# SOVIET-AMERICAN MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS IN THE 1980s--HOW FAR HAVE WE COME, AND HOW FAR ARE WE GOING?

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# Soviet-American Mutual Perceptions in the 1980s -- How Far Have We Come, and How Far Are We Going?*

**Harry Gelman**

You may remember that many years ago the late Henry Ford once had a choice word to say about history. History, he declared, is bunk. If he were right, and we could totally ignore the past, the job of deciding how to respond to the radically new challenge presented to America by Mr. Gorbachev would be considerably simplified. Unfortunately, however, the task of appraising Gorbachev is more difficult than that because our evaluation of recent trends must to some degree be affected by all our past experience with the Soviet Union. And so, to set the stage for our conference, and to help us to assess what may be possible with Gorbachev, I propose tonight to review how we and the Soviets got to the present point in our relations, how much has now changed in this relationship, and how much has not yet changed. Finally, what does this assessment imply about the possibilities for the future?

Let me start with ourselves. What is immediately obvious in our present attitude toward the Soviet Union, of course, is the change in the direction of the curve. Overall, we were sliding further and further down the slope of distrust in the first half of the 1980s, and we have been painfully climbing back up in the second half.

We entered the decade with the enormous heritage of distrust left us by the disappointments and frustrations of the 1970s. Whatever we think of Mr. Reagan and his presidency, there can be little doubt that when he

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entered the White House, his intransigent posture toward the Soviet Union at first had a great deal of public support. This attitude of the American majority was powerfully conditioned by a sense that detente had been attempted and had been betrayed by the Russians in the last decade. The fact that most if not all Americans did see it that way has now at last been explicitly recognized by some in the Soviet Union. Let me cite some extraordinary statements from a watershed article published by a man named Dashichev last May. Mr. Dashichev says:

**For the US and its allies...detente was acceptable only if the international-political and military-strategic status quo was maintained. As the West saw it, however, the Soviet leadership actively took advantage of detente to build up its military forces.... The US, paralyzed by the Vietnam catastrophe, was pained by the expansion of Soviet influence in Africa, the Middle East and other regions. In the West, all this was interpreted as a further increase in the Soviet threat.***

Naturally, since I wrote something similar to this in a book I published a few years ago, I think these assertions by Dashichev are right. Moreover, for many of those Americans old enough to remember, this sense of a Soviet betrayal of hopes for a lasting modus vivendi in the 1970s was superimposed on a sense that all this had happened many times before. At the close of World War II, there was Roosevelt's painful disillusionment in the last year of his life regarding Stalin's intentions in Europe. In 1954, after Stalin's death, there were the ephemeral hopes raised by the so-called "spirit of Geneva." In 1959, there was the short-lived "spirit of Camp David." In 1963, after the Cuban missile crisis, there was another brief period of rapidly improving Soviet-American relations, which dwindled just as rapidly when Khrushchev was replaced by men with different priorities the next year.

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*Aleksandr Dashichev, Literaturnaya Gazeta, May 18, 1988 (FBIS Daily Report--Soviet Union, May 20, 1988, pp 4-8).

When looked at from this perspective, what happened in the late 70s -- the unfortunate sequel that followed the euphoria created by the summits of 1972 and 73 -- was just one more plunge down the roller coaster, perhaps the biggest drop from the loftiest expectations to date.

Against this background, just what were the specific grievances against the Soviet leadership that were felt in the United States in the first half of the '80s? Perhaps the most vigorous and lasting reaction was evoked by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the start of the decade.

The consequences of this event were all the more profound because many people -- if not everybody -- saw the dispatch of Soviet divisions into Afghanistan, a country outside the Soviet bloc, as signalling a dangerous new readiness in Moscow to use Soviet military force directly for expansionist purposes. Afghanistan thus gave some verisimilitude to the most pessimistic visions of Soviet intentions favored at the time by American conservatives. In the aftermath, as Dashichev says, **"in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the Western public, the Soviet Union [has become] a dangerous power whose leadership is striving by military means to liquidate the bourgeois democracies and to establish a Soviet-type communist system throughout the world."** We must allow for a bit of hyperbole in this Soviet writer's depiction of what the Western perception of his country was when Gorbachev arrived on the scene.

Here in this country, Mr. Reagan from the outset sought to make use of American alarm over the invasion of Afghanistan in two ways. First, he attempted to use the feeling against the Soviet Union created by the Afghan war as one of the sources of political support for his weapons buildup. And more specifically, he tried to mobilize support for an effort to roll back the Soviets in four places in the Third World where a Soviet presence or Soviet influence had been newly implanted in the '70s. These four places were Afghanistan itself, Indochina, Angola, and Nicaragua. As things turned out over the next eight years, the Administration was to discover that the American public's support for this rollback effort -- which the press calls the Reagan doctrine -- varied tremendously in these four cases, being strongest

in the case of Afghanistan and by far the weakest in the case of Nicaragua. As we know, the results have also varied greatly to date. I will return to this matter when we come to the implications of Gorbachev's new policies.

Meanwhile, the second major American problem with the Brezhnev leadership of course centered on the strategic competition and the question of nuclear agreements with the Soviet Union. Here, as we well know, there was no unanimity in the American elite at the start of this decade. But it worth reminding ourselves that this was a striking change from the situation in the early '70s, when a fairly substantial majority had been assembled in support of the SALT I agreements. Senator Jackson had been very much in the minority in expressing apprehensions about ratifying SALT I.

By the time the '70s came to an end, the U.S. elite had become much more deeply divided about the fundamental usefulness and desirability of arms control. This happened in the first place as a result of a belated discovery that SALT I had not produced the results Mr. Kissinger had foolishly suggested it would produce. That is, SALT I had not prevented the Soviets from modernizing their heavy ICBMs and giving them capabilities that many in this country found threatening to our retaliatory potential.

By the close of the 1970s, the new schism in the American elite about arms control had drastically eroded the consensus for acceptance of President Carter's new SALT II agreement, a treaty which in my judgment was more advantageous to our interests than SALT I had been. And as a result, the new President who swept into office at the start of the '80s was a man who had declared the SALT II treaty "fatally flawed." What is even more important, Mr. Reagan saw himself as having a mandate to hold back on new strategic negotiations with the Soviets until American rearmament had somehow redressed the balance.

In addition to all this, American attitudes were of course affected by the two crises involving the USSR that unfolded in Europe in the first half of this decade. The first was the crisis over the Solidarity movement in Poland in 1980 and '81. The American perception of the Soviet Union was certainly not improved by the old, dreary spectacle of an hysterical Soviet leadership once

again mobilizing its efforts to intimidate the disobedient population of an East European neighbor. The effect on Polish-Americans, a politically important segment of the U.S. population, was of course particularly pronounced. In the end, thanks to General Jaruzelski, Brezhnev was able to put an end to the immediate threat to Soviet control over Poland without having to resort to using Soviet force, an option that promised to be difficult and bloody. But the aftermath of this episode lingers on to the present day, and is one of the factors that continues to threaten both the stability of Soviet control in Eastern Europe and the stability of the new detente.

The final major cause of contention between the United States and the Soviet Union in the first half of the '80s was the crisis in Western Europe, the crisis which the Brezhnev and Andropov leaderships conjured up over NATO's attempt to deploy INF missiles in response to the Soviet deployment of the SS-20s. In retrospect, this was the most extensive Soviet political attack on the coherence of the West since the general strike campaign which Stalin ordered in France and Italy back in the late 1940s.

Above all, the Soviet anti-missile campaign was an all-out effort to convince the West that the world was on the brink of war. It was a systematic attempt to make use of the West's natural fear of war and natural horror of nuclear weapons in order to bring mass pressure from below on Western governments to force the West to retreat. It is astonishing, in view of everything that has happened since, to remind ourselves that all this happened only five or six years ago. How much we heard then to the effect that the deployment of the SS-20s was legitimate, natural, and eternally irrevocable. How often we were told that we were about to go over the precipice into the flames of nuclear war if the Pershings were deployed in response. Some articles in the Soviet press at the time even assured us that Mr. Reagan was a reincarnation of Hitler. Whatever else one can say about Ronald Reagan, a resemblance to Adolf Hitler has hardly been one of his leading characteristics.

I shall return presently to the question of how much of this nonsense was believed at the time by all those members of the Soviet elite who were peddling it so assiduously in print and in personal contacts with Western

academics. The point I want to stress here is the continuity between what Brezhnev and Andropov were trying to do and long-established Stalinist tradition. The Soviet effort in the '80s to encourage hysterical domestic pressure on Western governments to accede to Soviet wishes was a direct descendent of the Stockholm peace campaign organized by Stalin in the 1950s. And it also was a descendant of the more recent campaign against the so-called "neutron bomb" which Brezhnev's apparatus had more successfully organized in the late '70s. In this connection, it is useful to turn one last time to Mr. Dashichev's statement cited earlier.

"**We**," he says -- that is, we Soviets, **"by attacking the West's positions, raised the level of the danger of war, while on the other hand we launched a broad campaign in defense of peace and spared no money in organizing a mass movement of peace advocates. It's no accident that the following joke made the rounds in the 1950s: 'There's going to be such a struggle for peace that not one stone will be left standing on another!'"**

Once again, we can only be astonished and grateful for Dashichev's frankness. This seems to me an accurate description of the cynicism that has motivated all the Soviet peace campaigns to date, throughout the regimes of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko. I will later consider what this may imply about Gorbachev's policies.

The final point to note about the Brezhnev-Andropov anti-INF campaign unleashed in the first half of the decade is how suddenly it faded away. Once the NATO missiles actually began to be deployed, once the peace movement in Western Europe in consequence began to dwindle, once the huge demonstrations no longer were thundering through European cities, and once the divided and decrepit Soviet leadership could get its act together sufficiently to recognize that its decision to walk out of the INF negotiations had been a major political blunder -- once all these things happened, it was remarkable how a plunge into the flames of nuclear war no longer seemed so imminent in Moscow. As if a water faucet were being turned, the great scare campaign in Europe was shut off between 1984 and 1985.

So much for the American grievances with the Soviet Union in the first half of the 80s and Mr. Reagan's initial response. What was the effect of all this on the American public? It seems to me that if we look at the evolution of opinion during the first four Reagan years -- the years up until Gorbachev -- we see a gradual reduction of support for Mr. Reagan's intransigent posture toward Moscow. First, Mr. Reagan's rhetoric about the Russians began to alarm people. Second, as the Soviet scare campaign over INF deployment in Europe grew in intensity, it inevitably began to have an effect in the United States, although never as much as in Europe. And third, given this context, the Reagan administration's initial determination to stonewall and put off strategic arms negotiations after a while began to create a good deal of public discomfort.

And so American concern about the nuclear danger began to rise to the surface, and presently found a direct outlet in the nuclear freeze movement, which mushroomed for a while in this country in the second year of Mr. Reagan's first term, and then subsided.

In response to this growth of public unease over his posture toward the Soviet Union, President Reagan by the middle of the decade had begun to adjust in several ways. He took steps to resume START negotiations, although almost no progress was made until after Gorbachev had arrived on the scene. By 1984 Mr. Reagan had also greatly toned down his rhetoric about the Russians and their evil empire, although they did not reciprocate for some time. What was more remarkable was the President's response to the rise of the nuclear freeze movement. To put it in a nutshell, Mr. Reagan responded by preempting and co-opting American fears about nuclear weapons.

In the first place, he announced the Strategic Defense Initiative, holding out to the American people the prospect of a defense that would give them immunity against the nuclear nightmare. This was very bad news for the Soviet leaders, partly because it meant a major new push to the military competition which their faltering economy could ill afford, and more important, because it threatened to shift the emphasis in this competition to areas of new technology in which they were under a great handicap. SDI

was also, of course, bitterly opposed from the beginning by many in the United States, particularly on grounds of its cost and questionable feasibility. But we should not forget that the notion of strategic defense was and remains to this day very enticing to a great many people in this country who are not reconciled to living indefinitely under the balance of terror created by mutual nuclear deterrence. Because the advent of SDI seemed to provide an answer to this widespread emotional craving for release from the nuclear threat, there seems little doubt to me that it played a role in the decline of the nuclear freeze movement.

Even more remarkable was Mr. Reagan's second response to the growth of nuclear fears in the United States, a response in the opposite direction. At the Reykjavik conference in the fall of 1986, he came very close to agreeing to Gorbachev's grandiose proposals for staged elimination of all nuclear weapons. The President thereby greatly alarmed many of the leaders of our West European allies, who have become heavily dependent over the years on the American nuclear deterrent as the essential and irreplaceable offset to Soviet geopolitical pressure in Europe.

In retrospect, however, both of President Reagan's broad responses to anti-nuclear sentiment in the United States are likely to prove to be dead ends in the long run. On the one hand, the American people's hopes for an effective strategic umbrella, the hopes evoked by Mr. Reagan's initial rhetoric on the subject, have progressively dwindled, and the prospects for the SDI program seem increasingly meager whoever wins the coming election. On the other hand, the goal of a world without nuclear weapons which Gorbachev has evoked and which President Reagan almost embraced at Reykjavik seems even more unrealistic. Whatever strategic agreements may be reached in the future, nuclear deterrence at some level is likely to remain the central military fact about the relationship between the superpowers, and the American people therefore are unlikely to find the escape they have craved from the balance of nuclear terror.

In the meantime, however, this unpleasant reality has again become easier to ignore, because the atmosphere of Soviet-American relations has now dramatically improved. Since Gorbachev made his appearance and

reentered negotiations with America in the middle of the decade, an INF agreement has been signed and ratified, considerable progress has been made toward a new START agreement, and a new set of conventional force reduction talks are about to begin on a fresh and possibly more realistic basis. Since 1985 there have been no less than four summit meetings between the new ruler of the evil empire and the alleged American reincarnation of Hitler. As usual, Mr. Reagan has swung to the most astonishing extreme, and now announces that those Soviet human rights violations that continue to occur are only the fault of the Soviet "bureaucracy" and not of the Soviet leadership.

Meanwhile, unprecedented exchanges between the military leaders of the two countries are taking place, the Soviet Union is seeking a role in the international economic system, there have been momentous shifts in aspects of Soviet domestic and foreign policy, and the Soviet and American intellectual elites are now interacting on a far broader scale than ever before. The extraordinary rate of internal change in the Soviet Union promises to drive this interaction with Americans even further and faster. But are these changes permanent -- do we have a lasting modus vivendi finally in sight? Or have we merely reached a new, record high in our long roller-coaster ride with the Soviet Union?

The answer to this central question will of course depend partly on ourselves, and how we respond to Gorbachev's changes and his challenge. But I think it will also depend, and in larger part, on the outcome of the profound struggle now going on within the Soviet elite, an outcome which remains quite problematical. For the issue of Soviet behavior toward the outside world -- including especially the United States -- is likely to remain closely intertwined with the question of what kind of a Soviet society emerges from the fierce political battles now going on.

One major clue to future behavior is, of course, the attitude taken toward the past, especially the recent past. As I suggested before, it is now clear that many in the second rank of the Soviet elite all along have privately had grave reservations about their leaders' foreign policy in the late Brezhnev era and about its implications for Soviet relations with

America. One institute director and former apparatchik, Oleg Bogomolov, has claimed that his institute privately warned the Brezhnev leadership at the time against both the deployment of the SS-20s and the invasion of Afghanistan, arguing in both cases that the political costs to the Soviet Union would exceed the benefits. Bogomolov has also asserted that long before the Afghan invasion, in the second half of the 1970s, he had sent "other memorandums to the highest authorities" recommending what he terms **"restraint and caution in the turbulent zone of the developing countries, in order not to jeopardize the relaxation of tension and the cause of disarmament."***

But of course, as Bogomolov himself says, these dissenting warnings had absolutely no effect on Soviet behavior in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That behavior was basically determined, as the Soviets now tell us, by a very small group within the Politburo centering around perhaps four or five people, all of whom are now gone with the conspicuous exception of former Foreign Minister Gromyko. For the Soviet elite down below, it was a case of obeying orders and amplifying the official line whatever the private misgivings. At the same time, it has long been clear that the political struggle among institutions and personalities at the very top also played some role in shaping Soviet leadership behavior, particularly during the anti-INF campaign of the early '80s. Specifically, some leaders of the Soviet military -- especially Marshal Ogarkov -- seem to have consciously sought to exploit the struggle over the NATO missiles so as to help create an atmosphere of crisis useful for their factional interests in the internal battle over resource priorities.

This behavior by Ogarkov in turn seems to have further increased resentment against the Soviet military and its influence on policy, the submerged resentment which became widespread among Moscow intellectuals inside and outside the regime in the years before Gorbachev

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*Literaturnaya Gazeta, March 16, 1988.

and which has now vividly surfaced in the Gorbachev era. Even before Gorbachev made it safe to exhibit this feeling, exceptionally courageous individuals once in a while found a way to protest indirectly against Ogarkov's bellicosity and its consequences for relations with the United States. I am thinking in particular of an extraordinary thinly-veiled anti-military article, ostensibly about the Cuban missile crisis, which Fedor Burlatskiy published in November 1983.

All this is should be kept in mind as useful background for the issues that now dominate American dealings with the Soviet Union: how do we appraise the implications of the changes that Gorbachev has made in Soviet foreign policy, how do we measure the credibility of the claims that are now being made by the Soviet elite about "new thinking" in foreign policy, and how should we respond?

That Gorbachev has made some real changes in Soviet external behavior is obvious. To begin with, I think the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan -- assuming it really is carried out to the bitter end -- is indeed likely to prove a watershed event, because it offers the most dramatic evidence to date that there is a meaningful transformation going on in Soviet foreign policy. But having said that, I think we also have good reason for caution in estimating the dimensions of this change.

Gorbachev has made it abundantly clear that he thinks his desperate struggle to modernize cannot hope to succeed unless there is a very general relaxation of tension. As a result, in the last two years we have seen several very important Soviet negotiating shifts from positions staked out by Brezhnev. Thus far, two retreats by Gorbachev have been particularly significant. The first was his consent last year to remove the SS-20 missiles deployed in Europe and Asia, and the second of course was his decision this year to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan. To be sure, in each case, there were major compensations for the Soviets which I won't have time to go into here. But the fact remains that these were momentous steps back from the previous Soviet positions. In addition, there have been several other important but less spectacular Gorbachev shifts. In dealings with the United States, for example, Gorbachev has accepted the principle of deep cuts

in strategic nuclear forces rejected by Brezhnev. He has also accepted intrusive verification measures previously unacceptable to the Soviets and still likely to be very unpopular among Soviet military leaders.

Beyond this, he and his spokesmen have rather vaguely claimed that there have been broad shifts in attitude in Moscow on matters of fundamental principle. The Soviet leaders now allege, for example, that while it may not have been true in the past, there is now a new Soviet recognition that Soviet security needs are dependent on the satisfaction of the security needs of others. But unfortunately, by the fall of 1988 these assertions were not yet backed up by any perceptible changes in ongoing Soviet defense programs.

One key test of Gorbachev's intentions in this regard will be whether or not he proves willing in the next few years to accept drastically asymmetrical reductions in the conventional forces the Soviets have maintained in Eastern Europe since the Second World War to overawe the Western Europeans and to intimidate the East Europeans. There is good evidence of an ongoing dispute in the Soviet elite between the General Staff and some civilians, evidently supported by the Foreign Ministry, who have been publicly pressing for significant unilateral or highly asymmetrical Soviet reductions. The Soviets to date have continued to insist that the big edge they hold in Europe in weapons such as tanks are offset by NATO advantages in other weapons systems such as tactical airpower. And they continue to demand offsetting, mutual cuts by the Warsaw Pact and NATO that would, in effect, perpetuate NATO's overall vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, the Soviet political offensive against the coherence of the NATO alliance has become much more formidable under Gorbachev. While what the Soviets say to Western Europe about the United States is now much less vitriolic than it was a few years ago, Soviet policy is still aimed at eroding the alliance, at exploiting its many internal differences, and above all, at incrementally reducing American influence in Western Europe -- provided this can be done under circumstances that do not promote a new West European unity against the Soviet Union. In particular, the Gorbachev leadership has by no means given up on a central goal that has been

traditional for the Soviet Union, the long-term effort to promote the neutralization of West Germany. And the international Stalinist mechanisms used by the cynical Soviet "peace" campaigns of the past -- to which Dashichev alluded -- have not been dismantled by Gorbachev. On the contrary, they have been modernized and refurbished to help support Gorbachev in his formidable appeal to Western publics to dilute opposition to Soviet purposes.

At the same time, we must also take note of the disturbing fact that certain traditional unfortunate Soviet military practices long characteristic of what the Soviets now call "old thinking" have simply not been halted in Europe under Gorbachev. I have in mind in particular the systematic and large-scale Soviet submarine intrusions into Swedish coastal waters and Swedish harbors which go on to this day.

When we turn to the Third World, there is also a rather mixed picture. Gorbachev clearly shares the disillusionment that has been growing in the Soviet elite for a long time about the fruits of Brezhnev's Third World policy. Some Soviet writers have become scathing in their denunciation of the Brezhnev interventions in the Third World in the late 1970s that so upset the United States. It is now the proclaimed view of many people in Moscow that this policy was not very successful, that it produced allies that were generally too weak and burdensome, and that the ultimate political costs were far more serious than Brezhnev realized.

Given this assessment, Gorbachev evidently does indeed desire to minimize costly or dangerous new commitments, and also to reduce expenditures that have grown onerous in places like Angola, Vietnam, and Cuba. His most radical step to reduce commitments, of course, has been the withdrawal from Afghanistan. In addition, he seems to want to facilitate settlement of some of the Third World armed struggles in which the Soviet Union has become entangled since Brezhnev's time. He thus seems to have taken steps to encourage negotiations regarding southern Africa and Cambodia. This much is quite new and encouraging in Soviet policy.

Nevertheless, his Third World policy remains intensely competitive, and the Gorbachev Politburo seems to me by no means ready to accept a general retreat from the geopolitical bridgeheads in the Third World inherited from Brezhnev. On the one hand, the Gorbachev leadership has been calling for what it calls settlements of "national reconciliation" in the Third World. But on the other hand, Moscow seems to be trying very hard to ensure that in the process, its other major Third World clients do not share the expected fate of the Kabul regime, and that they emerge on top in any such settlements.

To this end, for example, Gorbachev early in 1988 made possible a massive Cuban troop reinforcement in Angola, to assist Luanda against South African forces and to strengthen Luanda's bargaining power in the new negotiations in southern Africa. There is nothing very surprising or necessarily reprehensible about this competitive behavior. But it serves as a useful corrective to some widespread exaggerated expectations in the West about the likely extent of Soviet retreats. Gorbachev wants to phase down his costs and commitments, but he is emphatically not abandoning his clients. Even as he withdraws from Afghanistan, he apparently is establishing a large new naval base in Syria. And in Afghanistan itself, he is evidently being led to more extreme measures as the withdrawal proceeds. For example, in reaction to the mujahedin pressure on the retreating Soviet forces, Gorbachev apparently authorized the Afghan regime to step up terrorist bomb explosions in northern Pakistan, and Gorbachev also authorized the Soviet military for the first time to stage bombing raids from Soviet territory against a provincial capital that had fallen to the rebels.

There are other notable contradictions in the Soviet policy mixture. For example, Gorbachev has sent a Soviet team to the Seoul Olympics, and has sought to explore economic relations with South Korea, despite Kim Il-sung's unhappiness. But Gorbachev also continues to expand Soviet military exercises with North Korea and to send new high-performance weapons to North Korea, despite Kim's Il-sung's obvious and alarming adventurist tendencies.

In the Philippines, there is no good evidence that Gorbachev is assisting the Communist rebels; but on the other hand, Gorbachev through his diplomacy and propaganda is doing his best rather crudely and blatantly to encourage those local radical nationalist forces that wish to compel the United States to leave its Philippine bases. In this particular case, it seems hard to deny that his attitude continues to reflect zero-sum assumptions about his relationship with the United States, despite all that some Soviet writers have been saying about the need to abandon zero-sum attitudes.

So much for mere reality to date. When we turn to the vector of history, the possibilities for further change in our relationship with the Soviet Union, the situation seems to be both more hopeful and even more anomalous. To begin with, some of the statements that keep pouring out of Moscow have overtones that imply much more in the way of change than we have seen so far.

--Gorbachev and his close ally Foreign Minister Shevardnadze have now explicitly denounced the notion that the Soviet Union has a right to maintain military capabilities equal to those of all its potential adversaries combined. In the late '70s, Soviet leaders were openly defending this remarkable claim in an effort to get the West to accept its legitimacy. By rejecting this principle, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze seem to be implying that they can put up with sizeable adverse changes in the old force balances. Soviet military officials, however, have not yet signed on to the conclusion that this is what is really meant by "defense sufficiency."

-- Shevardnadze has also publicly insisted that peaceful coexistence must no longer be defined -- as it has in the past -- as a "special form of class struggle." The struggle between two opposing systems, he says, "is no longer a determining tendency of the present-day era." The significance of this change, if it wins the day in Moscow, might be profound, since it would remove the ideological basis for what I have termed, in some things I have written, the "attacking compulsion" in Soviet foreign policy, the felt need, so visible under Brezhnev, to keep pressing the West and the United States to the limits of prudence under all circumstances.

We should recognize, however, that Gorbachev appears to face problems in pushing such changes in viewpoint through the Soviet leadership consensus. These problems are intimately related to his difficulties on domestic policy. Over the last year he and the reformists he is protecting have been inching forward, although very hesitantly, toward acceptance of a number of Western economic and political ideas that were previously denounced as heretical "bourgeois liberalism." Many of these notions -- like the use of the market principle, and the presumption of innocence, and the need to tolerate dissenting opinion -- are still regarded with enormous suspicion by much of the party and its top leadership, and remain, to say the least, highly vulnerable and precarious in the Soviet Union. Chief among those who have articulated this conservative resistance to the kind of change that goes too far in rapprochement with Western ideology has been the senior leadership figure Yegor Ligachev. Ligachev has also articulated the resistance in the leadership to the new foreign policy heresies that are Gorbachev's external counterpart to radical domestic change. In a transparent attack on Shevardnadze's new formula about peaceful coexistence, Ligachev in August made a speech in which he summed up a deeply-imbedded opposing point of view. He said:

**We proceed from the class nature of international relations. Any other formulation of the issue only introduces confusion into the thinking of Soviet people and our friends abroad. Active involvement in the solution of general human problems by no means signifies any artificial "braking" of the social and national liberation struggle.***

This was openly polemical, and it did not merely involve what the Western press likes to call an "ideological" dispute. Rather, the issue raised goes to the heart of the question I have raised, of whether we are still on a long-term roller-coaster ride with the Soviet Union, or whether we can find a long-lasting modus vivendi. This issue is being fought out within the Soviet elite day by day across the whole spectrum of practical details in Soviet

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*Pravda, August 6, 1988.

interaction with the West. Nor is the matter confined to the question of Ligachev's personal political fate. There are many in the Soviet elite, well represented at the top by others besides Ligachev, who resent Gorbachev's tampering with the traditional symbols sanctifying endless political warfare with the West, just as they resent his similar assault on the inherited customs and sanctified structures of Soviet internal life.

The political pressure created by this conservative recalcitrance about first principles was again exhibited in late August, when Pravda ran a long article elaborately demonstrating, for the benefit of the heretical Soviet new thinkers, that it was the United States, and not the Soviet Union, that was responsible for the start of the cold war. Clearly, the struggle within the elite over the posture to take toward America is not over.

More concretely, this tension between the "old thinking" and the "new thinking" in the Soviet elite has obvious consequences for the Soviet Union's ability to follow through in practice on the promises held out by the "new thinking." One striking case in point is that of the scurrilous Soviet charges, which various Soviet agencies were assiduously spreading in the Third World in recent years, to the effect that the AIDS epidemic was artificially invented and inflicted upon the world by the Pentagon. After Secretary Shultz protested this Soviet behavior during his October 1987 visit to Moscow, a disavowal appeared in Izvestiya, and Soviet scientists held a press conference to affirm that they had never believed the AIDS allegation. But despite this, for many months afterward, the charge continued to appear in occasional Radio Moscow broadcasts! It is quite evident that some people, and some institutions, did not get the message, or rather, did not want to get it. And it also seems clear that the internal political costs of following through on this and on other matters involving a toning down of the "struggle" against the United States have appeared rather onerous to Mr. Gorbachev.

Similarly, it is dismaying to find that in the fall of 1988, the KGB is still planting stories in the Third World to the effect that the United States is developing an "ethnic weapon" that kills only nonwhites, or that the CIA organized the 1978 Jonestown massacre in Guyana, or that babies are being

adopted in the Third World to be sold for use in organ transplants in the United States. This kind of thing is important because, like the ongoing submarine operations in Swedish harbors and the other Soviet policy anomalies I have mentioned, it raises fundamental questions of credibility. Does Mr. Gorbachev mean it when he says that it is necessary to get rid of the notion of "the enemy" in East-West relations? Or is it only one side that is intended to get rid of this notion?

Finally, there is the vexed question of the so-called "blank spots" in history which Gorbachev has said must be filled in. It seems to me that he would really like to be able to tell the truth about more of those acts committed abroad by the Stalin and Brezhnev regimes which he now regards as shameful. Gorbachev would like to do this both to clear the air with the nations the Soviet Union has injured through these actions, and to furnish new evidence to the world that Soviet policy really has changed in a fundamental way.

But it also seems likely to me that many of his colleagues, typified by Ligachev, regard this as a harebrained notion. From their perspective, can the Soviet Union really afford to acknowledge, as the Poles wish them to do, that during World War II it was Stalin and the Russians, and not Hitler and the Germans, as the Soviets have said up to now, who murdered the thousands of Polish officers that are buried at Katyn? A joint Soviet-Polish commission has been solemnly considering this matter for two years, and the Soviets say that it will have to be investigated for years to come, since this is an issue requiring deep research. It is obvious, however, that the real debate on the matter is not going on in this commission, but in the Soviet Politburo, and there the issue is stalemated by the grave doubts of many of the Soviet leaders about the wisdom of telling the truth.

Moreover, as Gorbachev's opponents no doubt point out, the same problem arises on many other fronts, and how can the Soviet Union acknowledge the terrible truth on so many sides at once without doing grave damage to its present political position? From the perspective of Ligachev and those who think like him, entirely too much truth has been told already.

both about Stalin's actions inside the country and about past Soviet policies abroad.

Furthermore, because Gorbachev's glasnost is undermining Soviet discipline, fragments of the truth apparently unratified by the Politburo consensus keep slipping out to pose problems for the regime's defenders of traditional reticence. The Estonians, with Gorbachev's apparent private encouragement, have now published the secret protocol to the Stalin-Hitler pact in which Hitler authorized Stalin to occupy the Baltic states, but Moscow refuses to confirm that any such protocol exists. One anonymous Soviet official, in an interview with a leading Swedish newspaper, has acknowledged that yes, Soviet submarines have indeed been violating Swedish harbors, despite all the past Soviet denials.* And this confession in turn had to be freshly denied by the Foreign Ministry. In short, once even a little bit of leeway is given to the truth, matters are likely to get out of hand.

From Gorbachev's perspective, however, and indeed from our perspective, the fundamental issue is the credibility in the West of his claims about far-reaching change in the Soviet attitude toward the world. If he is to obtain the reciprocal changes in American attitudes which he seems to desire, he is likely to be compelled by circumstances to keep gradually pushing the frontier of truth about past Soviet behavior further and further back, whatever the inconvenience this causes Soviet foreign policy and whatever the political difficulties this causes him with his colleagues.

To take one concrete example, there is the matter of the Soviet military budget. Soviet officials now acknowledge that their officially announced figure for military spending has always been misleading, on two counts. It does not include major categories of expenditures listed in the military budget in Western countries but traditionally hidden under other categories in the Soviet budget. And on top of this, the Soviet leaders also now suggest that even they themselves have never had reliable figures about their own

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*Aftonbladet (Stockholm) article cited by Financial Times (London), June 30, 1988.

military spending, since the pricing system is so distorted; nor will they know in the future what they are really spending on defense until a thorough price reform is completed in the future. Only then, they now declare, can the Soviet Union publish a realistic military budget.

But if these statements are to be taken seriously, what are we to think in retrospect about the Soviet public campaigns in the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s demanding that the United States in the interests of peace agree to joint equal-percentage reductions in the announced military budgets? One would think that at least a small display of regret about this might now be appropriate, if only as a sort of down payment to secure some credibility for Soviet proposals on the subject in the future. Unless the mendacity of the past is confronted, how can the good faith of the new version be confidently accepted?

Let me close with some personal judgments about the possibilities for the future. First, I wish to make it clear, despite everything else I have said, that I think the possibilities for improvement of our relations with the Soviet Union are indeed better now than they have ever been in my lifetime. Gorbachev really has opened up avenues of opportunity that were not there before.

Moreover, one can now identify some points of superpower contention that are gradually becoming less severe. For example, because of the technical difficulties it has met and because its political support is slowly declining, SDI evidently no longer worries the Soviet leaders nearly as much as it once did. Also, Soviet competition with the United States in the Third World has become considerably less likely to bring with it the threat of military conflict than was the case in Brezhnev's day, on our last trip up the roller coaster.

But we should recognize that there are also some specific holdovers from the past that still have the potential to poison the relationship for a long time to come. To give one example, there remains Nicaragua. In this case, there seems little doubt to me that the "Reagan doctrine" has been defeated. Here the Soviet Union has, in effect, won, at least in the limited sense that the

United States will ultimately be forced to accept the fact that a second regime now exists alongside Cuba in Latin America that is fundamentally oriented toward America's main geopolitical competitor and potential adversary. But despite the fact that a majority in the United States has long been opposed to the "Contra" enterprise as an unjustifiable U.S. effort to inflict our will on a small neighbor, the same majority is apparently also unreconciled to the prospect of legitimizing a new Soviet client state in the Western hemisphere. In my view, it is the tension between these two facts that is responsible for much of the contortions exhibited by both political parties in Congress. In the future, as the "contra" effort eventually fades away and the Sandinista regime becomes consolidated, I think more of the residual resentment of the American majority is likely to be directed at Managua's great power patron.

On the other side of the coin, I believe that Afghanistan has the potential to become a cause of ongoing bitterness for the Soviets in their dealings with the United States. If the Soviet withdrawal is indeed carried out to the bitter end, the Soviet Union is likely to find itself with a source of anarchy, tension, and Moslem fundamentalist subversion implanted on its southern border for the foreseeable future. Many in the Soviet Union may come to blame the Americans for this predicament.

On the whole, it seems to me safe to conclude that the Soviet-American relationship under any circumstances will remain quite competitive for the foreseeable future. The intensity of the future competition, however, remains very much an open question. It will depend in large part on the degree to which the rivalry can really be de-ideologized, secularized, taken out of the realm of religious warfare. I think such a change would be very much in the American interest, but I also believe that this is not, fundamentally, up to us. I am well aware that there is no shortage of ideological fuel in this country for ongoing struggle with the Russians. But it nevertheless seems to me that the Soviet Union is going to have to go by far the greater distance to bring about a mutual transformation, in view of everything that has happened since the Second World War. Over the long sweep of time since then, despite Mr. Reagan's partial counterattack in the last decade, on the whole it is the Soviets who have been on the attack, and

**we** who have been trying to "contain" **them**, in George Kennan's phrase. Many of the Dashichev statements I have cited indeed frankly recognize this. It is therefore they who have to prove that all this is over, and not merely partially or temporarily suspended.

The Soviet leaders, however, are still some distance from proving any such thing. Despite the important and very welcome steps that Gorbachev has taken to change aspects of policy, and despite the even more welcome glimpses of the truth that are now flickering through the Soviet press, the anomalies of Soviet behavior -- which are not limited to the examples I have cited -- are still so great as to leave unsettled the question of Soviet good faith. Moreover, for the reasons I have given, that question is not likely to be settled while the protracted political struggle in the Soviet leadership continues.

And finally, while that struggle goes on, it seems to me that we should at last begin to consider what we fundamentally want from the Soviet Union, and what reciprocal concessions and sacrifices we are prepared to make to Gorbachev if the prospect of a real modus vivendi -- a real set of rules about the terms of the competition in all its aspects, political as well as military -- should ever come into view.

One cannot stress too much the fact that the key word here must be reciprocity. Over the next decade, if Gorbachev remains on the scene and continues his peace offensive, we may well hear many proposals from various quarters to abate American practices toward Moscow that assume, as Gorbachev says, the notion of an "enemy." These proposals might conceivably include, for example, such items as the Soviet Union's admission to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or the return of most-favored-nation status to the Soviet Union, or the repeal of the Stevenson Amendment restricting Export-Import Bank guarantees to investments in the Soviet Union, or the curtailing of the COCOM list, or the constraining of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, or the reduction of the American naval power that is deployed on both sides of Eurasia to help counterbalance massive Soviet land power.

Some of these potential proposals for American concessions might under some circumstances become consistent with American interests. Others, probably not. But what is essential is that nothing on this list be considered without an appropriate major quid pro quo, an equivalent subtraction from the totality of Soviet behavior injurious to the United States or its friends. In sum, a significant reduction in the intensity of the long geopolitical struggle between our two countries is now at last imaginable. But such a reduction will not take place and will not last unless it is truly mutual.