luncheon. One was a General in MSS (Ministry of State Security, the Chicom CIA), the other his aide. "So is its economy. It has no future. It is time for the West to stop being afraid of it. China certainly isn't."

They couldn't help smiling at that. Everyone else around the table agreed. Maybe by next year's meeting - to which I hope I'll still be welcome - there will be fewer trembling Euroweenies. Except for the French.

Ps: Here's me under that painting of the Sun King...

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