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*PERESTROIKA* AND SOVIET-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS

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*PERESTROIKA AND SOVIET-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS*<sup>1</sup>

The policy of perestroika being carried out in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev and the new Soviet leadership can justly be called a peaceful revolution. According to Gorbachev himself, perestroika is a revolution that "we are actually beginning to feel only now. Only now are all the signs of the revolution coming to the surface..... We will replace one economic and political model with another."<sup>2</sup>

The main question for any revolution is that of power. In the case of Gorbachev there are more and more reasons to believe that he is determined to change the political structure of government in the Soviet Union. This became especially clear during and after the 28th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Gorbachev has been trying to transfer government from the party and the party apparatus to representative bodies of authority formed as a result of free, universal, and direct elections in which many parties would be allowed to compete. What is on the agenda today is not the party's sharing power with a constructive opposition (as was the case in 1988-89), but a possible gradual transfer of power to elected representative bodies of authority--the soviets. In some instances this has already taken place (in Moscow and Leningrad, for example). This explains the popularity among the Soviet people of the topical slogan "All power to the Soviets!" There are rumors

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<sup>2</sup> Gorbachev, M. Interview with Time magazine. Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR. June 30, 1990, pp. 6, 2.

**that at the latest annual meeting with his former university fellow-students Gorbachev said that he could actually be voted out of office.**

**I believe that Gorbachev does not intend to dismantle the CPSU. He wants to change it, turning it eventually into a modern parliamentary party; however, for his own political career, he need not remain the head of the CPSU. Nevertheless, he is increasingly likely to stay on as head of the party if he succeeds in remodeling it in accordance with his ideas and retaining in it those progressive members capable of ideological rejuvenation. Nor can the possibility be ruled out of the CPSU being renamed in the future. This would allow it to get rid of the name, under which it has discredited itself in the eyes of many Soviet people, without changing its socialist essence.**

**All this enables one to conclude that Gorbachev places national interests--the interests of the people at large--above narrow ideological party interests. This has become more obvious to those who have been analyzing Soviet foreign policy over the past few years. Party influence on foreign policy is obviously weakening. Soviet diplomacy no longer appears based on the concept of "class struggle." Gorbachev and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze seem to be removing the ideological element from Soviet foreign policy. And it was precisely Communist ideology that provided the basis for Soviet expansionism. The strength and "dignity" of the Soviet Union were previously measured by the ideological yardstick. Both the Soviet people at home and the "progressive people" abroad were repeatedly informed about the "great economic achievements" of socialism--"the only progressive social order"--"the great**

victories of the international Communist and working-class movement," and the country's superior military strength. Today these are not even mentioned. The "great economic achievements" of socialism have proved to be mythical, as have the "great victories of the international Communist and working-class movement." Soviet expansionism appears to have lost its ideological and economic sustenance. However, the USSR's military potential remains high and the military lobby in the Soviet Union seems very powerful indeed, which gives reason for serious concern to many observers of the changing Soviet scene.

#### **RESTRUCTURING POLICY MAKING**

The Soviet Union is only now beginning to shape a foreign policy as it is understood in the civilized world. Prior to perestroika Soviet foreign policy was but an instrument of the ideological struggle against the West-- a struggle whose final goal was the victory of communism in the whole world. The national interests of the Soviet people were completely subordinated to achieving this goal. However, although ideology dominated Soviet foreign policy, geopolitics was also quite important. Mutually contradictory ideological and geopolitical considerations coexisted in Soviet foreign policy for decades. The tragedy of this "coexistence" was that Soviet foreign policy did not reflect the country's real national interests.

In that period Soviet foreign policy making was one of the most highly centralized areas within the generally highly centralized system. This degree of centralization was largely due to the need to preserve the party apparatus's ideological control over the country's foreign policy. At that time foreign policy was made in the departments of the CPSU Central Committee in close cooperation with the KGB, military, and Foreign Ministry think-tanks. When formulating foreign policy, party officials could use material prepared by research institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences, which acted as minor advisors. Depending on their importance, foreign policy decisions were taken either by the Central Committee Secretariat or the Politburo and involved only a limited number of foreign policy decision makers. For example, the decision to dispatch Soviet troops to Afghanistan was taken by a few members of the Politburo—all of them very close associates of Brezhnev. According to Shevardnadze, who was at that time a nonvoting member of the Politburo, he and the other members of the country's political leadership learned about this decision from reports circulated by the Soviet mass media.

To change this situation, Gorbachev needed five years of perestroika. I believe that this time was necessary for him to become convinced that implementing the principles of the new political thinking, which required the adoption of progressive decisions and the creation of a new foreign policy concept, was impossible when policy and decision making were in the hands of the powerful conservative party apparatus. Even the inclusion in the Politburo of Alexander Yakovlev, who was responsible for foreign policy making in the Central Committee, did not give Gorbachev any assurance that he could overcome the resistance of the conservatives

by introducing his supporters into the party apparatus. I also believe that it was increasingly difficult for Gorbachev to free foreign policy from complete domination by ideology without getting rid of the "ideological machine" run by the Central Committee apparatus.

With the creation of the post of president and the setting up of the Presidential Council, the Politburo and the Central Committee have lost their monopoly on policy decision making. Their influence is gradually weakening. Foreign policy decision making still is and will always be centralized, but policy making in general is becoming increasingly decentralized. The first step in this direction has been the creation of a special policy-making apparatus in the Presidential Council. The second step has been turning the Soviet Foreign Ministry into an important foreign policy-making body. An Academic Council has been set up at the ministry to deal with the most important, conceptual foreign policy issues and to determine the main aspects and forms of the academic support to be given to diplomatic activity. The council will listen to the opinions of leading Soviet scientists and scholars. Speaking at the first meeting of the Academic Council, Shevardnadze, who is the president of the council, made this point:

We are not talking about setting up a kind of emergency aid service for our foreign policy or a system of quick intellectual response to problems. It would be more correct to speak about the formation of a mode of cooperation between policy and science or, still more precisely, about their merger and interpenetration in our common interest....The alliance

between science and diplomacy is the most important condition for the democratization of our policy and the indispensable component needed for breakthroughs in the sphere of foreign policy. For today foreign policy involves a wide range of ideas, phenomena, and news. As a minimum, it must be able to distinguish between the present and the past, and between what is progressive and what has no future. To know what to do, diplomacy must know not only the present state of the world, but also understand the directions in which human thought, society, and technology are developing.<sup>3</sup>

After the Foreign Ministry had been freed from the Central Committee apparatus's ideological control and started to take independent decisions pertaining to the creation of a foreign policy concept, a shortage of qualified specialists, unaffected by ideological dogmatism and capable of a scientific analysis of the trends and processes occurring in the world, made itself felt. The restructuring of Soviet policy making called for the creation of a scientific basis for Soviet foreign policy. In Shevardnadze's opinion, the involvement of research institutes in this work should meet the following requirements:

First, scientists and scholars can and must become equal coauthors of the state's foreign policy strategy in all its aspects - from disarmament and national security to ecology, human rights, and culture. In its capacity of the coauthor and

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<sup>3</sup> Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR. December 31, 1989, p. 60.



cocreator of foreign policy concepts and ideas, science can and must criticize and evaluate Soviet diplomatic activity. Besides, we need an expert examination of our initiatives and projected actions. However, we need not only criticism, but recommendations as well. Second, a close cooperation with science should help us improve professionalism and bring up new diplomats, open to all that is innovative and free of dogmatism. Third, cooperation with diplomacy may give much to science as well, in particular, a correct understanding of the present-day requirements of international development and the tasks to be accomplished by our state in various specific spheres of foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

At the present time some research institutes have signed contracts with the Foreign Ministry to provide scientific analyses of various foreign policy issues. However, there is one important obstacle to an increased participation of research institutes in policy making. This obstacle is the Foreign Ministry's limited funds to finance the participation of such institutes. The Foreign Ministry itself is financed from the state budget, which does not envisage any increases in the funds intended for foreign policy or foreign policy research.

The third step in the direction of the decentralization of policy making has been the creation of a new Supreme Soviet of the USSR with various committees and commissions that take part in foreign policy

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

making. The Supreme Soviet has an Academic Center, whose purpose is to supply information necessary for the People's Deputies.

#### **INTERESTS VERSUS OBLIGATIONS?**

Latin America is unlikely to become a priority on the Soviet foreign policy agenda in the foreseeable future, first, because Gorbachev's attention is primarily centered on the creation of a "common European home" and the improvement of superpower relations and; second, because of the distance separating that region from the USSR. Nevertheless, in the last year or two it became increasingly clear that the Soviet Union did not have a coherent policy towards Latin America. To improve the situation, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with the USSR Academy of Sciences, is conducting comprehensive research aimed at working out a Third World policy. The main attention in formulating this policy may be given to the Non-Aligned Movement, among whose members are many Latin American countries.

In the Cold War years Soviet foreign policy towards Latin America combined recognition of geopolitical realities and ideological determinism. In practice it resulted in a constant vacillation between caution and boldness, diplomatic suaveness and bluntness. On the one hand, the Soviet leadership evidently accepted the fact that Latin America was a U.S. sphere of influence, that there existed special relations between the Latin American countries and the United States. In view of this they strove to

avoid taking hasty decisions and actions. On the other hand, geopolitical considerations receded into the background when the Kremlin regarded its Latin American policy as an instrument of "the struggle between the two social systems." Such a policy, dominated by ideology, dictated the expansion of the "socialist camp" also at the expense of Latin America.

During the Cold War period the instruments employed by the Soviet Union in its foreign policy with respect to Latin American countries were mainly anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism. The Soviet leadership believed that it would not be too difficult to stir up anti-Americanism in Latin America. U.S. policy was traditionally regarded there with suspicion, for in the long history of relations between them, the United States had sometimes striven to impose on Latin America unequal economic treaties and agreements and had even resorted to armed intervention. However, when the world was polarized and in the grip of the Cold War, even those tensions that would normally and spontaneously arise between industrialized and developing countries were ascribed to Soviet intrigues.

In reality, the contradictions between the United States and Latin American countries have far from always been due to the machinations of politicians or diplomats. They have a logic of their own--a logic that determines the relations between great powers and countries within their sphere of influence or between developed and developing countries. The existence and importance of these "inherent" contradictions should never be underestimated. However, it should not be overestimated either. The level of the anti-U.S. feelings in Latin American countries fluctuates, now rising, now falling, with the contradictions occasionally reaching the critical

**point. In spite of this, Latin American countries are invariably interested in maintaining stable and advantageous relations with the United States, and it is only now that the Soviet leadership is beginning to understand this fact.**

**Relations between the Soviet Union and Latin American countries did not arise from any vital necessity or spontaneous mutual attraction. Latin American countries established diplomatic relations with the USSR not because they expected the Soviet Union to help them solve their problems, but because they wanted to create a counterweight to their relations with the United States; they regarded their relations with the Soviet Union as a manifestation of their independence from the United States. However, under the new conditions, this factor no longer seems valid, since confrontation between the two superpowers has turned into cooperation. This has improved the chances for a further development in the relations between Latin American countries and the Soviet Union on a new and broader basis.**

**The 1980s--in particular, the second part of the decade--was a period of fundamental sociopolitical changes both in the Soviet Union and in most Latin American countries. It was a period when democracy was established or reestablished and new democratic social structures were created. Both Latin American countries and the Soviet Union learned democracy, as it were, having realized that a future without democracy would be bleak indeed. New governments in both areas have pledged to respect human rights and create pluralistic societies based on democratic foundations in order to prevent the return of dictatorships. However,**

these young democratic social structures are still fragile and need the support not only of the Western democracies but of each other, as well. In a number of Latin American countries the transition from authoritarian to democratic governments has failed to create a situation that would make this process irreversible, due to the weakness in their democratic traditions. The same applies to the Soviet Union, the difference being that the return to a Brezhnev-type regime is still more likely there in view of the almost complete lack of democratic traditions.

In the 1980s the Soviet Union went through a severe economic crisis, while the Latin American countries experienced a foreign debt crisis. Neither of these crises has yet been resolved. Nevertheless, in view of some similarity between their problems, the Soviet Union should be interested in studying and using the Latin American experience to avoid possible mistakes when introducing a free market economy into the country.<sup>5</sup> In their turn, the Latin American countries will need to reappraise the role of the state in regulating market forces, and in this respect the Soviet Union's negative experience in rigorously controlling the country's entire economy will prove extremely instructive.

Despite their different historical development and the different character of the transformations taking place in them, there are many similarities between the processes occurring in the USSR and Latin America. Therefore the intensification of perestroika in the USSR and the deepening transformations in Latin America create favorable conditions

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<sup>5</sup> See also: Zaitsev, N. "The Soviet Union and Latin America: Is a Comparative Analysis Possible?" Latinskaya Amerika, No. 4, 1990, pp. 29-36.

for the development of cooperation between them and the formation of a new Soviet policy towards Latin America. With the intensification of perestroika Soviet foreign policy has been losing, and in fact has largely lost, such features as its anti-imperialism, its confrontational attitude toward the West, and its political and ideological expansionism. The entire concept of Soviet foreign policy has been revised. In a number of speeches Gorbachev has stressed that coexistence of countries with different social systems should no longer be regarded as "a special form of class struggle."<sup>6</sup> As a result, the Soviet Union may discontinue its support of the national liberation and working-class movements in Latin America and the financing and patronage of Latin American Communist parties. Although the Soviet leadership has not yet clearly stated that it will no longer support such movements and parties, its attitude toward armed struggle aimed at the forceful overthrow of freely elected governments is unequivocally negative.<sup>7</sup> I hope that those who favor strengthening of the Communist and working-class movements in Latin American countries are in the minority in the new Soviet leadership. However, the CPSU is still the ruling party in the USSR, and the party apparatus has retained a certain influence.

Although Gorbachev did say that "there are, and there will always be, radical and revolutionary changes in certain countries,"<sup>8</sup> this statement cannot be interpreted as a call for a continued ideological expansion in the Third World. This statement in equal measure applies to the radical

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<sup>6</sup> Hull, S. "Dateline Moscow: Burying Lenin," Foreign Policy, No. 78, 1990, p. 174.

<sup>7</sup> Gorbachev, M. "Address at the United Nations." Pravda, December 8, 1988, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

changes now taking place in the East European countries and the USSR itself. Gorbachev obviously means that the new political thinking has no control over the social and economic factors that cause social tensions and crises and that may culminate in social upheavals.

I think that Soviet-Latin American relations can fruitfully develop only if the Soviet Union gives up its ideological uncompromisingness, which previously undermined all trust and goodwill between the USSR and Latin America. I also think that the Soviet leadership now believes that reason dictates that all countries should cooperate on the basis of common human values and mutual trust. An important step that the Soviet Union could take in order to enhance that would be an unequivocal renunciation of the idea of supporting socialist revolutions in Latin America. Only this can put an end to the overcautious approach of Latin American countries and assure them that Soviet policy in the region is open and sincere.

I believe that the Soviet Union has not yet given up the extensive model of developing its relations with Latin American countries. In spite of the deepening economic crisis and the considerable political difficulties experienced by Soviet society over the five years of perestroika, the intensity of Soviet diplomatic activity in the Western Hemisphere has not decreased in comparison with the pre-perestroika period. In fact, it has increased quite perceptibly.<sup>9</sup> Shevardnadze's visit to Argentina, Brazil, and

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<sup>9</sup> I think it would be erroneous to regard the Soviet diplomatic offensive in Latin America as aggressive, that is, directed against the interests of any third country, primarily the United States. Thus, for example, according to a Soviet official, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Panama will be conditional upon "the normalization of that country's internal situation and its

Uruguay in 1987 was a first in the history of Soviet-Latin American relations. The number of exchange visits by governmental and parliamentary delegations remains as high as ever. The countries of the region are more and more frequently visited by high-ranking Soviet diplomats for political consultations. This increased diplomatic activity has borne fruit. In March 1990 full diplomatic relations between Chile and the Soviet Union were restored. There are reports that the Soviet Union has had informal contact with Paraguay for the purpose of finding a basis for establishing diplomatic, consular, and commercial relations with that country.<sup>10</sup>

Although Soviet diplomatic activity is mainly centered on the countries of South America, much attention is also paid to Central America and the Caribbean. Soviet policy here reveals a new approach: it regards its participation in the solution of Central American problems as an important condition for the normalization of the situation there. For example, according to Shevardnadze: "Our own contribution to this consists not only in our political statements and the stopping of our supplies of military hardware to the region, but also in our new readiness to develop contacts with all the countries of the region, including the establishment of diplomatic relations with those states with which we have so far had no relations. This new approach is already bringing practical results."<sup>11</sup>

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relations with the other Latin American countries." (Latin America Daily Report, August 31, 1990, p. 29.)

<sup>10</sup> Latin America Daily Report, January 5, 1990, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR, January 15, 1990, p. 21.



The establishment of diplomatic relations with Honduras was actually decided during the visit to Tegucigalpa of the Soviet ambassador to Nicaragua, V. D. Nikolayenko. Nikolayenko discussed with President Rafael Callejas the need to take advantage of the "pleasant atmosphere" currently prevailing in the Central American region and the entire world to start economic and commercial relations that would benefit both countries.<sup>12</sup> Explaining Honduras's interest in establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Foreign Minister Carias Zapata, said: "This is a phase in which the USSR is proving--after all of the political and economic reforms that it has carried out--that it is joining the world economy, and I believe that it can provide positive results for developing countries like Honduras."<sup>13</sup>

The visit of Deputy Director Y. A. Burlyay of the Latin America Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, to five Central American countries--Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala--was unprecedented. It was the first trip by a high-ranking Soviet diplomat to El Salvador and only the second to Guatemala. The visit was significant in that it marked the end of the Cold War in Central America. In my opinion, the meeting between the Soviet diplomat and El Salvador's President Alfredo Cristiani and the signing of an official communique reflect both the recognition by El Salvador of the constructive role played by the Soviet Union in the efforts to find a peaceful resolution of its internal conflict and the recognition by the Soviet government of the peaceful intentions of El Salvador's government. It also shows that the Soviet Union now bases its

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<sup>12</sup> Latin America Daily Report, August 23, 1990, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

relations on the government-to-government level, ~~smc~~ there were no reports that Burlyay met with FMLN representatives. Under the circumstances, the FMLN may now refuse to talk with the Soviet Union. During this meeting, Burlyay stressed Cristiani's "courage" for having "begun the dialogue under the current conditions of civil war."<sup>14</sup> I believe that under its program of normalizing its relations with the Central American countries the Soviet leadership intends to continue economic cooperation with the government of Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua. It aims to encourage the political transition in that country where, according to one Soviet official, "the more sensible people in both the government and the Sandinista leadership have greater authority."<sup>15</sup>

In the Caribbean, Soviet diplomacy has succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with Antigua and Barbuda. Explaining his government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow, Antigua and Barbuda's Deputy Prime Minister Lester Burd, said: "It is true that prior to what happened in Eastern Europe we had not looked seriously at establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, but, as I have said, the world has changed fundamentally....The Soviet Union is one of the superpowers and clearly, in the light of recent developments, there could be no justification whatever for Antigua not to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Latin America Daily Report, August 31, 1990, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Latin America Daily Report, January, 16, 1990, p. 5.

In spite of all predictions and expectations, Gorbachev has not visited any Latin American country except Cuba. I find it difficult to speculate when such a visit might take place or whether it will take place at all. I believe that Gorbachev has put off his trip to Latin America for a number of reasons. First, he evidently understands how sensitive the United States is to everything happening to its southern neighbors and does not want to complicate Soviet-U.S. relations. Second, both Gorbachev and the country he represents are not very well known to Latin Americans. Against the background of the tumultuous reception accorded to Gorbachev in the West European countries and the United States, his reception in Latin America might appear lukewarm and detract from his international reputation. Nevertheless, in light of the Soviet diplomatic offensive in Latin America Gorbachev's visit is, in my opinion, imminent. Its postponement may also be explained by the need to prepare for it thoroughly and back it up by important and realistic economic and scientific-technical agreements that Gorbachev could sign during the visit.

More frequently than ever, Moscow is visited by high-ranking Latin American political leaders for political and economic negotiations. Soviet official communiques explain that the Soviet Union "gives due attention to the role and place of Latin America in world politics." During his meeting with Brazil's President Fernando Collor, which took place in January 1990, Gorbachev said: "A striving for independence, for overcoming economic backwardness and for solving the problems of external indebtedness was growing in all countries of the vast continent....The Soviet Union treated these aspirations of the Latin American peoples with understanding and solidarity. Latin America's embarking upon a path of independent

development had become an important phenomenon of the late twentieth century." 17

Among the factors favorable to the development of closer ties between the Soviet Union and Latin America is the existence of number of areas in which their positions and interests are sufficiently similar, if not identical. These areas include securing world peace and averting a nuclear holocaust; disarmament, first of all nuclear disarmament and the use of the resources thus made available for development, and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons; a peaceful settlement of regional conflicts; the creation of zones of peace and cooperation; stabilization of the international trade and financial systems; and a just solution of the external debt problem.

I believe that new areas of cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Latin American countries will be to fight international terrorism and drug trafficking and the conservation of the environment. There are many other areas, both economic and political, in which Soviet-Latin American relations can be further developed--the LAES, the Andean Pact, Central American integration, and the Caribbean commonwealth are just a few. Improving relations between the Soviet Union and the Rio Group, whose importance keeps growing and whose views of world development are similar to the new Soviet views, is also quite feasible.

However, the Soviet diplomatic offensive is taking place in the absence of a strong economic basis on which stable and mutually profitable

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<sup>17</sup> Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR, February 28, 1990, p. 1.

bilateral relations could be built. As a result of the economic crisis in the Soviet Union it would be logical to establish diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible with the purpose of developing trade with them under mutually advantageous conditions. This is precisely what Latin American countries expect from the Soviet Union. For example, Foreign Minister Carias Zapata of Honduras made no bones about the purpose of establishing relations with the Soviet Union: "First, a fluid commercial exchange must be established through which Honduras would have access to trolleybuses, fertilizers, and technical cooperation and would take advantage of the Soviet market to sell lumber, coffee, bananas, and sugar, which are the country's basic exports." 18

Since the Soviet economy is at present in bad shape, one should not hope for a large expansion of trade relations. Of course, the slack and even considerably reduced trade between the Soviet Union and the countries of the region cannot be explained by the fact that "the main obstacle in the way of the intensification of Soviet-Latin American economic relations is international monopolistic capital, which strives to hold its positions of undivided domination of the economies of the countries of the region." 19 Naturally, no one likes competitors, but in this case the question is whether the Soviet Union can compete with the Western countries in Latin America.

Unfortunately, five years of perestroika have not created favorable conditions for business relations with Latin American partners for a number of reasons. First, indecisive Soviet internal economic reforms have

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<sup>18</sup> Latin America Daily Report, August 23, 1990, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Latinskaya America, No. 6, 1988, p. 3.

not affected the essence of foreign trade relations. Even today Latin American businessmen who want to trade with the Soviet Union have to overcome the resistance and inertia of a huge bureaucratic apparatus that is still the obligatory "intermediary" in all foreign trade deals.<sup>20</sup> Second, the dislocation of the old system of relations was not accompanied by the creation of the mechanisms of a new system. This results in both the loss of contracts and the disruption of trade relations, and the emergence of a considerable number of new agents, who lack both the experience and the desire to deal with new little-known markets. Third, this unstable and uncertain situation makes Latin American businessmen reluctant to accept the new forms of cooperation. For example, out of the 940 joint ventures set up in the Soviet Union by October 1, 1989, only 13 were Soviet-Latin American ones (3 with Brazil, 7 with Venezuela, 3 with Panama). In Latin America itself there are only two joint Soviet-Latin American enterprises.<sup>21</sup> Fourth, the prospects for centralized Soviet purchases of agricultural products in Latin America are not encouraging for Latin American producers, since their U.S. and West European competitors already supply the Soviet market with grain and meat at considerably lower, subsidized prices. The prospects for cooperation in energy, mining, and other industries are also not very good.<sup>22</sup>

Social and political stability based on the deepening of democratic processes in Latin America is in the interest of the Soviet Union, whereas

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<sup>20</sup> I have worked at a number of medium-sized Argentinian Mendoza-based firms that supply the Soviet Union with candy and marmalade manufacturing equipment and have been able to see first-hand how insignificant are the changes in the foreign trade sphere.

<sup>21</sup> *Latinskaya America*, No. 1, 1990, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

all manifestations of radical nationalism and left-wing terrorism work against them. However, social and political stability in Latin America can exist only under conditions of continued economic growth and the lessening of external indebtedness. The Soviet Union is hardly able to help Latin American countries to create or maintain such conditions, but it can increase its participation in the search for better relations between the North and the South by advancing new ideas and supporting constructive initiatives.

With the Cold War in Latin America all but over, the Soviet Union must have a new policy in order to play a new role in the region--the role of a stabilizing force. However, there is, in my opinion, a major obstacle in the way of the Soviet Union becoming a stabilizing factor: its commitments to Cuba, with which it is bound by certain obligations. There is also the hostility--a little- Cold War--between Cuba and the United States. I believe that the attitude of the countries of the region towards the Soviet Union might change radically if this little Cold War ended, and Soviet diplomacy may play an important role here.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY FOR CUBA

Soviet foreign policy always accorded priority to its relations with socialist countries. Then, in decreasing order, priority was given to relations with countries of socialist orientation, the Western powers and, finally, the Third World countries. In view of the profound changes that

have taken place in the Soviet Union and the East European countries and the priority given by Gorbachev to the creation of the "common European home," relations with the socialist countries are ceasing to be the most important aspect of Soviet foreign policy and are becoming part of Moscow's general European policy. Speaking about the relations between the Soviet Union and the East European countries, Shevardnadze said, "It went without saying that these relations were based on party ties, but such ties merely bound together small elitist circles."<sup>23</sup>

Naturally, the same applied, and still applies, to Soviet-Cuban relations. However, there are reasons to believe that this situation may soon change. On another occasion Shevardnadze said that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understands how important and difficult is the task of placing all relations with the socialist, friendly, and well-disposed countries on a new basis. Much remains to be done in this respect."<sup>24</sup> I believe that Shevardnadze's words fully apply to relations with Cuba, which look increasingly anachronistic against the general background of the new pattern of relations with other countries that, in the past, constituted the Socialist camp. Changes are also long overdue in the military and economic spheres of Soviet-Cuban relations.

The limited Soviet military contingent in Cuba and the Soviet military bases there no longer seem to be a major factor in Soviet-Cuban relations. It must be understood that an immediate unilateral withdrawal

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<sup>23</sup> Shevardnadze, E. Interview with the weekly Pionyr, Vestnik Ministerstya Inostrannykh Del SSSR, March 31, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Shevardnadze, E. "Foreign Policy and Perestroika," Pravda, October 24, 1989, p. 3.



of Soviet troops from Cuba and the closing down of the bases--which would undoubtedly have been in the best interests of the Soviet people and would have enhanced the security of the Soviet Union--would be construed by Cuba as an openly hostile act. I think that Soviet troops were sent to Cuba and military bases were set up on its soil at the initiative of the Soviet government and that the Cuban leadership simply agreed to, and permitted, it. However, today it is the Cuban government that is interested in retaining the Soviet contingent, since its presence enables them to maintain close contacts with the Soviet military and the Soviet state security organization, which, I believe, constitute the most influential part of the Cuban lobby in Moscow. However, the importance of the new political forces in the life of Soviet society keeps growing and their influence in shaping the country's foreign policy increases proportionately. Although nearly all the workers of the Soviet Foreign Ministry are CPSU members and all the main diplomatic posts are still occupied by Communists, Soviet foreign policy has undergone a serious reappraisal. The previous policy, based on the thesis "the worse for the United States, the better for the Soviet Union," seems to have been scrapped. Numerous speeches by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze give reason to believe that the Soviet government does not intend to challenge the United States over its policy in the Western Hemisphere, and that it has tacitly acknowledged U.S. national interests in that part of the world and will no longer take advantage of possible U.S. reversals there. "If in any aspect of our foreign policy we should do something that may prove detrimental to U.S. interests, then such a policy cannot succeed," said Gorbachev.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Gorbachev, Interview with  magazine, p. 4.

I think that as a result of Gorbachev's perestroika and in the spirit of the new political thinking, any further unconditional support of Cuba will contradict the national interests of the Soviet Union. Recently much has been said about what Cuba costs the Soviet people. A Soviet publication indicated that aid to Cuba amounts to \$5 billion a year; at the same time, the nonequivalent trade within the CMEA costs the Soviet Union from \$5 to \$10 billion.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet Union remains faithful to the principle *pacta sunt servanda*.<sup>27</sup> Shevardnadze gives this elucidation of the Soviet position:

Voices are heard, calling on us to turn our backs on our old friends or even simply replace them by new ones. Frankly, such recommendations seem to come from narrow-minded people. But this is even not the whole point. I believe that the new thinking is first of all based on such eternal values as honesty, loyalty, and decency. We have given financial and economic obligations to a number of countries. We must fulfill them. If we should want to introduce some changes--and in many cases changes are undoubtedly called for--we must negotiate new conditions with the parties concerned.<sup>28</sup>

Vice-President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez of Cuba seems optimistic about continuing Soviet aid to his country:

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<sup>26</sup> Borodayev, V. and Levikina, G. "The Hard Road to Socialism," Argumenty i Fakty, Moscow, No. 11, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Gorbachev, "Address at the United Nations," p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Shevardnadze, "Foreign Policy and Perestroika," p. 3.

Comrade Gorbachev gave this assurance to us that there would be no difficulties; no matter what changes occurred in the Soviet Union, our relations would remain the same. This determination was once again officially reaffirmed by the Soviet side during the discussion in the CMEA of the problems of prices and nonequivalent exchanges. So, everything concerning the future is positive. There are no problems between us that cannot be solved.<sup>29</sup>

So far the Soviet Union has been willing to compensate Cuba for the losses it has sustained as a result of the refusal of some East European countries to continue their supplies to Cuba in 1990. But the economic situation at home may force the Soviet government to change its mind on this point. I think that the Soviet government is likely to reappraise its policy of satisfying Cuba's requests for any goods and even in unlimited quantities. Practice has shown that Cuba often received large quantities of industrial equipment that remained unused and Soviet-supplied machinery and equipment were allowed to rust and deteriorate in Cuban depots and warehouses. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union can ill afford to spend large sums on foreign aid and that this aid means denying the Soviet people many of the bare necessities of life. Sooner or later the Soviet Union will have to curtail its economic aid to Cuba even in contravention of some of its obligations and previous agreements.

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<sup>29</sup> C. R. Rodriguez, "There Are No Problems Between Us That Cannot Be Solved," Latinskaya Amerika, No. 1, 1990, p. 10.

It must be said that under the new conditions, the continuation of unlimited military aid to Cuba may even pose a certain danger to the national security of the Soviet Union. The Caribbean crisis of 1962, which brought the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust, has not been forgotten, and I believe that the Soviet government is determined not to allow any repetition of those events. This will undoubtedly require a revision of free military aid to Cuba and the financing of the oversized Cuban army. Such a revision, however, can hardly be achieved without reforming the Soviet armed forces themselves and without diminishing the influence of the military on foreign policy decisions. In general, the need for a change of the privileged position of the military in the power block in the USSR has been long overdue. However, perestroika has not yet affected the Soviet military-industrial complex, and this is the major reason that military aid to Cuba still remains extremely high and in 1989 equalled \$1.2 billion.<sup>30</sup> If the Soviet government really regards Third World countries as the most likely areas of international tension,<sup>31</sup> continuation of military aid to Cuba must be linked with Cuba's guarantee that the weapons it receives would not be used to fan regional conflicts.

Much has recently been said about disagreements between Gorbachev and Castro. However, in any appraisal of Soviet-Cuban relations such disagreements should not be overestimated. It must be remembered that Castro always had disagreements with Soviet leaders, from Khrushchev to Chernenko, and yet mutual accommodation was always found. Gorbachev is a skillful politician, capable of holding his ground in

<sup>30</sup> Kaufman, Susan K. "Cuba's Cloudy Future," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer, 1990, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> Gorbachev, "Address at the United Nations," p. 2.

any "war of words" and winning over his opponent. It is obvious that Gorbachev has no intention to destabilize Cuba either economically or politically, but he would like Cuba to embark on an evolutionary path.<sup>32</sup> In his report on Soviet foreign policy delivered to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Shevardnadze stressed that "the main task of Soviet-Cuban relations is to perfect the mechanism of economic cooperation and decidedly to raise its effectiveness and mutual profitability. Much has to be done in this respect."<sup>33</sup> I believe that Gorbachev will go out of his way to make the Cuban leadership see the truth about socialism and the socialist construction so that they could introduce greater realism and pragmatism into their domestic and foreign policy.

Gorbachev has admitted that the radical changes that have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe testify to the failure of the practice of barracks socialism and of Utopian concepts of socialism.<sup>34</sup> However, such concepts still determine Cuba's policy. Hopefully it will not be long before Cuban leaders realize that they are at a crossroads of history and that the Soviet Union will be ready to continue its aid to the island republic provided reforms aimed at the rejuvenation of Cuban society are introduced. There can be no doubt that this will be done extremely tactfully, so that the Cubans' national pride should not be hurt, and in a form that will preclude any interpretation that the Soviet Union interferes with the Cuban government's internal policy.

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32 Mazarr, M. "Prospects for Revolution in Post-Castro Cuba," Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs, Winter, 1989, p. 82,

33 Shevardnadze, "Foreign Policy and Perestroika," p. 2.

34 Gorbachev, Interview with I.i.m.e. magazine, p. 10.

There is every reason to believe that the Soviet government would like to see implemented changes affecting the sociopolitical foundations of Cuban society. With respect to such changes--the changes that have occurred in the East European countries--Shevardnadze said:

It is my profound belief that the situation when the Soviet Union's neighbors are free, democratic, and prosperous states, equally open to both West and East, is more in our interests than the situation when we are surrounded by an artificially created "sanitary cordon" of very uncertain and unstable regimes. The democratic nature of the sociopolitical changes in such countries is more in our interests than the preservation of regimes based on their own and foreign bayonets.<sup>35</sup>

I hope that the Soviet leadership feels the same with regard to Cuba's sociopolitical system.

Soviet-Cuban relations are already thirty years old. They were established, and their special character took shape, during Khrushchev's "thaw," when the first Soviet reforms were introduced. The paradox of the future of Soviet-Cuban relations lies in the fact that the reforms introduced by Gorbachev--a continuer of Khrushchev's cause--threaten the very foundations on which these relations are based. Their distinctive feature is that Cuba always succeeded in presenting its relations with the Soviet Union as something special and in maintaining these special relations in

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35 Shevardnadze, Interview with the weekly Ogonyok, p. 8.

spite of the temporary tensions that arose from time to time. Thanks to the close personal relations between Castro and the highest Soviet party officials, Cuba always received "preferential treatment" from the Soviet Union. However, as perestroika continues to develop, the entire structure of Soviet-Cuban relations will have to be adjusted to the USSR's real economic possibilities; and the indispensable condition for the preservation of any form of Soviet aid is the introduction of reforms in Cuba.

Economic relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba are based on the assumption that Cuba will not be able to repay its debts to the USSR. In his speech at the United Nations in December 1988, Gorbachev acknowledged this fact when he expressed his government's readiness to set a moratorium on the repayment of the least developed countries' debts (Cuba belongs to that category in the CMEA) and in a number of cases even to write off the debts altogether.<sup>36</sup> Previously the ideology based on "proletarian internationalism" and "class solidarity" and the support of national liberation movements justified selfless Soviet aid to Cuba--a country on the "front line of the anti-imperialist struggle." The same argument--that Cuba was on the front line of the anti-imperialist struggle--was until quite recently successfully used to justify not only economic aid but also the massive supplies of military hardware. In the eyes of the Soviet leadership and Soviet public opinion the fact that the United States still had a naval base (Guantanamo) on Cuban soil was justification for the introduction in Cuba of emergency measures in the name of defending the country, the militarization of all aspects of Cuban life, and even the

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<sup>36</sup> Gorbachev, "Address at the United Nations," p. 2.

curtailment of "socialist democracy."<sup>37</sup> However, with the improvement of Soviet-U.S. relations and the replacement of the image of the United States as the Soviet Union's enemy with that of a friend, it will be increasingly difficult for the Soviet public to accept the Cuban leadership's bitter anti-Americanism even given the conditions of the "squeeze policy" conducted by the U.S. administration against Cuba.<sup>38</sup>

The whole world witnessed the decline of communism as a political ideology<sup>39</sup> and the end of the Cold War.<sup>40</sup> As Communist ideology gradually vanished from Soviet policy and the Soviet Union renounced anti-Americanism as a foreign policy weapon, the United States had to give up its anti-Communist stance in its relations with the Soviet Union and the East European countries. However, it retained it as a weapon in its relations with Cuba. This poses a difficult problem to the Cuban leadership: how can it continue its anti-imperialist policy--this cornerstone of the Cold War--entirely on its own? The Cuban leaders must give serious thought to the implications of Shevardnadze's words that the thesis of the renunciation of "the image of an enemy" being a destabilizing factor in a country's internal affairs is based on "a devilishly distorted logic"; that "a country bolstering 'the image of an enemy' has no right to

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<sup>37</sup> Borodayev and Levikina, "The Hard Road," p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Gunn, G. "Will Castro Fall?" Foreign Policy, No. 79, 1990, pp. 145-150. I fully realize that U.S.-Cuban relations are to a large extent determined by the Cuban lobby in Miami. It is precisely this lobby that urges the United States to follow a squeeze policy toward Cuba. In this connection, the contacts between the Soviet Union and the leaders of the Cuban exiles in Miami are quite understandable. I believe that such contacts are necessary for the Soviet government if it wishes to exert a moderating influence on the Cuban exiles.

<sup>39</sup> Ornstein, N., and Schmitt, M. "Dateline Campaign '92: Post-Cold War Politics," Foreign Policy, No. 79, 1990, p. 169.

<sup>40</sup> Kirkpatrick, J. "Beyond the Cold War," Foreign Affairs, No. 1, 1990, p. 1.



*exist"; and that, "it was precisely the militarization of society, ideology, and the way of life of a people, in other words, a paranoid preoccupation with their security that destabilized whole civilizations and resulted in their destruction... 41*

*Here parallels are all too obvious.*

*Cuba's leaders are apprehensive that they may lose Soviet economic aid. This may partially explain their attempts to diversify their country's trade relations.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, their rectification campaign is designed to bring their policy somewhat closer to that of perestroika. I believe that the first stage of this campaign, in the course of which an attempt was made to solve problems exclusively by ideological propaganda and education and by strengthening the administer-and-command method of running the economy, has ended. In the opinion of the Cubans themselves, this stage has not brought any tangible results and "new solutions to the old problems" must be sought.<sup>43</sup> A second stage of the rectification policy seems to be in the offing, for the implementation of which Cuba has sufficient professional administrators.<sup>44</sup>*

*At the present time preparations for the Fourth Congress of the Communist party of Cuba are under way. I think that very important decisions will be taken at the congress to enable the Cuban economy to develop satisfactorily. Since Soviet enterprises have been given more*

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41 Shevardnadze, Interview with the weekly *Oionyok*, p. 7.

42 Gunn, "Will Castro Fall", pp. 137-139; Kaufman, "Cuba's Cloudy Future," pp. 121-122.

43 Borodayev and Levikina, "The Hard Road," p. 4.

44 Mazarr, "Prospects," p. 82.

independence in their trade activity on the home and foreign markets, they may well refuse to accept unprofitable Cuban orders, in which case the Soviet government will find it increasingly difficult to meet its Cuban commitments; the Cuban government is well aware of this.<sup>45</sup> However, the Soviet Union is still interested in trade since Cuba often supplies it with goods that can be bought on the world market only with hard currency<sup>46</sup> and since the Cubans frequently overpay for Soviet equipment and machinery.<sup>47</sup> Thus, their trade relations may finally become not so profitable for Cuba. All this may give an additional impetus to change the methods of running the country's economy. There are signs that certain reforms in the party and society are already under way.<sup>48</sup> In spite of the fact that in some of his speeches Castro has flatly rejected the possibility of perestroika-type reforms in Cuba--and this was reaffirmed by the declaration "To the Cuban people," unanimously adopted by the session of the National Assembly of People's Power on December 25, 1989--the Cuban leadership seems nevertheless likely to continue and develop its rectification policy, even though its radicalism may not match that of Gorbachev's perestroika.

Despite its economic and financial dependence on the Soviet Union, Cuba has exercised considerable autonomy in its foreign policy.<sup>49</sup> While

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45 Rodriguez, "There Are No Problems," pp. 3-10.

46 Gunn, "Will Castro Fall," p. 135.

47 Borodayev and Levikina, "The Hard Road," p. 4.

48 Gunn, "Will Castro Fall," p. 141; Mazarr, "Prospects," p. 81.

49 Rodriguez, Jorge. "United States-Cuban Relations in the Mid-1980s," in Cuban Communism, ed. by Irving Louis Horowitz, Transaction Publishers, 1989, pp. 702-704; Shearman, P. "The Soviet Union and Cuba," Chatham House Papers, No. 38, 1987; Blasier, Cole. The Giant's Rival; The USSR and Latin America Pittsburgh Press, 1983.

Gorbachev has no intention to interfere with or diminish this autonomy, he is obviously determined to lessen Cuba's influence on Soviet foreign policy decision making with respect to the Western Hemisphere. This is borne out by the Soviet Union's support of the results of the latest elections in Nicaragua, its support of the peaceful negotiations between the government and the insurgents in El Salvador, and the temporary suspension of Soviet supplies of military hardware to the Sandinista government on the eve of the Nicaraguan elections.<sup>50</sup> Cuba's foreign policy, on the other hand, is entirely in the thrall of ideological considerations and often runs counter to the country's national interests. To use Shevardnadze's remark concerning foreign policy in general, Cuba's foreign policy is not a profitable branch of the national economy.<sup>51</sup> Unless it is changed radically, this may tell on its profitability with respect to the Soviet Union, let alone the East European countries--members of the CMEA.

One would like to hope that changes in Cuba are not only possible, but that they will actually be implemented in the near future. I am well aware that changes in Cuba depend on the decisions of one man only--Castro. There are historical examples that he could follow. First, there is Lenin, who adopted his famous New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921 in order to pull the country out of the crisis that resulted from the Civil War and the policy of "War Communism." The NEP demonstrated Lenin's courage and foresight. Second, there is Gorbachev, who initiated perestroika in 1985. Both these examples show graphically that the future

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<sup>50</sup> Shevardnadze, E. "Press Conference in Managua," Vestnik Ministerstiya Inostrannykh Del SSSR, No. 1, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Shevardnadze, Interview with the weekly Oionyok, p. 10.

belongs to those leaders who are ready to make a political U-turn when the old policy has failed to bring the desired results. To make the Cuban economy more effective, to introduce democratic methods of government, and to respect human rights and freedoms does not necessitate a change in the socialist nature of the Cuban revolution or Castro's withdrawal from the political scene.

Gorbachev will not press the Cuban leadership to introduce the necessary reforms and will continue supporting Cuba. While Gorbachev is fully in control of Soviet foreign policy and Soviet economic aid to Cuba continues, there is sufficient time for the Cuban leadership to choose the path its country is to take. This is guaranteed by the following: first, Gorbachev has a majority in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and is always capable of blocking any proposal to change Soviet-Cuban relations; second, the Supreme Soviet itself has as yet acquired neither the power nor the structure necessary for it to adopt and implement such a proposal. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that this situation may change and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR may acquire real control over foreign economic and military aid and will determine priorities, proceeding exclusively from the country's national interests and its national security.

The Cuban leaders need a constructive vision of socialism. Here Gorbachev can help both by articulating its perspectives more explicitly and formulating the choices confronting almost all the socialist countries and by indicating Soviet willingness to help Cuba introduce positive political and economic reforms. Surely some sort of accommodation between Cuba and the USSR is preferable to a rupture in their relations.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

In his address to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Shevardnadze stated: "The U.S. policy towards Cuba does not correspond to today's context. It contrasts too sharply with the general warming of the international climate. The very terms 'blockade' and 'embargo' grate on the ears. Washington ought also to think about the signal sent by the world community which has elected Cuba a member of the UN Security Council."<sup>52</sup> The Soviet government is obviously unhappy with the U.S. administration's "squeeze policy" towards Cuba. In the opinion of the Soviet government, the state of Cuban-U.S. relations "is at its present level not at all owing to the policy of the Cuban leadership."<sup>53</sup> It is hard to accept this biased evaluation, based on censoring only one of the two parties involved. It is no less hard to agree with the following statement in the same document, that "both parties have expressed their common opinion about the importance of the introduction of the principles of the new thinking into world politics and the transition from confrontation to cooperation..."<sup>54</sup> From these statements it follows that the U.S. administration, which was ready to abide by the principles of the new

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<sup>52</sup> Shevardnadze, "Foreign Policy and Perestroika," p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Shevardnadze, E. "Short Working Visit to Cuba," Vestnik Ministerstya Inostrannykh Del SSSR, November 1, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. Any attempt by Washington to destabilize or overthrow militarily the present Cuban government is more likely than not to result in a renewed Cold War between the superpowers. Such an attempt may even undermine Gorbachev's position and reverse the progressive reforms in the Soviet Union.

thinking in its relations with the Soviet Union and the other East European countries, was unwilling to do so with respect to Cuba.

At the beginning of perestroika Gorbachev said that "the new thinking means among other things the liquidation of the discrepancy between words and deeds."<sup>55</sup> These words do not seem to apply yet to the Soviet attitude towards Cuban-U.S. relations. Arguments dating back to the period of the Cold War must not be used to explain the tension between Cuba and the United States, for those arguments were often invented in the interests of propaganda. While there are objective reasons for the differences between the two countries, it is quite clear that mutual recriminations will not lead to the normalization of relations between them. The Cuban leadership should understand that the confrontation between Cuba and the United States contradicts the national interests of the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet government expressed its disapproval of the broadcasts to Cuba by the Marti TV station, it called on the Cuban government not to let that aggravate its relations with Washington. The relevant Soviet statement reads in part: "We hope that this action of the United States will not lead to a further escalation of tension in U.S.-Cuban relations and that the desire to show restraint and seek constructive solutions will prevail."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, it is not difficult to understand why the Cuban leadership would be unwilling to begin a rapprochement with the United States exclusively on the latter's terms; yet, it must be achieved.

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<sup>55</sup> Gorbachev, M. "Reality and the Guarantees of the Secure World," Izvestiya, September 17, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR, No. 8, 1990, p. 69.

If Cuba should show its intention to implement reforms similar to those initiated in the Soviet Union by Gorbachev, the United States must be the first to take the first step towards reconciliation. One also gets the impression that the Cuban leadership believes that since the policy of detente was already tried once and failed and did not affect Cuban-U.S. relations at all, that this time, too, detente and perestroika will eventually fail and all that Cuba has to do is to wait.

An important condition for normalization would be the implementation of reforms in Cuba. This could present a serious dilemma to the United States. A Cuban perestroika would undoubtedly require significant foreign aid. The example of the East European countries shows that the introduction of radical reforms depends to a considerable extent on foreign aid. The Soviet Union may not be able to afford to finance future Cuban reforms. The Soviet leadership's concern may be whether the United States would be willing to pay for the Cuban perestroika when and if it began. Cuba is unlikely to be an exception. So the United States may have to look for ways to support possible Cuban reforms.

## CONCLUSION

Perestroika creates new possibilities for the development of bilateral and multilateral relations with Latin American countries. The increased Soviet diplomatic activity in the region has coincided with the renunciation

of its role as the developing countries' natural ally in their dialogue with the West (North-South dialogue). In this connection the Soviet Union's flirtation with Third World countries, intending to get their support of its foreign policy--which was often the case in the past--is unlikely. At present, the Soviet government seems to have no alternative but a policy conducted in the USSR's national interests. Current Soviet policy towards the countries of Latin America puzzles the left and causes displeasure among leftist extremists. In spite of the Soviet Union's extremely difficult economic situation it is unlikely to follow the policy of "constructive isolation" with respect to the Latin American countries, that is of indifference towards Latin American problems. Rather, it is attempting to exert a moderating influence, which is clear in the Soviet policy towards Central America. The Soviet Union remains a great power and its diplomatic presence may play a positive role in the situation existing in Latin America.



**COLE BLASIER**

**Director**

**Hispanic Division**

**Library of Congress**

**Commentary**

Soviet foreign policy, including Latin America, was made for a long, long time by the Politburo, and most particularly the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which reported directly to the Politburo. And there were two parts to that, as relate to Latin American problems. There was the department that was concerned with the Communist and workers' parties in the socialist countries. Its leader was Mikhail Suslov. And there was another group that was concerned with the parties in the Third World, and Boris Ponomarev was the head of that. These people were the ones, along with the Politburo members, who actually made government and trade policy, particularly in terms of the criteria of the international Communist movement.

That began to fall apart in 1973 when Gromyko was brought in. He was no longer just a foreign policy official but directly became a voting member of the Politburo. This meant that government and trade matters got new weight in the Politburo. Now Gorbachev, as Sergei has pointed out, has separated out these two departments into the International Department--which is concerned almost exclusively with Communist party affairs in the international Communist movement. But foreign policies and

trade policies are made primarily by the government, by the Presidential Council, and by Gorbachev himself. So we have a big shift away from Communist party and international influences of that sort to the government.

National liberation movements have been a big thing for the Soviets for a long time. I think that one of the reasons they have stopped supporting these, at least very actively--and their support, if anything, is moral support--is that it costs money. Supporting Communist parties and liberation movements all over the world--there are over a hundred such parties--is expensive. Also, if they start supporting a group that fails, then they are asked to come in and help out. And if that does not work or they do not help out, they get a black eye. It is politically difficult because they do not want to be caught with a bunch of losers. And Latin America has had its full quota of losers with respect to national liberation movements. I think they have also discovered--this is true especially with respect to Argentina and Brazil and Mexico, which are their favorite countries because they are the countries with power--that there is more to be gained by collaborating with these governments than there is by getting tangled up with insignificant small parties on the left. And so they are moving in terms of their national interests in this respect. And now, of course, there are the complications of close relations between the Soviet Union and such leftist parties while also continuing to improve ties with the United States.

In my view, the most important thing that has happened with respect to the Gorbachev revolution in Latin America is Soviet policy

towards Cuba. And the most important aspect of the new Soviet policy towards Cuba is Soviet aid to Cuba. One of the big problems is that the Cuban economy was already in big trouble before Gorbachev's revolution really gathered momentum: lower rates of growth, lower productivity, shortages, food problems, per-capita income problems, all the indicators were going down. Now, if Cuba was having trouble with aid from the Soviet Union, what sort of situation will it be in when it does not have aid or not much aid? There is the whole question of agreements and Soviet commitments to Cuba, and the high-flown rhetoric about sticking by commitments. There may be some commitments that I do not know about, but the latest five-year plan recently ended, at a very convenient time. The fact is that the Soviets did not complete their economic agreement with Cuba for 1990 until April of this year. And I am not sure they have finished 1991 yet. So if they do not have any firm commitments, the Soviets do not have that much that they are obligated to do down the road. Now, they may be obligated in a moral sense for trying to keep Cuba afloat, but they never had any military commitment to defend Cuba against the United States. They were very shrewd about that.

Now, where does the Cuban aid come in? It comes in on sugar. The price is five or six times the world price of sugar. It has become common in their official statements, at least in draft plans, that they want to put their relations with all countries on an economic and financial basis, not on a political and ideological basis. If they do that, they are going to have to cut out these price subsidies. Of course, oil is the most important thing that they do for Cuba. People just back from Cuba report that gas lines are longer and longer. They are having great problems with oil supplies. Even

the Russians are wondering why the supplies are so bad. They did not think they had been supplying less and they wonder whether Cuba is building up reserves for later when things get more difficult. As for trade, that is a bit different. The Russians often say, when talking about relations with Cuba, that they are going to continue to trade with Cuba. And well they might, because they need Cuban sugar. They may need some Cuban nickel. So they will continue to trade, but without the same aid component. And so that could continue for a long time.

## DISCUSSION

Stanley Zuckerman of the U.S. Information Agency observed that Soviet diplomatic activity in Latin America is increasing at a time when its interests there are disappearing. Noting that Sergei Tagor alluded to Soviet interests in counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and the environment, Zuckerman asked whether that was really enough to explain the increased diplomatic activity. He also asked what interests the Soviet Union has in Latin America today.

Tagor responded that increased Soviet diplomatic activity in Latin America was due to the Soviet leadership's view of their country as a superpower. The mere diplomatic and commercial presence of the Soviet Union in Latin American countries, especially Central America, will serve as a moderating factor and contribute to stabilization of the regional situation. Some Soviet scholars speak about "constructive isolation," arguing that the Soviet Union should withdraw from Latin America because it cannot contribute to a resolution of the region's problems. Since the Soviets cannot contribute to democratization in Latin America or to a solution of the debt crisis, they have no reason to be there. But, when a great power, which the Soviet Union still is, stops its activity and withdraws, it is taking a diplomatic action. The Soviets would be taking an action that produces different results. He believes that the Soviet government thinks that its presence in the region will be beneficial, stabilize the situation, and probably cause national liberation movements to think twice before taking up arms. It would also encourage them to

become involved in political activity. (He added that he objects to the idea of constructive isolation.)

Cole Blasier commented that the Communist movement was based on capitalizing on the issues of capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. These two issues are very real ones for the future. At the moment, they are taking a back seat, but they can return, and the United States is very much apt to be a target then as this gives the Soviets potential political allies in the United Nations and other forums, which they need. In addition, the Soviets were not able to compete in Latin America. The quality of their exports, particularly machine goods exports, were not good enough, even in the Brezhnev era. But they could be in five or ten years, and the Soviets clearly have always wanted to compete economically in the area since it is the most advanced in the Third World.

George Lister of the State Department raised the point that if--emphasizing "if"--events continue the way they have been in the Soviet Union, then eventually the Communist party will become just one of a group of many parties. If this occurs, he asked, will not there be a much stronger tendency to reduce activity of all types in Latin America?

The Soviet Union will continue its diplomatic presence in Latin America, Tagor responded. The number of exchanges of governmental and parliamentary delegations will be the same; at present, they are even increasing. This will continue despite the difficulties in the Soviet Union--unless there is a complete collapse of the entire system resulting in chaos. On the other hand, Tagor does not see economic or trade relations picking

up very soon unless the Soviet Union changes its economic system completely and replaces it with a market economy. The Soviet Union cannot even produce enough for itself, so it cannot now expect to export. Diplomatic activity produces the infrastructure and prepares the needed channels for future economic activity with the region. The Soviet Union already has relations with almost all of the larger countries in Latin America. Those remaining are relatively small countries, such as Paraguay, and countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

Beginning the discussion on Cuba, Carl Midvale of El Monitor de Hoy observed that there are officials in the upper hierarchy of the Cuban government who now regard the Soviet Union, not the United States, as the main enemy for ideological purposes. There appears to be no Cuban intention to introduce the changes noted earlier on which the Soviets could exert influence. If such is the case, disregarding the inability of the Soviet Union to continue providing aid, how long does the country intend to continue with the same policy toward Cuba?

Tagor responded that there was speculation in Moscow that the Communist party of Cuba is studying several economic reform projects for presentation at the Fourth Party Congress. Some important decisions will be made there. He does not think the Cubans will introduce a market economy, but will again try something else. Cuba experimented too much with its economy, always trying to combine bits of the Romanian example, the Polish example, and the Soviet example--a sort of goulash. This did not work in any East European country, and it does not work in Cuba. Cuba definitely cannot survive without accommodating itself to the new world

order. There are countries, like Cuba, that are still outside the new order that the United Nations is today trying to create, an order in which countries cooperate and resolve international issues together. They must join in this new approach. Furthermore, it is understood that in Cuba, change only comes when Castro changes, although it is difficult to see Castro changing. Lenin and Gorbachev have set precedents, so it is possible that Castro could follow suit. Since these two leaders initiated change, there is nothing for him to lose in the eyes of reformists of the Communist movement if he were to introduce changes in Cuba. Still, it has been thirty years. One can, however, expect anything from Castro.

Paul Molineaux of the State Department observed that the Soviets faced a contradiction between, on the one hand, their obligations and traditional commitments to support Cuba and, on the other, the desire to adopt the fundamental reforms that they and the rest of the Socialist bloc are in the process of implementing. He also raised the issue of U.S. aid for a Cuban perestroika, since, as Tagor stated, such assistance cannot come from either the Soviet Union or Europe. Was it possible that some kind of entente or understanding between the Soviet Union and the Miami Cubans could be reached in order to make U.S. aid more likely?

Tagor responded that one could expect anything from the Soviet government. If previously the Soviets were extremely predictable, today the opposite is true. They could easily talk to the Miami Cubans, establish relations with or recognize them. They may even speak to the Russian heir to the throne; so why not the Cuban exiles?



With regard to aid, Tagor stated that he does not believe the Soviets can meet their commitments to Cuba. Gorbachev does not want to see instability in Cuba or collapse, especially if it is possible for the situation to evolve slowly as in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, like Cuba, there are two paths. First, the evolutionary way, which may take five or ten years. It will be difficult, there will be suffering, but there will be no bloodshed. Second, there is the quick way, producing revolution, explosion, bloodshed, instability, and unpredictability. Gorbachev, as a person and politician, is a cautious and moderate man who does not want explosions to occur anywhere in the world. Tagor views Gorbachev's economic commitment to Cuba not as support for the regime, but as a way to give it another chance to survive. He is giving the Cuban government time by simply saying publicly and diplomatically that he will support them.

Paula Pettavino from Marymount University asked what would he specifically recommend that United States policy toward Cuba be.

Tagor responded that there are three approaches toward Cuba. First, is the present squeeze policy. The second is indifference. The third is to open negotiations and start talking. The Soviet Government definitely wants the United States to talk to Cuba. Fidel Castro is an influential political figure. He is ruling Cuba not by mere force and the use of a security apparatus; he is a charismatic figure with popular support. Tagor added that he does not think the Cuban system will collapse, even if the Soviets withdraw their support, because it was produced by a popular revolution. Toppling the Cuban government is impossible. Continuing the squeeze may make it difficult for Cuba, but it will not bring the nation to

its knees. The proud and nationalistic Cubans are prepared to suffer to prevent a loss of their national identity. In the Soviet Union, Tagor continued, people who are anti-Communist favor a continuation of the squeeze. Those who are moderate say start talking.

Beginning the discussion on Nicaragua, Ruben Perina of the Organization of American States asked how the Soviet leadership and the academic community reacted to the defeat of the Sandinistas. He also asked what is the status of Soviet relations with the Sandinistas and with the Chamorro government.

Tagor responded that the reaction of his colleagues at the Institute was one of complete surprise because they thought the Sandinistas would win. He noted that Foreign Minister Shevardnadze toured Nicaragua and other parts of Central America twice before the elections. Commitments were made. The Soviet Union signed aid agreements, and Shevardnadze went on television supporting the Sandinistas, lobbying heavily for them. The results were unexpected. Tagor continued that he did predict that the Sandinistas would lose the elections when he learned that the ticket would include Daniel Ortega and Sergio Ramirez, running for the same posts. Tagor felt that the incumbent could not win because the population wanted change. The main mistake of the Sandinistas was putting Ortega and Ramirez on the ticket. Generally, people in the Soviet Union did not know about the race and did not care. The academics were surprised because they were influenced by the Sandinista's propaganda and because of their wishful thinking.

After the victory of Violeta Chamorro, the Soviets recognized their commitments to Nicaragua and said that they would fulfill their obligations to the Sandinistas. Surprisingly, Violeta Chamorro said there would be a continuation of Nicaragua's foreign policy towards the Soviet Union, meaning that Nicaragua agreed to accept all the aid that the Soviets had promised the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas will change, they may divide into factions, or become an opposition political party. The Soviets will definitely not be downgrading relations with Nicaragua and will serve as a stabilizing force in the country.

Griffin Hathaway of the University of Maryland observed that Time magazine reported that just prior to the election, the Sandinistas had made an emergency request for a loan to put consumer goods in stores to help them win the election. Pavlov said the Soviets refused the loan because they did not think it was a good idea. Hathaway wanted to know if Tagor thought that the Soviets really wanted the Sandinistas to win.

Tagor felt that the Soviets wanted the Sandinistas to win, as indicated by Shevardnadze's visit to Nicaragua and his lobbying. The Soviets refused the loan because they knew that it would not be paid back and because they did not have the money to give.

Another questioner asked about the possibility of disorder and continuing failure of Soviet society, and wanted to know what Tagor thought the international consequences would be.

Tagor responded that there are three scenarios, each of which could take hours to discuss. Briefly, they are: bloody revolution and civil war, authoritarian rule that smashes the democratic forces and ushers in a period like Pinochet's in Chile, and a continuation of the present. The situation is difficult to judge when one is abroad, as opposed to being in Russia and being able to sense the changes. Small civil wars, as in Armenia and Azerbaijan, will not destabilize the Soviet "empire." It is civil war in Russia that may destabilize the nation. He now did not believe the first two scenarios would occur. In both, it would be catastrophic for the country and destabilizing for the whole world.

Another questioner noted that Tagor's presentation minimized the role that academics played in Soviet foreign policy making prior to about 1985. The questioner recalled dozens of doctoral dissertations written in the West about debates within the Soviet foreign policy community, as printed in academic journals. These dissertations linked the differences of opinion to various political leaders. He asked Tagor to comment on that body of Western scholarship, on Soviet foreign policy decision making. Is it accurate to say that the people who were focusing on academic debates really misunderstood the processes that were, in fact, taking place among the decision makers?

Tagor responded that Soviet academics were able to make only a limited contribution to policy making. Communist dogma prevented them from moving beyond traditional borders. Academics had to stick to the party line, which denied them from having a significant impact. There is a running joke in the Soviet Union that the party line was always vacillating,

always going up and down, right and left. But the academics always went with the party line. Now, academics have moved beyond those limitations. About 70 percent of his colleagues could not speak out ten years ago. Those that did had to play by the rules of the game or else face imprisonment. But now anyone who wants to contribute can do so.

Another participant raised a question about ideology with respect to understanding the past as well as the future. He pointed out that both Tagor and Blasier used the term as a pejorative, to point to a body of beliefs that are maintained for some kind of selfish national purposes, beliefs that are at odds with common sense. There is a kind of complacency in assuming that if we can just detach from ideology that sense--that body of beliefs that justified the Communist cause or also that body of beliefs that justified the anti-Communist crusade--then there will be a substitute body of beliefs, some kind of common sense that will open up the world to reason and understanding, improvement and perpetual peace. Both Tagor and Blasier seem to assume that if command economies were to be abandoned, if the magical market were allowed to have its way, then there would be some solution to all these problems. But a large majority of the world has a market economy and is poor. One cannot help wondering whether that ideological framework should be examined to determine if it coincides with the way the world is moving.

Tagor responded that if Russians have their own ideology and understanding of ideology, they can solve the problems they face by making the best use of it. But in the past, since they could not choose between ideologies, since everyone had to follow the state's ideology, one

could not be apolitical. One had to be part of the system. Many people are questioning the role of ideology in the Soviet Union today. But society cannot survive without aspirations, without ideology, and the people in the Soviet Union must find an ideology for themselves and choose what they want. Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, conservatives, or monarchists all should have the same right and same opportunities in society. Tagor stated that he was not entirely in favor of a market economy and understands how difficult it is for his country to adopt one. But a solution must be found because the country is in crisis. If the Soviet Union uses only capitalism, there would not be freedom of ideology.

Cole Blasier pointed out that we talk about Marxism and Leninism as an ideology. Do we mean Marxism and Leninism or Lenin or Stalin or Khrushchev or Brezhnev or Gorbachev? The term is used loosely, although everybody may have a slightly different idea of what it means. That is dangerous and inexact, because there is no common conception of these particular subjects. One should use the word "ideology" carefully and attempt to find a more concrete or specific term, if possible.

Michael Schatzberg of the Woodrow Wilson Center asked whether Tagor, in his presentation, did not confuse the freedom of academics to discuss and criticize policy with the actual influence that academics can have on policy. Are not these really two separate issues? In the United States, for example, academics have a great deal of freedom to argue and debate policy, yet the U.S. government is peculiarly resistant to such influence. There is an old saying that the experts should be on tap, not on top. There may be some deep-seated folk wisdom in this country about

the proper use and role of experts in the formulation of foreign or any other type of policy.

Following up on the previous question, Stuart Tucker of the Overseas Development Council noted that he worked for an organization that largely tries to act as a translator between academia and the policy-making community in the United States. He pointed out that it is very difficult to get the two groups to see eye to eye and understand each other's points of view. But what facilitates his organization's work is the vast amount of private sector money that is available. In the Soviet Union, there is no private sector, so to speak, that can support academia or policy analysis in an effort to make academia more relevant to policy. Tucker asked Tagor if he could make some hypotheses about how academia will develop in the next ten years and what its relationship with policy making will be.

Tagor responded that in the United States the division between freedom of expression and influencing policy makers was always clear. However, Soviet citizens had neither the freedom of expression nor the ability to influence policy. They did not have any sense that they were part of the process. It was unrealistic to think they did. Today, Soviet citizens have freedom of expression and the government has asked academics to participate. Of course, that does not mean academics will have an immediate impact or that the Institute will deeply influence Soviet policy towards Latin America. At times people at the Institute have made predictions or recommendations, but the government acted differently. The academics then found that they were correct, and the government could have benefitted if it had followed their advice. In this

sense, Tagor said, the Soviet Union is becoming more and more like the United States. Academics understand that they are still a long way from participating in policy making and can only offer ideas for policy makers to consider and bring new issues to their attention. The contribution of academia is to bring forth new ideas.

Tagor continued that it is good to give academicians this kind of policy influence. But they still do not have much influence. Academicians in the United States have much more influence, particularly through the media. Also, today the Soviet Union is introverted and does not want to hear about foreign policy. One cannot seriously discuss Latin America in the Soviet Union now because few are interested. There are many difficulties, but there have been positive developments. Academicians can express themselves and help shape public opinion, which is a main objective in influencing public policy. The Supreme Soviet is becoming influential, and it has a small academic council that consists mostly of professors who formerly worked in the Academy of Sciences. They advise the People's Deputies on the key issues and on what questions to raise. The issue of Soviet aid to Cuba was raised there for the first time, so someone briefed a People's Deputy and he spoke out. That shows influence. The question of foreign indebtedness to the Soviet Union was raised in the Supreme Soviet and the government then had to publish the list of debtors. Had the issue not been raised, the government would not have published the list. So this is a type of influence, even if it is not terribly strong and even though we cannot directly approach Gorbachev.



With regard to relations between the private sector and academia, Tagor added that Gorbachev has made the Academy of Sciences a public organization. Gorbachev said that it will receive funding for fundamental research. While very few people and institutes in the Soviet Union understand what fundamental research is, that is all the government will support, and the Academy will definitely experience a shortage of funds. The government encourages the institutes to find external sources of finance, which is detrimental to research in general. Working under contracts for foreign ministries, foreign trade organizations, and foreign companies will force researchers to study only what is topical. For example, the Institute of Latin American Studies has begun a joint venture with Grupo Mediterraneo in Argentina. The Institute is expecting tens of thousands of dollars in financing for that project. But, as a result, the Institute will have to study only the issues that are hot at the time. The Department of International Relations and World Economy will have to find various sources of financing, maybe even from the private sector in the Soviet Union. The financially sound companies that would like to invest in Latin America and that would likely receive offers to take part in joint ventures with Latin American companies might come to the Department for assistance. While it is difficult to say, Tagor concluded, institutes are definitely facing hard times for the future.

