The Sources of the New Thinking

As I described earlier, by the mid-1980s the danger of nuclear war had become a reality. The world's nations were at an impasse, and no one could see a way out. It seemed that the confrontation between East and West would go on forever. Countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain were preparing themselves for such a future. No one wanted nuclear war, of course, but no one could guarantee that it would not occur—even if it was simply the result of some unfortunate accident.

The Soviet Union and the United States constantly had each other "in their sights," as did all the other Eastern and Western countries. The accumulation and continual refinement of nuclear and conventional weapons had become an accustomed and seemingly inseparable part of the modern world's existence. Europe had been transformed into an arena for the nuclear arms race. With each passing year, indeed each month, Europe was becoming more and more densely saturated with missiles of varying range and capacity. The world's oceans swarmed with missile-bearing vessels, both above and below the surface. Not only the air above us but outer space as well had become part of the standoff. And regional conflicts continued to rage—in Asia, Africa, Latin America.

By the mid-1980s Soviet relations with many countries of the world were quite strained. And completing the picture were (1) the war in Afghanistan; (2) complications in the Soviet Union's relations with its giant neighbor, China; and (3) the unceasing, decades-long rivalry between East and West in supplying arms to certain Asian and African countries (which had become peripheral proving grounds for the Cold War).

Our country's security had by no means become more reliably guaranteed—and that was despite the fact that an inordinately large portion of our resources was being spent on the production of weapons. The race for mil-

itary supremacy relative to any possible opponent (and that was the orientation) resulted in military spending that in some years reached 25–30 percent of our gross national product—that is, five or six times greater than analogous military spending in the United States and the European NATO countries.

Obviously this course could not continue. The rush toward the abyss had to end. The need to pay serious attention to questions of foreign policy had become urgent.

The problem was not so much Soviet foreign policy itself or the actions of Soviet diplomats as it was the concepts on which they were based. These concepts rested on a dogmatic world outlook, not on reality, not on a sober analysis of the situation nor on meeting the real and vital interests of our country and our people. Rather, our foreign policy was oriented toward harsh confrontation with the entire outside world (not including, of course, those we regarded as allies, although they occupied a rather subordinate position in our overall political doctrine).

Such was the foreign policy legacy of totalitarianism. By its very nature, wherever it might arise and in whatever garments it might be vested, totalitarianism cannot exist without a harsh ideological and political system, a set of stereotypes that distort reality and have only one purpose—to serve the interests of the regime, to create conditions for its further entrenchment, and to establish a way of thinking among its "loyal subjects" that is purely to the regime's own advantage.

The first stimulus of the new thinking was a dispassionate, even remorseless analysis of our own foreign policy concepts and the practices they inspired.

What was needed was a new, unbiased appraisal of the Soviet Union's place in the world arena; a clear definition of our country's real national interests and the real parameters and imperatives for our security; a serious analysis of the present state of the international community and the main trends of its development; and, finally, the elaboration, on this basis, of a well-thought-out program of specific actions in the main areas of foreign policy practice.

Even before perestroika we had reflected on all these questions. Within the framework of studying all the important questions that had accumulated since the beginning of the 1980s, considerable attention had been paid to international affairs. With the beginning of perestroika this effort went on more energetically and was no longer kept secret from the public. Our sci-

entific research centers provided a great deal of valuable material. (Foremost among these centers were the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, the U.S. and Canada Institute, and the Institute on the Economics of the World Socialist System, among others.) In addition, individual appraisals were offered by scientists and specialists.

This work of reexamining foreign policy concepts was not easy or simple largely because the notions of foreign policy in the Soviet period had, so to speak, been foreordained: They were taken as a "given" based on ideological postulates that had long been inculcated among us. Reexamining these concepts ultimately necessitated a revision of those political assumptions and of the deeply rooted foundations of the prevailing ideology.

The difficulty arose first for those who undertook to reexamine the established views. After all, they, too, were children of their times. From their earliest days, beginning in school, they had absorbed the fundamentals of the official ideology. Certainly they had all been deeply affected by Nikita Khrushchev's exposé of Stalinism at the Twentieth Party Congress. These were the youth of the 1960s, but they were in no way free of the ideological chains of the 1950s. A struggle took place within their very depths—such was the process of emancipating oneself from ideological fetters.

On the other hand, there were also external difficulties. Society as a whole, including a substantial number of active party members, found it hard to accept new ways of thinking. For many, it seemed to be an inadmissible form of "sedition," even a renunciation of one's own self. What about everything we had been fighting for? This was a question that many asked—people who did not think especially deeply about the meaning of the official ideology but who worked, thought, and lived in an honest way. For the citizens of our country to understand and accept the new ideas, they needed time as well as consistent and convincing explanations, and practical evidence of the advantages the new approaches would bring them. Some of our citizens never did understand or accept these new ideas, as can easily be observed today.

A second impetus for the new thinking was a reflective analysis of world politics and the best way to implement it. This involved overcoming our old way of thinking, thinking that had become typical for us as a result not only of Soviet history but of world history. An analysis of world politics concerned above all the role of force in history, that is, the use of troops as the customary means not only of defending the state but of realizing its political intentions.

From time immemorial war has been recognized as a valid political tool by international law. True, in the second half of the nineteenth century certain legal restrictions were instituted to reduce the harmful effects of war on the civilian population. Rules were also established for the proper treatment of prisoners of war. After World War I the use of chemical weapons was banned. Attempts were also made to limit the production of certain other types of weapons. But none of this changed the fact that war was regarded as a legitimate way to conduct policy.

The situation radically changed with the appearance of nuclear weapons. Human beings now had a weapon with which they could commit collective suicide, and thus people were forced to abandon previously accepted approaches—or so it seemed. As we all know, this did not happen. On the contrary, the entire period up to the end of the 1980s was an uninterrupted arms race, primarily involving nuclear weapons. Various scenarios providing for the use of nuclear weapons or the threat of their use essentially became the basis for the military doctrine of every nation-state possessing atomic or hydrogen bombs and for the military alliances to which these states belonged.

An ever-increasing segment of world opinion—especially in the scientific community—sounded the alarm and demanded that measures be taken to prevent a nuclear holocaust. Some steps toward limiting the nuclear arms race were taken in the 1960s. Thus a nuclear test ban (on tests above ground, in the air, and at sea) was signed, followed later by a treaty on nonproliferation of these weapons of mass destruction. At the same time agreements were reached limiting or banning other weapons of mass destruction (for example, chemical and biological weapons). But none of this stopped the race to produce and refine nuclear weapons, and, covertly, the production and accumulation of forbidden or restricted weapons of mass destruction continued.

Scientific research—above all, by Soviet and American scientists—in the 1970s and 1980s showed convincingly what human beings faced in the event of a nuclear catastrophe. Eloquent testimony to what might happen was expressed in descriptions of a possible "nuclear winter." Obviously a radical change in the fundamental positions of governments was required, a change in their practical approaches to policy and their means of pursuing policy. Governments had to renounce approaches involving the use of force, fraught with the danger of the destruction of millions of people, if not the entire human race.

Such a reversal clearly would not be simple or easy. Historical traditions, which had become outmoded under the new conditions, were deeply rooted both in people's consciousness and in policy making. Further, the general state of relations between East and West during the Cold War was that of mutual distrust, permeated with the idea that whoever did not share one's own point of view was an "enemy" and invariably a mortal threat. Finally, material and political interests were another consideration. Some became rich from the production of weapons of mass destruction or from the arms industry in general; others saw in these weapons a reliable lever for guaranteeing their own primacy, a dependable instrument for asserting policy aimed at achieving and maintaining hegemony.

Nevertheless a radical reversal of this volatile situation was imperative.

Finally, the third stimulus giving rise to the new thinking was our analysis of the major changes that had occurred in the most fundamental aspects of daily life worldwide during the years after World War II. The shifting technological basis of the world economy, the rapid progress in computer technology, the emergence of new, enhanced methods of exchanging information worldwide, and the emergence of new means of transportation—all these revolutionary changes were affecting relations between nation-states and national populations. A new world economy and worldwide information and cultural systems were in fact taking shape.

Under these conditions everything became interconnected; all problems—both national and international—were tied in a single knot that had to be unraveled. And this had to be done in the name of one's own national interests (which coincided with the interests of all countries) and for the survival of the human race.

The changes that had taken place were not reflected in international relations or government policy. Or if they were reflected, it was in a one-sided way. The great powers were using the emerging new possibilities to exploit the less powerful, less developed countries. Interdependence among nations became an instrument of power for those who sought to pursue a hegemonistic policy in world affairs.

The Soviet leadership sought to base its analysis of these new problems on research carried out by the scientific and cultural community worldwide. This was a new development, not at all customary for the Soviet Union. Indeed, until the 1980s, the Soviet regime had largely regarded such research as hostile, unacceptable, and false. Earlier, in the Stalin era, genetics, cybernetics, political science, geopolitics, and so forth, were denounced as "bour-

geois pseudoscience" (which resulted in our lagging behind significantly in the fields of science and technology, as well as in other areas). Even after the Khrushchev "thaw," even after the era of détente in the 1970s, ideas voiced by "dissidents" (whether in science or, especially, in politics) were rejected out of hand.

Gradually, during perestroika, the extremely interesting ideas of certain scientists and political figures, and the works of major writers and poets, all of which had been consigned to oblivion, began to be restored in our country. A living link with world science, with international culture, with the enormous reservoir of worldwide thought was also reestablished. Thus our own ideas about the surrounding world, our own theoretical generalizations regarding the state of the modern world and prospects for the future, were enriched.

Among the precursors, and to no small degree the coauthors, of the new thinking were such major Russian scientists as Vladimir Vernadsky, Pyotr Kapitsa, and Andrei Sakharov, and such foreign thinkers as Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russel, and Giorgio La Pira. There were many others besides these.

A question is often asked of us: Do you mean that before perestroika no one in the Soviet Union recognized the need for change in the realm of foreign policy, both in theory and practice? Of course such ideas did occur. We still do not know all the details of the past, but judging from the information we have, even in the later years of the Stalin era, before Stalin's death, a certain uneasiness about the course of events and a vague desire to change things in the realm of foreign policy made its appearance within our ruling circles.

After Stalin's death came the first "thaw" in the Cold War. Relations were normalized with many countries, the first summit meetings were held, and the first treaties intending to moderate the generally tense climate in world affairs were signed. The Korean War had ended, as did the first phase of the war in Indochina. But this phase of improved relations did not last long. The Hungarian crisis and the war over the Suez Canal put a brake on this course of developments.

The attempts at change undertaken at that time were by no means consistent, and they occurred in the context of internal struggle. Georgy Malenkov received no support, and in fact was condemned, after a speech he made to voters in Moscow in which he stated that the Cold War policy was "a policy of preparing for a new world war, which, given today's weapons,

would mean the destruction of world civilization." In January 1955, at a plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, Vyacheslav Molotov stated that no Communist should talk about the "destruction of world civilization" or of the human race but rather should speak of "preparing and mobilizing all forces for the destruction of the bourgeoisie."

Of course a short while later Nikita Khrushchev (influenced by the events of the time, especially the Cuban missile crisis) took a position similar to that voiced by Malenkov. At Khrushchev's insistence, official party and government documents were to state that *peaceful coexistence* was the general line for Soviet foreign policy. But as early as 1964, after Khrushchev was relieved of his duties as first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, this formula was discarded, to be replaced by a return to the basic foreign policy coordinates of the early 1950s.

In 1971, at the Twenty-Fourth Party Congress, another attempt was made, not revolutionary but substantial, to introduce correctives in the practices and line of conduct of the foreign policy being pursued. I am referring to the Peace Program adopted at that congress. It contained a number of sensible proposals regarding, above all, the necessity of reducing the danger of nuclear war. True, this program was adopted to a considerable extent because of the desire to improve the Soviet Union's image in the eyes of the world, an image that had become rather negative as the result of such actions as the suppression of the Prague Spring and the deployment of new medium-range missiles in Europe.

But the Peace Program soon died on the vine. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan buried the possibility of improving international relations for a long time. This action essentially resulted in a new and more dangerous edition of the Cold War.

Thus there had been earlier attempts to refine or modernize Soviet foreign policy, taking the world's realities into account. But these efforts were inconsistent and, most important, were not reinforced by appropriate changes in the very conception of the fundamental principles of state policy.

The need for a change in foreign policy was referred to, in a general way, during the visit to Great Britain by a Soviet parliamentary delegation that I headed in December 1984. I then stated that the nuclear age inevitably dictates *new political thinking*, that "now more than ever" there was a need for constructive dialogue, for a search for solutions to key international problems, an attempt to find areas of agreement that could lead to greater trust among different countries, the creation of an atmosphere in international

relations that would be free of nuclear threats, suspicion, fear, and animosity; it was time for everyone to gradually learn to live together, based on the realities of a modern world that was constantly changing according to certain basic regularities inherent in it.

This was a clear statement, but obviously practical implementation of the ideas expressed in it was not possible until after I had been elected to the post of general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee in March 1985 and a new Soviet leadership had been formed, a leadership that would chart a course toward profound change.