



Charles E. Bohlen

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Charles E. Bohlen

'Mr C. E. Bohlen: Close Study of Soviet Leaders' (supplementary obituary),
The Times, 11 January 1974, 16h



MAY I ADD a personal note to your admirable account of Charles Bohlen's professional life?¹

He was sensitive, gay and remarkably unpompous and unstuffy, and possessed an acute sense of the ridiculous; moreover, he had great charm, penetrating intelligence, and delight in congenial company, and so earned the respect and affection of a very varied circle of friends extending far beyond the diplomatic world.

His interest in Russia and Communist ideology was at the very heart of his being: gifted with an interest in persons as well as ideas, he studied Soviet leaders as an ornithologist studies birds. His vignettes of Bolshevik personalities, from Radek to the present members of the Politburo, aided by considerable power of mimicry of voice and expression, were entertaining and wholly convincing.

He was a man of conservative character, liberal opinions, and loved discussion and argument: he could hold his own with considerable brilliance against some very formidable ideological opponents both at home and abroad. He was responsive to every

¹ 'Mr Charles E. Bohlen: Distinguished American Diplomat and Expert on Russian Affairs', *The Times*, 3 January 1974, 14f-h.

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tremor and nuance in Soviet utterance and behaviour, read the classics of Soviet ideology constantly, and was not burdened by theoretical preconceptions or obstinately held hypotheses. The strength of his intellect, his free imagination, his acute political sagacity and his spontaneous wit greatly impressed officials, journalists and friends alike.

Happily married, deeply loved by his family and his friends, he led a fully realised, productive and morally unswerving life, and bore his last, long and painful illness with characteristic fortitude. He was one of the most delightful, talented, upright and attractive human beings I have ever known.

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