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## Smuts House Notes

To the overseas visitor South Africa seems beset by timetables imposed by eminent persons, presidential commissions, Bishop Tutu *et al.* Abroad a consensus exists that South African politics has changed qualitatively since its declaration of the state of emergency in July 1985 and the contrast with events post-1960 and post-1976 is constructive. Then, following the Sharpeville and Soweto crises—external hostility was initially acute but withered once domestic order was restored; that this has not occurred in 1985/6 is largely due to the government's failure to end unrest in the black townships. As Mr Harry Oppenheimer perceptively remarked in his Chairman's Report to the Institute's National Executive Council in March 1986: 'For many years the government's domestic policies have been the main issue in our external relations; now the situation has moved even beyond that and the two dimensions are inextricably linked. Events here caused reactions abroad and those reactions impact upon our own domestic political developments'.

Those who, in the heady days following the Nkomati Accord and the promulgation of the tricameral constitution, placed their faith in the law of unexpected consequences as the saving grace of the new dispensation, have seen that 'law' operate with a vengeance! The breakdown of order in many black areas; the belief of militant youths that revolution is near; the refusal of 'moderate' leaders like Chief Buthelezi to negotiate with the government; the slow, haphazard application of 'creeping sanctions' by the Western powers—all these developments point to a steady erosion of the government's authority at home and abroad.

President Botha is sometimes described as 'reforming by stealth', à la General de Gaulle moving France by a policy of 'calculated ambiguity' from a colonial to a European role in the late 1950s. But the comparison is ill-founded: the General appealed to a latent French nationalism crossing classes and traditional political boundaries; President Botha by contrast appears trapped between 'colons' on the right and black militants on the left; unable to ignore the electoral threat represented by the former and unwilling to risk open-ended negotiations with the latter.

Meanwhile, the debate on the utility and the morality of comprehensive mandatory sanctions grows ever more intense and those who are sceptical about the government's commitment to root and branch reform (especially

on the critical issue of black participation in the centres of state power) and equally doubtful about the merits of sanctions find themselves in a dilemma, unable to suggest an alternative strategy of change. The same dilemma confronts conservative administrations in the West: the clear evidence that the 'private sanctions' of bankers and businessmen have made an impact sharpens pressures for 'public governmental' action against the Republic. Both President Reagan and Mrs Thatcher therefore risk isolation in the Congress and Commonwealth respectively if their policies fail to reflect to some degree the attitude of those who in domestic and external consultations place their faith in coercion rather than co-operation and the encouragement of change within South Africa.

Hence the external significance of the lifting of the state of emergency and the recently announced Namibian initiative. Both might be regarded as designed to give Western leaders some leeway and flexibility in their dealings with internal and external pressure groups in favour of a tougher posture. Both might also be interpreted as a belated application of the doctrine of constructive engagement; yet equally these moves demonstrate how difficult it is to operate that doctrine in conditions of social unrest and bitter external hostility from a variety of sources.

Certainly, Pretoria would do well to remember that no Western government welcomes isolation from friends and allies in, for example, the EEC or the Commonwealth. Mrs Thatcher once described herself as a 'lady not for turning', but even she can change her mind if hard economic and political interests appear threatened by persistence with traditional policies on issues like apartheid. Her *volte face* over Rhodesia at the 1978 Lusaka Commonwealth Conference readily comes to mind.

Yet even if we discount the likelihood of full-scale sanctions, there is little doubt that 'creeping sanctions' with more substance and less symbolic content will be applied unless and until some drastic and decisive initiative is undertaken by the government. Those reforms that have occurred (and of these the abolition of the pass laws is probably the most significant) are widely interpreted abroad as a response to external pressure rather than the product of some carefully devised long term plan and the result is that the government is unable to catch up with its critics and stay ahead of the political game. 'Too little, too late' is a familiar response in these circumstances. Indeed, the combination of reform with repression in the absence of a meaningful and radical constitutional change produces in Professor Lawrence Schlemmer's acute phrase 'a double bind . . . where both the cost of responding . . . to . . . (external pressure) . . . and making the concession and the cost of not responding are completely prohibitive'.

Some signs of hope, however: the political mobilisation of the business community in South Africa, witness the plethora of blue-prints and manifestos of the last few months. And not much is heard these days of 'total

onslaught' and 'total strategy'; after all it is difficult to see the directors of the Chase Manhattan Bank, etc., as footsoldiers of Lenin! Thirdly, the role of the Eminent Persons Group and its careful, methodical preparation in advance of visiting the Republic has been impressive contrasting favourably with the flying visits of US Congressional delegates. The Group's commitment to privacy, its avoidance of the media and its cultivation of private diplomacy might just help to make its findings and recommendations more acceptable to Pretoria. Who knows? The release of Nelson Mandela may be on the cards after all. Thereafter . . . ?

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## Soviet Society in Transition

In the year 1981, an unusual article appeared in the Soviet Communist Party's major theoretical journal under the authorship of Politburo member and subsequently General Secretary of the Party, Konstantin Chernenko. For possibly the first time since Lenin introduced NEP (New Economic Policy) in 1921 to quell domestic discontent, a key member of the Soviet political élite openly referred to the possibility of internal crisis in the USSR. If the Party failed to provide proper leadership, Chernenko warned in this article, it risked losing its mass support and could face 'the danger of social tension and of political and socio-economic crisis.'

Chernenko's concern reflected a widespread mood of malaise and anxiety evident within broad segments of the Soviet élite during the last years of Brezhnev's rule. Turmoil in Poland served as a sharp reminder that accumulating problems, if not successfully addressed, could provoke serious social instability.

Chernenko's comments also appeared to offer authoritative support for the apocalyptic images of the Soviet scene proffered by a number of Western commentators who affirmed that the Soviet Union in the late Brezhnev era was experiencing a profound systemic crisis. Western writings about the Soviet system have repeatedly used the term 'crisis' to describe a wide variety of political and social problems, from economic slowdown to deteriorating health care, to nationality tensions. What was new was the suggestion that the structural, cumulative, and seemingly irreversible nature of these problems now made them unmanageable—that, in effect, the Soviet Union faced a 'revolutionary situation' of historic dimensions. This assessment, in turn, has important implications for American policy toward the USSR. If the threat of instability and crisis was, as some argued, conducive to both internal reform and external moderation in Soviet behavior, American interests would be well served by policies which sought to exacerbate rather than alleviate Soviet problems.

The tendency to view Soviet problems in apocalyptic terms has been so

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recurrent a feature of American perceptions of the Soviet scene that we have tended to neglect the very considerable sources of stability of the Soviet system. At the same time, stability should not be confused with rigidity, or lead us to ignore the very genuine pressures for change within the system. In this essay I will focus on the very real social problems with which Chernenko and his successors have been preoccupied and which have become a major focus of Gorbachev's early policy initiatives. I will propose that although the Soviet system confronts a set of major problems at this particular stage of its development—problems as severe and complex as at any point since the death of Stalin in 1953—the danger of destabilization is extremely remote. Indeed, the new Gorbachev leadership has moved very quickly to address these problems, with a sense of urgency and a number of fresh initiatives that constitute a real departure from previous behavior.

The Soviet Union in the Gorbachev era is a country in the midst of a major transition, a transition whose scope and outcome remain uncertain, but one which extends from the composition of its political élite, to key economic institutions and policies, and to the social values and social policies that have contributed so critically to the stability of the Soviet system. Indeed, to fully appreciate the potential impact of Gorbachev's political agenda it is helpful to view it in the broader context of Soviet development in the post-Stalin period.

For the Soviet political élite, as for the Soviet population generally, the post-Stalin years, until the late 1970s, were in many respects a golden era in Soviet history. By the time of Stalin's death a number of fundamental crises had been successfully surmounted, from the traumas of collectivization, of the purges, and of World War II, to the trauma of Stalin's own departure from the political scene in 1953. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev the Soviet Union entered a new stage of its development. It enjoyed a period of growing internal prosperity, a high degree of social and political stability after an epoch of turmoil and insecurity, and a more benign international environment in which it occupied an increasingly secure and powerful place.

Within the Soviet Union itself, the relaxation of terror diminished what had been a major source of alienation from the regime. A combination of rapid economic growth and expanding educational and occupational opportunities strengthened popular support for the Soviet system and made it possible to supplant to some extent the Stalinist reliance on coercion with a more secure and stable social base. Rapid rates of economic growth made it easier for the Soviet political leadership to allocate resources among competing priorities—investment, military power, and consumption—and among rival claimants, whether institutional bureaucracies, geographical and ethnic regions, or social classes. Not only could the leadership meet the population's modest expectations for improved living standards; it could also insure security of employment (and the absence of unemployment), low and



stable prices for basic commodities — from food, to rent, to social services — and a high level of public order.

Moreover, by significantly enhancing the power and status of the Soviet Union in the international arena, the Soviet leadership could also tap strong sentiments of patriotism and pride within the population as a whole. It was therefore in a position to deal rather easily with what could have been significant challenges to its political rule, including an unprecedented level of intelligentsia dissent. Although the dissident movement reached its apex during the period of detente, it was disposed of harshly, but — from the point of view of the leadership — rather successfully.

By the late Brezhnev period, however, this entire picture had changed dramatically. The Soviet leadership confronted an increasingly bleak prospect on both the domestic and the international scene. Four factors played a key role in this transformation.

First and foremost was the growing retardation of the Soviet economy, a retardation which had both a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. Slowing rates of economic growth forced hard choices among military expenditures, investment, and consumption, and adversely affected the ability of the Soviet leadership to provide the steady improvement in living standards that the Soviet population had come to expect. The growth of military spending slowed sharply in the late 1970s, provoking visible strain in Party-Military relations, while the economy was increasingly deprived of the new investment needed to rejuvenate decaying industrial enterprises. Consumer dissatisfaction became especially pronounced and focused on the poor quality as well as the inadequate quantity of desired goods and services. As rising incomes and expectations created a demand for high quality goods and services that far exceeded the supply, a thriving 'second economy' expanded to bridge the gap. At the same time, the food supply — a key element in the population's assessment of regime performance, and therefore an exceedingly delicate political as well as economic issue — was hard hit in the late 1970s and early 1980s by a series of poor harvests. Shortages of meat and dairy products produced widespread discontent and helped trigger a number of strikes and demonstrations, forcing the government to ration selected food products.

Technological backwardness compounded the problems of economic slowdown. Revolutionary developments in communications and other new technologies — such as the computer revolution — left the Soviet Union even further behind. Not only did Japan overtake the USSR in key measures of national income, but the economic dynamism of other Asian countries — from the People's Republic of China to South Korea to Taiwan to Malaysia — dramatized the shortcomings and indeed irrelevance of the once heralded Soviet economic model.

The pressures of external competition were accentuated even further by

the deterioration of Soviet-American relations. The collapse of détente, and the American military build-up launched under Carter and Reagan, rekindled the fear that the United States would once again outstrip the USSR not only militarily but also in new technologies with significant future military potential.

A final source of malaise was the apparent incapacity of the Soviet leadership itself to adequately address these problems. An aging and frequently ailing political élite continued to hold tightly to the reins of power, frustrating the ambitions of a younger and more impatient political generation, while failing to come to grips with what were widely perceived as urgent needs. To make matters worse, corruption and scandal seemed to have penetrated to the very highest levels of the Soviet élite and touched the Politburo itself; only the KGB (Secret Police) and the military appeared untarnished by revelations of abuse of official position.

Taken together, these trends had a corrosive impact on civic morale. The optimism of the Khrushchev era turned to pessimism about the Soviet future, disillusionment with official values, and a mood of cynicism, apathy, and malaise. Khrushchev's boast that by 1980 the Soviet population would enjoy the highest standard of living in the world now seemed hollow mockery, as Chernenko cautioned the drafters of the Party program to eliminate overly confident forecasts as well as excessive use of figures and minor details. While capitalism is doomed by history, he reminded his audience that it still had substantial reserves for development.

Low worker productivity and a high degree of apathy also reflect this mood of social malaise. In a highly publicized dialogue with factory workers Andropov warned that wage increases could not outstrip productivity. But the absence of effective material incentives erodes the motivation of workers to raise output. Moreover, severe shortcomings in the supply of goods and services divert a large share of the population's time and energy from production to procurement. While the growth of the 'second economy' serves as a safety valve in reducing frustration, it also produces an unofficial and uncontrollable redistribution of resources and incomes that distorts central priorities.

The decline in civic morale had three elements. The first was the loss of optimism, the conviction that the system cannot live up to expectations, although there is little conviction that the United States — or other capitalist systems — offer a viable alternative. The second element was the loss of a sense of purpose which accompanied the declining relevance and vitality of official ideology. Recent years have witnessed a widespread quest for alternative sources of values. Heightened interest in religion — evident in church attendance, in the growing use of religious symbolism, and the affirmation of moral and spiritual values — was one manifestation of this trend. It is also expressed in the renewed interest in national traditions and a

general nostalgia for the past, dramatically illustrated by the rapid rise and massive membership of the grassroots Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments. And it takes the form of other kinds of escapism, whether to personal relations, to parapsychology, to science fiction, or even to alcohol. The third element of the decline of civic morale is the erosion of social controls and individual self-discipline, evident in the whole gamut of social pathologies, from alcoholism to corruption, to violations of labor discipline, to theft of state property—in short to the failure to internalize new social norms.

If the system of values that had earlier served as a source of social cohesion no longer served its original function, there were now real constraints on the ability of the leadership to resort to other means of social control. The use of coercion and mass terror on a large scale had been repudiated after Stalin's death. While the KGB remained a potent instrument for dealing with anything that could be construed as anti-regime activity, large areas of individual behavior increasingly fell within the domain of individual choice and outside the orbit of direct regime control.

The labor market offers one dramatic illustration of this trend. Massive movements of population to the southern regions of the country in search of better living conditions and higher incomes flew in the face of central economic priorities, which sought to move scarce labor to Siberia to help develop energy and other natural resources there. Yet another area of social behavior that had become important to the regime, family policy, proved equally resistant to central priorities. During a period in which the Soviet Union was experiencing a declining rate of population growth, particularly among the Russian and Baltic populations, rapid population growth was occurring instead among the largely Moslem populations of labor surplus in Central Asia, and there proved to be no easy way to reverse these trends. In these instances, as in a whole range of areas, the regime lacked the levers to enforce its priorities. Ideological exhortation proved inadequate to mobilize desired behavior; coercion was unavailable or inappropriate to the task, and the reliance on material incentives was sharply constrained by the economic slowdown. Neither higher wages nor enhanced social mobility could be held out as motivations for officially desired behavior.

Thus, the late Brezhnev period was marked by an accumulation of social and economic problems on the one hand, combined with the erosion of traditional instruments for dealing with them, on the other. These difficulties were further compounded by the absence of forceful and imaginative leadership that could break through the considerable bureaucratic inertia that constituted a formidable barrier to real change and elicit the mass enthusiasm and dedication that might halt the erosion of civic morale. In this respect, the Gorbachev succession constitutes a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for change.

Before turning to Gorbachev's strategy for addressing these problems, a few observations deserve to be restated. First, it is not the severity of any of these problems individually that constitutes a critical issue. At a number of points in its history the Soviet Union faced difficulties that were far more threatening to its security and survival: collectivization could have produced the collapse of the Soviet system, and World War II could also have brought its demise. In comparison with these genuine crises, or comparable ones faced by other societies at other points in their histories, current Soviet difficulties are considerably less acute. To the extent that the term 'crisis' is meaningful, it is a crisis of effectiveness rather than of survival.

Moreover, many of these problems are as much a product of Soviet successes as of Soviet failures, reflecting the presence of a new set of requirements associated with a new stage of development. They reflect the exhaustion of institutions and strategies that served well at earlier stages of development but have become a brake on current progress, which requires new forms of economic and social organization. Finally, these problems are also a product of the enormous aspirations of the Soviet system, both domestically and internationally. If the Soviet Union were content to remain a second-rate power, they would not prove nearly so acute. But it is the fact that the Soviet Union seeks to be a major global actor, indeed a superpower, and that it has also stimulated aspirations among its own people to enjoy living standards comparable to those of other advanced industrial societies that puts the system under extreme pressure to improve its performance. It is therefore the gap between current capabilities and ambitions that contributes to the pressures for change.

Gorbachev has brought a new sense of urgency as well as energy to addressing the problems outlined here. He is the beneficiary of unusual opportunities to alter the composition of the political elite, but the beneficiary as well of a widespread yearning for strong and decisive leadership to get the country moving again. Soviet political culture has long attached great value to strong, paternalistic, even authoritarian leadership. From the postwar generation of Soviet refugees to the current wave of emigrés, even among those most critical of the Soviet system, one encounters a pervasive unease with the individualistic, competitive, laissez-faire strains of American political culture and a tendency to view it as dangerously pluralistic and anarchic. For the Soviet population to have faced the death of three leaders in relatively rapid succession left a gnawing sense of anxiety and insecurity which Gorbachev has moved very quickly to eradicate. The accession of a comparatively young and energetic leader under these circumstances fills an important psychological as well as political void; the widespread desire for effectiveness constitutes one of his major political assets.

First and foremost on Gorbachev's political agenda is the need to radically improve the performance of the Soviet economy. This effort requires a

combination of structural and policy changes which will increase both the incentives for successful performance and the penalties for failure. Such changes are likely to entail a further diminution of economic and social equality. For enterprise management it requires greater autonomy and greater accountability, and a restructuring of the larger economic bureaucracy. But serious economic reforms would have their most dramatic impact on the Soviet working class, not only by increasing wage differentials but by making job security dependent on work performance. A move in this direction would *challenge a long-standing set of expectations that constitute* at one and the same time a tremendous drag on economic efficiency and a major contribution to social stability. They are necessary to a revitalization of the economy, but they strike at one of the most basic guarantees of the Soviet system. While the scarcity of labor makes the specter of actual unemployment an unlikely one, serious economic reforms have a certain potential for social destabilization.

Similarly, measures to allow greater scope for private initiative in agriculture and the service sector also challenge deeply rooted values, which hold private economic activity to be virtually antisocial. Soviet publications are filled with lively controversy over whether it subverts the socialist economy and the values associated with it. This ongoing debate has been given added intensity by current efforts at economic reform in the People's Republic of China, which are followed with considerable but critical interest in the Soviet press.

But the initiatives on which I should like to focus attention are precisely those that seek to address the problems of social malaise. Gorbachev's speeches have insisted on the urgency of the issues, virtually accusing Brezhnev and Chernenko of inertia and ineffective half-measures in addressing internal difficulties. The first requisite of successfully attacking such problems, Gorbachev appears to be arguing, is to face them openly: through more frank discussions in the media, closer contact between the leadership and the population, and more effective use of public opinion surveys to ascertain popular attitudes and expectations. As is suggested by the unusually extensive Soviet media coverage of Gorbachev's press conference in Paris or of President Reagan's interview with Soviet reporters, Gorbachev's strategy is one of preemption as well; the suppression of information and the failure to address problems openly has not only contributed to domestic alienation but has created opportunities that can be exploited by foreign propaganda.

This broader strategy for dealing with internal problems has been accompanied by new policy departures in several specific areas. First and foremost is the massive campaign against alcoholism. A number of measures to combat excessive alcohol consumption, with its devastating impact on health and labor productivity, were initiated by Gorbachev's predecessors,

but these were timid and piecemeal efforts by comparison with the scope and comprehensiveness of current measures. This campaign is intended not only to reduce the overall level of consumption of strong spirits, but to challenge the ubiquitous reliance on vodka to smooth business dealings, especially within the State, Party, and diplomatic élites. More fundamentally still, it represents an effort to alter the permissive climate of values, which offers social support to heavy drinking. The objective may not be wholly dissimilar to that achieved by the campaign against smoking in this country in recent years: a modest shift in values that offers increased social support to non-smokers in public settings.

Combined with the campaign against alcoholism is a massive attack on corruption. While this assault has its political utility during a succession in helping eliminate potential opponents and competitors, it is primarily intended as a signal that the period of drift, of anarchy, and of tolerance for the use of public office for personal enrichment is at an end. Joined as it is to a campaign for greater labor discipline, it serves to reassure Soviet workers that they are not to be the sole targets of a more demanding leadership, and that similarly exacting performance will be expected of élites.

A final but also significant element of Gorbachev's strategy for dealing with social malaise is the effort to bring expectations into closer line with real possibilities. The new Party program is one example of this effort: by placing the achievement of socialism, as well as of full communism, into a very distant future, and eliminating the more ambitious and utopian features of Khrushchev's 1961 program, the leadership is seeking to focus on a more limited and feasible set of objectives. Similarly, the new educational reforms, in which Gorbachev played a key role, seek to scale down excessive popular aspirations for upward social mobility. By shifting the focus of secondary training from academic to vocational pursuits, and making it clear that the performance of good blue-collar work is a worthy objective in life, the reforms are intended to reduce the widespread sense of frustration and alienation among young people whose aspirations for higher education and satisfying professional careers cannot be satisfied.

It remains unclear how the Gorbachev leadership will motivate the Soviet population to achieve the goals of rapid scientific and technical progress and increased labor productivity. While the new Five-Year Plan promises significant increases in consumer goods and services, it remains to be seen whether the combination of authoritarianism, pragmatism, and energetic leadership will suffice in addressing the problems of civic morale bequeathed by Gorbachev's predecessors.

## The Soviet Nationality Question

The management of relations among its diverse national groups is a major challenge for the Soviet system. As events of recent years have made clear, the Soviet Union is not immune to what is essentially a world-wide phenomenon: an upsurge of ethnic and national consciousness. From the Baltic States to Soviet Central Asia, the Soviet system faces competing claims to resources, power, and status.

That rising ethno-nationalism is one of the most serious problems facing the Soviet Union today is a view widely shared by specialists on the Soviet Union. Indeed, some would go so far as to assert that it is the single most serious problem confronting the system in the years ahead, and a few would argue that it is likely to prove unmanageable over the long run. Such eminent specialists as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Richard Pipes, for example, have predicted that the Soviet Union could well fragment along the lines of its national republics, and some have suggested that this could actually happen within the next twenty years.

The Soviet leadership would not share that judgement. They nonetheless clearly recognize that the management of 'national relations' is one of the most important as well as one of the most delicate problems on their political agenda, with profound implications for the long-term stability and legitimacy of the Soviet system.

To assess properly the nature of this problem and its likely impact on the Soviet future, it is important to bring a historical and comparative perspective to the Soviet scene. We need to explore the conditions under which national grievances or national tensions are mobilized into politically salient movements and the extent to which such conditions are present, or potentially present, in the Soviet Union today. This broader question in turn suggests three topics on which I would like to focus. First, what have been the main features of the Soviet strategy for managing a multinational empire and how successful has that strategy been? Second, what are the major tensions and problems that Soviet policymakers are now obliged to address? Finally, how likely is the Soviet system to manage these problems, and what impact are they likely to have on the long-term legitimacy and viability of the Soviet system?

Let me begin by stating that the Soviet Union is one of the most complex multinational states in the world today, comprising over one hundred different nations and nationalities, of which twenty have a population of over one million. It is also one in which geography is a critical factor. Western journalistic writings all too often use the terms 'Russia' and 'the Soviet Union' interchangeably, when, in fact, they are quite distinct. A Russian heartland, which extends from the western part of the Soviet Union all the way across Siberia to the Pacific Ocean, is surrounded by a number of non-Russian republics that form a large part of the Soviet Union's external borders. From the Baltic States, with their proximity to Scandinavia and Poland, to the Ukraine, which borders on Eastern Europe, down to the Transcaucasus and Soviet Central Asia, along the borders of Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Middle East, the non-Russian republics form a rather vulnerable and insecure periphery. They represent in effect both a barrier and a buffer to outside influences and, conceivably to outside armies that might seek to penetrate the Russian heartland.

The composition of the Soviet population also distinguishes it from the many other multinational systems in which two major groups dominate the political arena. Russians, with 52 per cent of the total population, constitute a very slight majority. If you add to this figure the two other Slavic nationalities—the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians—you account for roughly 75 per cent of the Soviet population. The remaining quarter includes the largely Muslim Central Asian populations, the Georgians and Armenians, and the three Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which taken together comprise only a tiny part of the Soviet population.

All too often accounts of Soviet nationality problems conjure up images of a struggle between the Russians and the non-Russians, two large and cohesive groups pitted against each other. It is important to bear in mind that the non-Russian nationalities are themselves extremely diverse. They encompass all conceivable levels of socio-economic development, from the highly industrialized and very Westernized parts of the Baltic to the largely agricultural, rural, and comparatively underdeveloped regions of Central Asia. This diversity of socio-economic development is accompanied by a diversity of cultures, of languages, and of religious traditions. For example, Russian Orthodoxy retains some vitality in the Russian Republic; Roman Catholicism plays a significant role in Lithuania; and Islamic practices remain widespread in Soviet Central Asia.

Diversity is evident, finally, in patterns of historical relationships to Russia. For some nationalities, Russia has traditionally been a protector against other enemies, as in the case of the Armenians against the Turks. For others it is Russia itself that is the traditional threat. Far from being a cohesive and anti-Russian force, the non-Russian populations are fragmented and often at odds.



How then, we may ask, has the Soviet system managed this enormously complex set of relationships over the years? It was Lenin himself who in the early years of the Soviet regime elaborated a strategy for dealing with the nationality problem, a strategy whose essential features have not changed since then. In 1917 Lenin faced the shattered legacy of the Russian Empire. In the chaos and disorganization of World War I, many of the nationalities that had been incorporated into the empire under the tsars had seized the opportunity to secede and form independent states. As a socialist, Lenin genuinely believed that nations and nationalism were but transitional phenomena in human history and that a classless society would also be one without national antagonisms. As a political strategist, however, Lenin sought to use powerful sentiments on behalf of the revolutionary cause.

What Lenin and Stalin succeeded in doing was to reconstitute that old Russian Empire, to draw those nations back, forcibly if necessary, into the fabric of the new Soviet state. But they did so by creating, in effect, a nominal federal system in which a high degree of economic and political centralization, exercised through a unitary party, was combined with limited local (and largely cultural) autonomy for the major national groups, which were organized as republics.

Imagine how the United States might look if it were organized as the Soviet Union is. Imagine, if you will, a federal system in which the major political and administrative boundaries are also ethnic boundaries. The state of California might then well be a Chicano state; New York, a Jewish state; Illinois, a Polish state; Alabama, a black state. Imagine too, that instead of being largely composed of immigrant communities dispersed throughout the country, each of these states represented an historic national homeland in which that dominant nationality or ethnic group had lived for many centuries.

Paradoxically, by opting for this approach, the founders of the Soviet state created, in effect, a series of mini nation-states. Because the political and administrative boundaries of the Soviet republics coincided, by and large, with ethnic boundaries, the two tended to reinforce each other, providing a framework for asserting the interests and demands of the particular ethnic groups.

The Soviet leadership has, by and large, managed the nationality problem through a combination of rapid modernization, coercion, and political co-optation. First, Stalin largely destroyed the traditional élites of the non-Russian regions as well as the traditional bases of their social, economic, and political power; he used economic development to bring into being from within those minority nationalities new élites loyal to the Soviet system and with a stake in Soviet rule. The more coercive aspects of Soviet nationality policy have diminished in recent years but are still evoked against any national leaders or groups with aspirations to secession or greater autonomy.

The result of this entire strategy, which differs in some very important respects from that of classical colonial systems, has been to build a fundamental tension into Soviet nationality policy. On the one hand, nations and nationalities are recognized as fundamental social units—in contrast with the United States, where citizenship is the fundamental category and ethnicity is largely self-ascribed. For example, in the passport that every Soviet citizen is obliged to carry, his or her nationality is specifically inscribed, either as given by birth or, in the case of children of mixed marriages, selected at age eighteen from the two—the nationalities of the mother and father.

Because national identity is recognized as a fundamental fact of political organization, Soviet policy has also resulted to some degree in the development of national languages, educations, and cultures. Those who have travelled in the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union—Armenia, for example—will no doubt remember that primary and secondary schools are conducted in Armenian, the street signs are written in Armenian, Armenian language newspapers exist alongside Russian ones, and radio and television programs are broadcast in Armenian as well as Russian. In short, the republics provide a framework for the assertion and protection of group identity, interests, and values.

At the same time, this pluralist aspect of Soviet nationality policy is in fundamental tension with the centralizing and Russifying impulse. Russians form the core population of the USSR, concentrated not only in the Russian Republic but also in the key cities of the non-Russian republics; Russian is the language of communication among republics and its study is compulsory. These facts tend to give Russian culture a pre-eminent place.

Moreover, although élites of the local nationality play a visible and important role in governing their own republics, at the center of the Soviet system the key élites—Party, military, economic—tend to be Russian or Slavic.

The tension between the multinational and pluralist aspects of Soviet policy and its centralizing and assimilationist thrust is also reflected in Soviet ideology, which combines a commitment to the 'flowering' of national cultures with the conviction that a process of convergence and rapprochement will result in a society in which national antagonisms and differences will disappear.

The central problem in Soviet nationality policy is to maintain the delicate balance between these two elements: to assure the continued dominance of the Russian majority and of its values, language, and cultural heritage, and at the same time to reduce the alienation of non-Russian nationalities, many of whom suffered oppression and discrimination under tsarist rule, and to guarantee that they will be equal, valued, and respected members of a Soviet multinational community.

In practice, Soviet policy has fluctuated between these impulses. But even the most skillful leadership confronts a constant tug of war over the broad thrust of that policy. This tug of war is visible across a whole range of very practical issues. To take one example, there is the problem of managing a federal system. Centralizing and unifying pressures coming from Moscow conflict with the desire of republics to adapt central policies to local conditions and needs, or to maintain and assert their own autonomy. The question of whether this federal system represents a temporary, tactical compromise on the path to a unitary system, or whether Lenin intended it to be a long-term and permanent solution, is still a subject of debate. For example, in the discussions surrounding the new constitution of 1977, proposals to abolish the national republics were reported to have been rejected.

A second tug of war involves resource allocation as the different republics and regions of the Soviet Union compete over the division of the national economic pie. The less developed republics remind the leadership of its commitment to social and economic equalization and request greater resources for development, particularly in view of their surplus labor—the result of rapid population growth.

The more developed republics complain that they make a disproportionate contribution to national wealth and receive less in return than others. They argue that in view of their highly skilled manpower, developed infrastructure, low transportation costs, and proximity to Europe, the high returns on investment in their region warrant a larger share.

Although lobbying is not the highly organized activity in Moscow that it is in Washington, the process of central economic planning involves enormous tugging and bargaining behind the scenes. A Siberian 'lobby', for example, points to its vast resources of untapped mineral wealth, oil, gas, and other natural resources, as well as its strategic location, to support its claim to a larger investment in building up the economy of that region.

Nationality issues also come very much to the forefront with regard to demographic trends. The Soviet leadership would clearly welcome more rapid population growth to alleviate manpower shortages, to promote economic growth, and perhaps to increase its pool of military manpower. It would especially like to encourage larger families among the Russian population of the Soviet Union and to reduce family size among the Muslim populations of Soviet Central Asia. This is obviously so sensitive an issue that to argue it openly is difficult, but some Central Asian demographers have in effect suggested that a differential population policy is inherently discriminatory.

Yet another source of tension between various national groups stems from competition over upward mobility and the access to higher education and desirable jobs on which it depends. In the larger cities of a republic like

Uzbekistan, to take one example, there are very substantial Russian settler communities, many of them going back to the nineteenth century, when Russian colonists moved in to develop these outlying areas. For decades they constituted a political, economic, and managerial élite — and an instrument of central control over the republics. At the same time, economic development and the expansion of educational opportunities created in Uzbekistan, as in other republics, a very substantial indigenous élite, which by now has relatively high educational qualifications and wants to see its own children occupy these positions.

Competing claims to educational and occupational preferment occasionally find expression in arguments over whether native nationalities should receive preferential treatment in access to schools and jobs. Similar issues are at stake in language policy. The question of whether Uzbek or Russian will be used in the state and Party bureaucracy, in research institutes, and in journals, has direct implications for the career choices and life chances of young people of different nationalities. Conflict over the language in which television programs will be broadcast, books published, classes taught, and theatrical productions performed is another aspect of the struggle among competing national elites to shape their futures. During an earlier period of rapid economic development, ample opportunities for upward mobility minimized the areas of potential ethnic conflict.

As economic growth slows, as social development stabilizes, and as the whole system of social stratification crystallizes and hardens and competition becomes sharper, frustration over disappointed expectations can easily fuse with national antagonisms. Thus what may appear to be symbolic issues, involving the status of one's national language, culture, and history are in fact issues that affect careers and material interests as well.

Finally, the nationality problem also affects the interaction of domestic and foreign policy. Here the case of Central Asia is especially interesting. Beginning in the Khrushchev period, the Soviets have made a very deliberate effort, as part of their overtures to the Third World, to present the Soviet Union as a model for the successful development of backward societies emerging from the struggle for national liberation against colonial oppression. They have sought to portray Central Asia as an example of what other Third World countries might accomplish by turning to a socialist path: a once backward, underdeveloped, illiterate, and impoverished region is now endowed with a modern industrial sector, a developed social infrastructure, high rates of literacy, and visible cultural achievement. Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, figures prominently as a showcase and meeting place in Soviet political and cultural diplomacy in the Third World and in Soviet relations with Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

This effort has double-edged consequences: it gives Central Asia growing importance and visibility in the Soviet system and Central Asians a broader

role in diplomatic, technical, and cultural exchanges. Increased visibility in turn provokes wider claims for constructing conference centers or refurbishing historical monuments. It also has the effect of opening Central Asia to foreign influences to a greater degree, much as the process of *détente* somewhat reduced the insulation of Moscow from the West. Thus the effort to project Soviet influence into the Third World also makes the Soviet Union, and this region in particular, more vulnerable to external influences.

The scope and nature of this vulnerability is a major question, especially with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran and the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. However, the argument that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was intended to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism across Soviet borders has a serious flaw: it would argue more for an effort to seal that border and reduce the level of interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan. By sending not only troops but large numbers of advisors to Afghanistan to rebuild its governmental and security apparatus, reorganize its economy, and transform its school system, the Soviet leadership is demonstrating a confidence in the long-term transformation of Afghanistan rather than a fear of contagion. The invasion of Afghanistan was the outcome of a whole sequence of policy decisions in which concern about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism need not be assumed to have played a central role. Moreover, there is little evidence of any serious spillover of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran and Afghanistan to Central Asia, and good reason to believe that the political, economic, and social environment of the region is extremely inhospitable to its development. This is not to suggest that the Soviet leadership has no reason for concern; indeed, it will typically over-insure itself against any conceivable threat and combat any potentially subversive influence.

While much of the discussion of Soviet nationality problems focuses on the rising national consciousness of the non-Russian groups within the Soviet Union and their efforts to claim a greater share of power and resources, it is also important to bear in mind that rising Russian nationalism is part of this overall picture. The claims or grievances of Uzbeks or Armenians or Estonians have provoked a defensive reaction on the part of Russians themselves. We are seeing the emergence of what might be described as a Russian nationalist political sentiment — opposed to the massive transfer of resources from the Russian heartland to the outlying republics, anxious about current demographic trends, eager for policies which will encourage high birth rates in the Russian territories, critical of affirmative action on behalf of other nationalities, perceiving Russians to be the victims of discrimination, and concerned with the preservation of Russian historical and national traditions in the face of rapid modernization. A growing body of literature laments the wanton destruction of the Russian natural environment, as well as of its historical and cultural environment — from Lake Baikal to lovely old

churches, in a spectrum of opinions ranging from the desire for a cultural renaissance to an extreme and even xenophobic political nationalism.

Looking ahead, then, to the long-term implications of these problems, what are the prospects that this rising national consciousness and self-assertiveness is likely to lead to serious cleavages, potential secessionist movements, and, indeed, to the possible disintegration of the Soviet system? I would suggest that the trends I have been discussing create genuine and important problems of political management. They will require bargaining within the system and continuing readjustments in traditional institutions and policies, but, given skillful political leadership, these problems are not intrinsically unmanageable. They can be addressed in a variety of ways short of the breakup of the Soviet system itself.

Several factors contribute to making the problems relatively manageable. First of all, there are many obstacles to the emergence of nationalist political movements within the Soviet Union, just as there are to the organization of any spontaneous, unofficial movements within the Soviet system. Efforts to organize a dissident movement, a feminist movement, a workers' movement, a peace movement, have all been shattered.

Not only does the Soviet regime have exceptionally powerful mechanisms of coercion available to it; it is also in a position to proffer carrots as well as sticks. The élites of the national republics have considerable incentive to work within the system rather than to oppose it, to exploit it for individual or group advantage rather than to challenge it.

Finally, the very complexity and fragmentation of the Soviet multinational population enables the central leadership to exploit tensions and antagonisms to maintain control. For example, when Georgian elites were protesting constitutional changes that would affect the status of the Georgian language, the Abkhazian minority within Georgia appealed to Moscow for support in protecting their own national rights vis-à-vis the Georgians — a reminder of the limits of national self-assertion.

In conclusion, while there are conceivable circumstances under which various social forces, including national groups, could become increasingly politicized and could pose a serious threat to the stability of the Soviet system, such a prospect is highly unlikely in the near and medium term. Clearly, the political salience of national self-assertiveness is growing and is likely to impinge on the management of central problems, from the composition of the Central Committee and Politburo, to decisions about economic reform, to issues of foreign policy. The nationality problem creates complex challenges for the Soviet system and the new Soviet leadership, but it is unlikely to disrupt the stability of the Soviet system.

## The Vicissitudes of the totalitarian model: South African conceptions of the Soviet system

### Introduction

People who write about misconceptions of the Soviet Union usually have an axe to grind. Two prime examples of this immediately spring to mind. The first is the well known *Foreign Affairs* article by Alexander Solzhenitsyn 'Misconceptions about Russia are a threat to America'.<sup>1</sup> With barely hidden anger, Solzhenitsyn takes to task all those who simply equate the USSR with Russia; Soviet communism with Russian culture; and Soviet expansionism with Russian national fervour. In a very personal metaphor, he in turn depicts communism as a cancer afflicting the body of Russia with dire consequences, yet emphasizes that as an illness, communism cannot be equated with the body carrying it. Behind the use of this metaphor, lies Solzhenitsyn's desire to portray Russian (spiritual) culture as the panacea for materialism in both its Eastern and Western versions.

The second example is to be found in Alexander Zinoviev's (another Soviet emigré), interview with George Urban in *Encounter*.<sup>2</sup> With a curious blend of parochialism, which ironically contradicts Solzhenitsyn and methodological naïveté, Zinoviev claims that only a Russian like himself can really understand the Soviet Union, and that all 'Western' attempts fail to do so because of an unbridgeable interpretive gap. Secondly, he claims that given enough manpower and the use of a sophisticated enough computer, he can develop a comprehensive model of the Soviet Union which in all detail will be able to predict future Soviet behaviour.

These two examples, albeit extreme ones, illustrate two dangers in writing about misconceptions of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, such writing may become, as in the case of Solzhenitsyn, a means of promoting certain policy lines such as the termination of all ties with the USSR, as Solzhenitsyn actually proposes. Although it will become clear that all perceptions and concepts have policy implications, which should be made explicit, it seems dubious and devious to trick your readers into accepting your proposed policies simply by pronouncing *ex cathedra* all other concepts

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to be wrong and yours to be the only one valid. Secondly, and closely tied to the first, it seems dangerous to maintain as Zinoviev does explicitly and Solzhenitsyn implicitly, that there is something like a privileged access to understanding a specific society. Apart from the stultifying effect this has on policy, which by nature should be flexible and adaptable, it is also intellectually untenable. Human society as the repository of human action is equally multifaceted and pluriform as any literary text, because its meaning, through unforeseen consequences, always escapes the intentions of its actors (authors) no matter how systematized and dogmatized these may be. Consequently, any society will take on differing meanings for different commentators in different contexts.<sup>3</sup> A single perspective can therefore never claim exclusive validity, no matter how sophisticated its methodology or how well informed its propounders are. To paraphrase the title of Daniel Bell's well known article somewhat: it is not ten theories that search for reality, but reality itself that generates ten theories.<sup>4</sup>

That does not imply, however, that all models, respectively all concepts, are of equal value. If careful attention is paid to the facts of the matter, certain concepts can be said to be more applicable than others. At the same time care should be taken not to disregard other less favoured concepts out of hand, because they may be able to tell us something about a specific society which no other can do.

These points are well illustrated by the first section of this article. In this section different models of Soviet society are discussed, namely the totalitarian, pluralist and corporatist models. There are also other grand models of Soviet society which should be listed in any comprehensive survey. Yet my limited purpose is to argue that, despite the applicability of the totalitarian model for certain purposes, South African commentators have perhaps, by default more than by intent, considered it to the exclusion of all others. The consequences of this oversight are both an intellectually unsatisfactory picture of changing Soviet reality, and an undue narrowing of policy options in dealing with the Soviet threat in Southern Africa. The latter point is taken up in the second section of this article, in which it is argued that there is important evidence of conflicting views in the Soviet establishment on the Third World, and the policy to be adopted towards it. The interest of some Soviet leaders in settlement of regional conflicts, Southern Africa included, is also stressed, although others still see them as simple military problems. A scaling down of the totalitarian model may expedite identification of these opposing points of view, and the formulation of counter-policies to exploit these for specific purposes.

In all, care has been taken not to create the impression that a claim to privileged access is made by the author. The intention is simply to open up perspectives in the study of Soviet society and behaviour which the nascent discipline of Soviet Studies in South Africa can ignore only at its own peril.



Finally, the author has no axe to grind with official South African perceptions of and policies on the Soviet Union. It is hoped, however, that the article may contribute somewhat to a more nuanced and sophisticated official line on the USSR.

### **I. Between totalitarianism and pluralism.**

Since Daniel Bell's seminal article appeared in 1958,<sup>4</sup> it has become tenuous to speak of one dominating Western perception of the socio-political system in the USSR. Bell identified ten approaches — albeit with different levels of sophistication — that could then be said to apply in the developing Western field of Soviet studies. As will be suggested later, this list could already be extended to include the recent literature on the pluralist and corporatist approaches to the Soviet system.

Yet, despite the abundance of these general perceptions, and the vigorous debate on their applicability, one in particular seems to dominate academic, public and official statements on the Soviet Union in South Africa. According to this perception, the Soviet Union can best be described as a *totalitarian system*. Although the term 'totalitarianism' originated in the self-legitimizing literature of the fascists in Italy,<sup>5</sup> it gained academic currency only in the 1950s when Carl J. Friedrich proposed to use the term as a generalization for the common salient features of the pre-war fascist regime in Italy, national socialism in Germany, and the Soviet system as it crystallized under Stalin's leadership. Initially, Friedrich identified five<sup>6</sup> such salient features but later, in a book jointly authored with Z. Brzezinski, added a sixth.<sup>7</sup> Paraphrasing somewhat, these features can be said to imply:

- adherence to an official, dogmatized ideology which purports to delineate the perfect final state of mankind;
- tolerance of only one mass political party, usually under a single leader and organically intertwined with the state bureaucracy;
- the exercising of centralized technocratic control over a military-industrial complex and all other security services;
- a near-complete monopoly similarly exercised over the means of mass communication;
- a system of physical and psychological police control to eliminate all dissent;
- central control and direction of the entire economy.

By 1969, after heated exchanges on the initial scheme, Friedrich had qualified two of these features.<sup>8</sup> First, he added that in totalitarian systems *all* institutions, not only the military, security and mass media, but also the economic, social and cultural groups and institutions, have to function under the State/Party's technocratic control. Secondly, he conceded that this monopoly control does not necessarily have to be exercised by a party *in toto*, but can be in the hands of whatever élite group constitutes the

particular regime. The implication is that in the case of the Soviet Union an élite within the party, and not the party as such, may be the locus of authority.

There is no doubt that Friedrich and his followers in delineating the above succinctly expressed the main features of the Soviet society under Stalin's rule. Stalin did turn Marxism-Leninism into an official state dogma; he emerged as the sole source of final control in Soviet society, and extended his control over all forms of Soviet life through systematic terror; and finally, in the late 1920s, established a firm central control over almost the entire economic sector. It is important to note, however, that precisely because the concept of totalitarianism so perfectly fitted Stalinism, it quickly lost the academic, more disinterested interpretation intended by Friedrich. In the context of the Cold War this concept became the rallying point for the expression of moral indignation about the excesses of Stalin's rule, as well as for Western ideologues who wished to defend the moral superiority of Western, presumably democratic, societies vis-à-vis those of the USSR and similarly organised societies in Eastern Europe and Cuba. 'Totalitarian' thus became a pejorative term above all else. It is with this pejorative connotation in mind that someone like President Reagan still refers to the USSR as a totalitarian society.

Partly in reaction to this political colonialization of the concept, numerous authors developed reservations about it. In reflecting on the usefulness of the term, a number of other important reservations were also aired. Firstly, it was argued that the concept did not really delineate a clearcut distinction between so-called democracies and the authoritarian structures in totalitarian societies. Quite a number of the features of totalitarian regimes were said to be present in presumed democratic systems,<sup>9</sup> for instance: the De Gaulle version of French democracy. In addition, the concept as developed by Friedrich, could not really help in a comparative study of different communist systems, eg a comparison between the system of Rumania and Hungary or for that matter a comparison between pre-1968 and post-1968 Czechoslovakia. Secondly, the totalitarian model proved inadequate to explain why, despite its monolithic appearance, Soviet-type systems did change with time, and sometimes significantly at that. This inability stemmed from the fact that the totalitarian model did not address the question of the policy *process*, but rather focused on the question of *power* and its sources. Thirdly, and most importantly, by 1966 it had become clear that significant changes in the distribution of power had taken place in the USSR since Khrushchev delivered his scathing attack on Stalinism at the 20th Party Congress in 1956. Not only had the 'role of the leader' taken on an altogether different hue, evidence was emerging that different sub-groups in the party, bureaucratic interest groups and issue-orientated coalitions made considerable inputs into the decision-making process, although final

decision-making power was believed to be still firmly in the hands of the party-apparatus.

Consequently, in his trail-blazing 1966 article,<sup>10</sup> Gordon Skilling argued that these trends have necessitated a group approach in comparative studies of policy formulation in Soviet-type societies. His cue was taken up with considerable vigour and culminated in the publication of the, yet to be surpassed, standard work on interest groups in Soviet politics. The essential point which this new approach wanted to emphasize, as one of the contributors to the latter work stated, was that:

... there can be no doubt that communist society, in spite of its monolithic appearance and the claims of homogeneity made by its supporters, is in fact as complex and stratified as any other, and is divided into social classes and into other categories distinguished by factors such as nationality or religion. Each group has its own values and interests, and each its sharp internal differences, and all are inescapably involved in conflict with other groups.<sup>11</sup>

This alternative approach soon caught up with the changing mood in East-West relations brought about by detente. More and more discerning scholars recognised familiar features behind the monolithic facade of Soviet society. Publications from this period paid increasing attention to signs of intra-bureaucratic controversies and contrasting alliances, ranging from debates in the Soviet academic community about developments in the Third World to regional and national representation in the higher party hierarchy and resulting patron-client *Seilschaften*.<sup>12</sup>

As this approach became the new paradigm in Soviet studies, the search was on for a new conceptual model to replace the limited totalitarian one. Two candidates suggested themselves as possible successors: *pluralism* initially, and later on *corporatism*.

Taking its cue from pluralist American studies in the 1950s and 1960s, which highlighted the role of interest groups in policy formulation, scholars sought for similar societal and institutional groups in the USSR apart from the party apparatus which had a significant impact on policy formulation. Although valuable insights of the kind already mentioned were gained, it soon became clear that in the case of the Soviet Union, the plurality of groups differed in one important respect from interest groups in plural democracies. Soviet interest groups, although in some cases—like doctors in the formulation of health policy—do have considerable autonomy and represent a flow of power from the bottom up, in most cases receive their authority by means of a special client-patron relationship with the centre of power, the party apparatus. Classical pluralist theory was deemed to be inappropriate for dealing with this crucial relationship, and authors like Jerry Hough, who at one stage had still preferred to use pluralist concepts, qualified the pluralist model by talking about 'institutional' or 'bureaucratic pluralism' in the case of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

As Archie Brown has pointed out, this tended to stretch the concept of pluralism to the point where the specific merits of its use became obscured by the different qualifications and ad hoc explanations necessitated by its limited applicability.<sup>14</sup> More important however, the pluralist model was unable to deal with the major focus and advantage of the totalitarian model, namely the centralization of power in all major respects in the Soviet Union.

Some authors, consequently, turned towards a concept which was originally developed in the study of authoritarian-cum-democratic societies in Latin America, namely *corporatism*. The advantage of this concept is that it takes up a middle position between the totalitarian and pluralist models, and has proved able to synthesize the best from both opposing models.

On the one hand corporatism makes provision for the existence of interest groups, institutional or otherwise, and acknowledges that these groups make important inputs into the policy process. On the other, these groups are not accorded autonomy but are said to receive their *raison d'être* and (limited) authority exclusively from the centre of power, whether it be the state in the case of Latin America, or the party apparatus in the case of the Soviet Union.

Philippe Schmitter, one of the leading corporatist theoreticians, has supplied the most often-cited definition of corporatism. It is, he writes:

a system of interest intermediation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered, and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.<sup>15</sup>

To make provision for what he calls *Leninist monism* in the case of the Soviet Union, Schmitter complemented his initial definition in such a way that the Soviet system of interest intermediation is said to be one:

in which the constituent units are organized into a fixed number of singular, ideologically selective, non-competitive, functionally differentiated and hierarchically ordered categories, created, subsidized and licensed by a single party and granted a representation role within that part and vis-à-vis the state in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders, articulation of demands and mobilization of support.<sup>16</sup>

In addition he contrasts both corporatism in general and the special case of Soviet monistic corporatism with a pluralist body politic which he defines as:

a system of interest intermediation in which the constituent units are organized into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, nonhierarchically ordered, and self-determined (as to type or scope of interest) categories that are not specifically licensed, recognized, subsidized, created, or otherwise controlled in leadership selection or interest articulation by the state and that do not exercise a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories.<sup>17</sup>

The corporatist model has found some useful application. Yet, a number of conceptual problems in Schmitter's definition have made Sovietologists hesitant to accept the model *in toto*. Firstly, it has been argued that the corporatist stipulation that licensed groups have to observe certain controls on their selection of leaders, underplays the total *nomenklatura* (the Soviet citizen's own term for the governing élite) control of the central power, the Party, over the appointment of 'leaders'.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, evidence exists that far from being 'non-competitive' some of the institutional groups do become involved in competition with each other, not only on the verbal level but also in terms of cultivating patron relationships with the powers that be. One example is the acrimonious debate in the early Sixties between the Institute of the Peoples of Asia (INA) and the Institute for World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) about the revolutionary potential of national bourgeois leaders in the developing world, IMEMO being the academic institution through which Khrushchev's adventures in the Third World were justified. INA, on the other hand, courted the support of Suslov and Ponomarev who were both vigorously opposed to Khrushchev's indiscriminate support of 'merc bourgeois' regimes in the UAR and Ghana, for instance.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these definitional reservations, corporatism is an approach which merits continued attention, because it makes it possible to synthesize the totalitarian model's emphasis on centralized power with the group approach highlighted by the pluralist model.

## II. Moving away from the totalitarian model

It is not the purpose here to supply an adequate evaluation of the contending paradigmatic models available to the student of the Soviet system. What I would like to do is to point out that the above discussion about the complexities of the Soviet system has almost totally escaped the attention of both decision-makers and the academic community in South Africa. Academic study of the Soviet Union in South Africa is a grossly neglected field and one therefore has high appreciation for the two or three scholars who in the past have, with the limited resources available, tried to write intelligently on Soviet policies and practice. One such scholar is Dr Jan du Plessis, who in his doctoral dissertation focused on the relationship between ideology and political practice within the CPSU, and did make a valuable contribution to developing an interest in Soviet studies in South Africa.<sup>20</sup> Another was Prof. D.J. Kotzé, who in his studies on the Soviet attitude towards the question of nationalism and his studies on communism in general, developed a basically sound historical perspective on certain debates within Soviet communism.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, despite these advances, their writings fall squarely within the ambit of the totalitarian model, with its emphasis on the monolithic character of Soviet

society and the central role of ideology. This model seems to underlie the majority of writings by South Africans on Soviet policy in Africa.<sup>22</sup> Despite the merits of these otherwise to be recommended studies, no attention is given in them to the evidence of different institutional groupings in the Soviet system and their varied inputs into the policy process. By default, more than by intent, these studies reflect a commitment to the totalitarian model in which policy is seen as the direct outcome of a monolithic process through which the maximizing of goals within certain restraints are sought.<sup>23</sup>

It must of course be added that the identification of different institutional actors and competing issue-oriented alliances in the Soviet apparatus dealing with Africa, is a difficult task. Given the fact that Africa has a relatively low position on the priority-listing of the top leadership, it is justifiable to expect that medium to low level decision-makers are involved in formulating, coordinating and implementing Soviet policy. In addition it can hardly be expected that these decision-makers would place their political lives at stake for a relatively minor issue in the grand scheme of concerns for the present Soviet leadership. Consequently, no sharply identified battles are as yet fought over aims, priorities and strategy in Soviet policies towards Africa. Finally, research has shown that the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, under the leadership of Ponomarev, Ulyanovsky, Brutents and Manchka, for a long time probably had a near monopoly on at least the input-side of the Soviet policy process as far as Africa is concerned.<sup>24</sup> Yet, lately it has become evident that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is taking on a much more direct role in managing Soviet-Southern African relations.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, it must be added that a close reading of Soviet sources indicate significant points of differences on a whole range of subjects. Two examples will suffice. Firstly, not all Soviet authors accept that Africa can simply be divided into *socialist-orientated* and *capitalist-orientated* states. Although this seems to be the line drawn by the ideologues Gromyko and Starushenko of the Africa Institute,<sup>26</sup> Peter Manchka of the International Department pleads for a more discerning division which makes provision for a large group of states *not yet* committed to one or the other orientation.<sup>27</sup> In terms of policies, he is actually suggesting that the Soviet Union should not ideologically exclude African states from its 'programme of relations' simply because they are not yet socialist-orientated, but should actually develop ties with them lest they over time succumb to the seduction of imperialism. This is probably what Chirkin and Yudin had in mind when they wrote:

All this shows that states currently following the capitalist road or those which have not yet determined their path of development (this group includes in the main some countries of Tropical Africa with a still underdeveloped social structure) are a potential reserve in the fight for social progress.<sup>28</sup>

In Southern Africa, the Soviet Union seems to follow exactly such a less

ideological course of action, viz. the establishment of party ties with Zambia and commercial ties with Zaïre.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, some Soviet authors<sup>30</sup> draw a clear line of distinction between two different types of capitalist states in the Third World. Those in the first, such as South Korea, are regarded as unredeemably 'imperialist'. Those in the second category, however, are said to be based on a national democratic capitalism, developed 'from below', such as Nigeria and Morocco (countries with which the USSR has lucrative economic ties) which could be coaxed into an anti-imperialist, (read 'anti-American'), camp in the long run.

Along these and similar lines, it is possible to discern, if not competing institutional groups, at least issue-orientated alliances of Soviet authors and leaders who do have different opinions on Soviet policy towards Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular. A bold initiative in this regard has been taken by Vanneman and James,<sup>31</sup> although the evidence they muster for intra-Soviet differences about African policy can be developed much more coherently and conclusively. An initial step in this regard must be the recognition that although the totalitarian model still has some relevance when one focuses on the locus and distribution of power in the Soviet system, it has become inadequate to facilitate the increasing evidence of the multifaceted input side of Soviet decision-making in general, and Soviet policy towards the developing world in particular.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from being intellectually unsatisfactory, continued allegiance to the totalitarian model does have some implications for the way in which the Soviet threat in Southern Africa is officially perceived, and for policy which is formulated on this basis. It makes a difference whether one sees Soviet policy as emanating from one set of commitments shared by all who have a bearing on that policy, or whether policy is seen as the outcome of a multifaceted process in which a bureaucratic balance is struck between different strands of perceptions, bureaucratic interests and procedures. Policy formulated on the basis of the latter can consciously be directed to play these differences off against each other, or to strengthen the position of those interests which converge with the policy-maker's own interests. This discerning approach can probably be fully implemented only when a state, such as the USA, has a multitude of relations with the USSR, and can use selections of these relations to add extra leverage to the attempt to promote dissension in the target establishment. In the case of South African policy vis-à-vis the USSR, these relational influences are absent, and only one or two issues are really at stake. Consequently, South Africa has limited leverage on the direction Soviet policy will take.

Yet, at least in principle it should be considered that specific actions by decision-makers in South Africa may aggravate identifiable dissensions in the Soviet policy establishment, or alternatively make it easier for this establishment to devise a single, coherent policy line on South Africa. This

seems to apply with special urgency right now when the USSR seems to be going through a fundamental rethinking concerning its long-term policy towards the whole Southern African region

In a recent article, Neil MacFarlane<sup>33</sup> has supplied conclusive evidence that at least some decision-makers in the USSR are developing an interest in regional stability. Traditionally the Soviet Union regarded instability not only as an historical, dialectical necessity, but also as something to be desired as long as the 'imperialist' nations are the losers. Consequently the USSR, compelled by its 'historical duty', supported wars of national liberation wherever it regarded imperialist interests to be at stake. Détente made no difference to this, as far as the USSR was concerned, and it regarded any attempt towards 'linkage' as indicative of a Western misconception about the inevitable progress of history, which ordains the transition to socialism as inevitable. As Brezhnev said during 1979.

There are also continuing attempts to depict social processes in one country or another and the struggle of people for independence and social progress as 'Moscow's intrigues and machinations'. Our appraisals of political regimes in various countries sometimes differ strongly from the appraisals made by certain circles in the US. We believe that every people has the right to decide its own destiny. Why then pin on the Soviet Union the responsibility for the objective course of history and, moreover, use this as a pretext for worsening our relations.<sup>34</sup>

Since the early 1980s, Soviet gains in the developing world from Afghanistan to Angola have come under severe pressure, with the result that the Soviet Union finds itself in the awkward and unusual position of being the defender of the status quo, i.e. of stability in those countries. Coupled with that, the USSR has displayed a marked concern, given its perception of the present state of American aggressiveness and the possibility of regional conflicts developing into extended wars into which the superpowers will be drawn.<sup>35</sup> Some Soviet spokespersons indicate that they are aware of the inherent dangers for peaceful coexistence in their past policy of delinking support for national liberation movements from relations between the superpowers. Within these perspectives it seems reasonable to suggest that some Soviet interest groups have an 'objective' and 'subjective' interest in at least containing regional conflicts, which indicate that they may be more susceptible to discussions and dialogue. Hence Soviet meetings with American regional specialists on Southern Africa, and Afghanistan in 1985, and the Soviet desire to get negotiations on the Middle East going in which they are accorded a voice in keeping with what they perceive to be their interests.<sup>36</sup>

Even in Southern Africa the Soviets may now be more forthcoming. In the past it was, correctly I believe, surmised that the Soviets had little interest in talks on the Namibian-Angolan nexus, and that they even advised



SWAPO not to become too involved in American-led negotiations. The recent (1986) consultative meeting between Angola, Cuba and the USSR resulted, however, in a statement that the Angolan issue 'should be resolved through political means'.<sup>37</sup> Obviously the repeal of the Clarke Amendment and prospects of significant American aid to UNITA enforced this viewpoint which already became evident in Soviet tacit support for the Angolan-Cuban declaration on the staged withdrawal, under certain circumstances, of Cuban troops from Angola. In addition, it is clear from the comments of Georgi Arbatov (the Director of the highly placed Institute of Canada and the USA) that Gorbachev and Reagan did reach some agreement on the settling of Third World conflicts during their summit in November 1985. In a recent interview on the summit, with *Soviet Military Review*, Arbatov said:

The newly-free countries have a vested interest in the elimination of regional conflicts, which go far back into the past and are conditioned by the socio-economic situation in these countries and regions. During the Geneva meeting the sides discussed the situation in such regions as Central America, the Middle East and Africa. The leaders of the two great powers agreed to continue political consultation and to expand the framework of co-operation on regional problems.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, during his speech before the 27th Party Congress on 25 February 1986, Gorbachev explicitly stated Soviet willingness to become involved in negotiated settlements in troublesome areas in the Third World. Mentioning Southern Africa by name, he said:

The Asian and Pacific sector is of growing importance. In that extensive region there are many tangled knots and contradictions and the political situation in individual places is unstable. This is where it is necessary for solutions and paths to them to be found without delay. Evidently a beginning should be made with co-ordination and then with uniting efforts in the interests of a political settlement of troublesome matters, so that, working in parallel on that basis, at least the acuteness of military confrontation in different areas of Asia might be removed and the situation there be stabilised.

And that is all the more urgent since in Asia and in other continents the sparks which could lead to war have not gone out. We are in favour of stepping up a collective search for ways of unblocking conflict situations in the Near and Middle East, in Central America and Southern Africa and in all the hot-beds of the planet. This is what the interests of universal security demand insistently.<sup>39</sup>

Whether these views are generally accepted in the Soviet leadership is hard to tell. It might be that some military leaders have an institutional stake in a prolonged war. There are some indications that the new line on 'political settlements' does not enjoy the unanimous support of the President, Andrei Gromyko, and other members of the foreign policy establishment.<sup>40</sup> This is to be expected, since the delinking of regional conflicts and détente was one of the hallmarks of Gromyko's term of office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is also ideologically hard to swallow, given the above-mentioned

historical stake which Marxist-Leninist ideology has in instability.

What all this does suggest, however, is that within the presumed intransigent monolith of the Soviet establishment, trends are developing that may be indirectly influenced by decisions taken within South Africa, viz. to what extent military operations within Angola will continue and to what extent the South African government can convince its negotiating partners of its reliability. Will it (the South African government) stick to its commitment not to support RENAMO in Mozambique, for instance, and finally is it prepared to call the Soviet bluff and become involved in a phased, attempted political settlement of the Namibian-Angolan nexus?<sup>41</sup>

It may be argued that the identification of these new trends in Soviet thinking and policy does not necessarily rely on taking leave of the totalitarian model. Yet I believe that it does make a difference whether one sees Soviet policy as a changing, variously-determined flexible response to both external influences and the balancing of internal (competing) forces, or whether one regards policy as an unchanging set of actions emanating from a monolithic structure, fundamentally determined by an all encompassing, unflinching ideology. Despite the considerable historical and sociological merits of the totalitarian model, this is, unfortunately, the picture it creates of Soviet policy. South Africans would be wise, therefore, to treat it with some reservation and to consider carefully, the evidence presented

#### Notes

- 1 A Solzhenitsyn Misconceptions about Russia are a threat to America *Foreign Affairs* Spring 1980, pp 797-834
- 2 Portrait of a dissenter as a Soviet man—A conversation with A Zinoviev *Encounter* April and May 1984
- 3 See P Ricoeur The model of the text meaningful action considered as a text In J B Thompson (ed.) Paul Ricoeur *Hermeneutics and the human sciences* New York, 1984, pp 197-224
- 4 D Bell Ten theories in search of reality — The prediction of Soviet behaviour in the Social Sciences *World Politics* Vol 10, 1958, pp 327-365
- 5 See L Schapiro *Totalitarianism* London 1972, pp 13-14
- 6 The unique character in totalitarian society In C J Friedrich (ed.) *Totalitarianism* Proceedings of a conference held at the American Academy of Art and Sciences, Cambridge, Mass., 1954
- 7 *Totalitarian dictatorship and autocracy* 2nd edition, New York 1966
- 8 The evolving theory and practice of totalitarian regimes *Totalitarianism in Perspective Three views* London 1969, p 126
- 9 On the dangers involved in this kind of concept delineation, see G Sartori Concept misformation in comparative politics *American Political Science Review* Vol 64, No 4, Dec 1970
- 10 Interest groups and communist politics *World Politics* Vol XVIII, No 3, Apr 1966, pp 435-451
- 11 H G Skilling Interest groups and communist politics An introduction In Skilling and F Griffiths (eds.) *Interest groups in Soviet politics* Princeton, 1971, p 13

- 12 The term *Seilschaften* is taken from German mountaineering jargon and refers to roped parties whose mutual aid and support enable them to scale heights that would be beyond their individual capacities. See G Jozsa Political 'Seilschaften' in the USSR. In T H Rigby and B Harasymiw (eds) *Leadership selection and patron-client relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* London 1983, pp 139-173
- 13 See J F Hough *The Soviet Union and social science theory* Cambridge, Mass 1977, p 24
- 14 A Brown Pluralism, power and the Soviet political system. A comparative perspective. In S G Solomon (ed) *Pluralism in the Soviet Union* London 1983, pp 66-72
- 15 Still the century of corporatism. *Review of Politics* Vol 36, Jan 1974, pp 93-94
- 16 *Ibid* p 97
- 17 *Ibid* p 96
- 18 A Brown *op cit* p 78
- 19 On the debate, see O Eran *Mezhdunarodniki — An assessment of professional expertise in the making of Soviet foreign policy* Ramat Gan 1979, pp 161-217
- 20 J A du Plessis Die relatie tussen filosofie, ideologie en party in die Sowjetdenke 'n verkenning in die algemene Sowjetologie Unpublished D Litt et Phil -dissertation, RAU, 1970
- 21 See for instance his *Nasionalisme en kommunisme* Cape Town 1970
- 22 One partial exception is the article by R Schrire Russian policy in sub-Saharan Africa *Optima* Vol 31, No 1, Oct 1982
- 23 As can be gathered from the formulation, I regard the totalitarian model as akin to what John Steinbrunner has called the 'analytic paradigm' (rational actor paradigm) in the study of Soviet policy formation. See J D Steinbrunner *The cybernetic theory of decision* Princeton 1974, pp 25-46
- 24 See P R Nel Soviet African policy: the role of the International Department *Africa Insights* Vol 12, No 3, 1982, pp 132-136 + 141
- 25 Leonid Ilyichev, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vladilen Vasev, Chief of the Third African Department have recently featured prominently in Soviet meetings with Southern African leaders
- 26 See An Gromyko's and G Starushenko's critical review of Manchka's book (note 27) in *Kommunist* No 2, Jan 1980, pp 118-120
- 27 P I Manchka *Aktual'nyye problemy sovremennoy Afriki* (Current problems of contemporary Africa) Moscow 1979
- 28 V Y Churkin and Y A Yudin *A socialist oriented state Instrument of revolutionary change* Moscow 1978, p 9
- 29 See D E Albright New trends in Soviet policy towards Africa *CSIS Africa Notes* No 27, 29 April 1984
- 30 See e.g. K Brutents *The newly free countries in the seventies* Moscow 1983, pp 38 ff, G Kim National liberation movements topical problems *International Affairs* No 9, Sept 1984, pp 45-46
- 31 *Soviet foreign policy in Southern Africa — Problems and prospects* Pretoria 1982, pp 15-33
- 32 The literature on this topic is steadily growing, with both Jerry F Hough and Daniel S Papp at present completing booklength studies on it. The prime example is still, however, Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier's *The Soviet Union and the Third World — an economic bind* New York 1983
- 33 The Soviet conception of regional security *World Politics* Vol XXXVII, No 3, Apr 1985, pp 295-316
- 34 *Pravda* 17 June 1979 Cited in V Aspaturian Soviet global power and the correlation of forces *Problems of Communism* Vol XXIX, No 3, May-June 1980, p 12

35. See N. S. MacFarlane: op cit., p. 311.
36. See V. Gurev: The Middle East and the cobwebs of Camp David. *International Affairs* No. 11, November 1985, pp. 68-71.
37. *Soviet Weekly* No 2296, 8 February 1986.
38. *Soviet Military Review* No. 1, Jan. 1986, p. 9.
39. BBC SWB SU/8194/C/34, 27 February 1986.
40. On new trends in Soviet foreign policy and factional alignments, see H. Timmermann: Gorbatschow zeigt aussenpolitisches Profil. Kurskorrekturen oder konzeptionswandel? *Osteuropa* Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan 1986, pp. 3-21. It is significant that Boris Ponomarev, one of the architects of Soviet policy towards the Third World during the past 30 years, was not re-elected as candidate member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee during the recent 27th Congress of the CPSU. Ponomarev has, however, stayed on as a member of the Central Committee, and did have meetings with African leaders during the Congress. See BBC SWB SU/8199 5.3.86; SU/8201 7.3.86; SU/8204 11.3.86.
41. Whether the announcement of 1 Aug. 1986 as the starting date for the implementation of Resolution 435-independence in Namibia, was predicated on an American or South African recognition of these new trends in Soviet thinking is unclear. It is, however, a step which should be welcomed in terms of the argument developed here.

## The Global System: Continuity and change

All systems face a continuous tension between the forces of change and the forces of continuity. In a macro-system such as the contemporary global community, the forces of continuity are generally more powerful than the forces of change and, except when system breakdown occurs during periods of major conflict, tends towards a state of homeostatic equilibrium. System transformation takes place either as a result of major shocks or incrementally as a result of the cumulative impact of marginal changes. This paper has three components: (1) an analysis of the forces of continuity; (2) an analysis of the forces of change; (3) implications for South Africa.

### 1. The Forces of Continuity

The core elements of the international system have shown remarkable continuity for at least a century. These elements may be summarized as follows:

- (i) territorially based political units are the major political actors in global inter-actions;
- (ii) they enjoy internal sovereignty and have a monopoly on legitimate relations with other political units;
- (iii) the environment is characterized by anarchy in the sense of the absence of enforceable rules and norms;
- (iv) as a consequence, each unit is responsible for its own survival and welfare and must rely upon its own capabilities to achieve its ends;
- (v) in the pursuit of these interests, all means, including the use of force, are applied, prudence and the perception of interests being the only restraining factors.

The contemporary international system has the following elements:

- (i) a basic bipolar structure in which two major contending blocks — i.e. the Soviet and American alliances, contend for power and influence;
- (ii) a decline in the ideological fervour of this competition and a consequent increase in the importance of national interests;

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- (iii) the existence of a large bloc of states which are not aligned to any of the two major groupings;
- (iv) a basic stability in global alignments. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union are making significant progress in weakening the capabilities or will of their rival. The appeal of Marxism has declined significantly in the states that make up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the communist parties there have suffered an erosion in their electoral strengths. The members of the Warsaw Pact, although reluctant allies of the Soviets, remain firmly embedded in the Soviet influence structure and any opposition to Soviet policy carries with it the certainty of Soviet reaction, including the possibility of the use of armed force;
- (v) technology has become perhaps the dominant factor in shaping great power relationships. Under present circumstances both superpowers have the capability under all conceivable circumstances of inflicting unacceptable damage upon their rivals, should armed conflict break out. Conflict as a rational tool of state policy (although not its utility as a threat) is thus ruled out by the contemporary balance of terror.

To summarize the forces of continuity: the state remains the prime unit in global relations and anarchy remains the dominant characteristic of the context in which these states interact. The contemporary global order is dominated by the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States which is played out in a loose bipolar structure and has its own influence on the political dynamics.

## 2. **The Forces of Change**

Although we have briefly listed some of the elements of continuity within the global system, the discontinuities should also be stressed. In general, the pace of change has perhaps never been greater than during the twentieth century and the pace and scope of this change may be exponential. These forces will be dealt with here under two headings: (a) the weakening of the state, and (b) the rise of global issues. The inter-relationships between these two categories should not, however, be ignored.

### (a) *The weakening of the state*

Although as noted earlier, the territorially-based state remains the dominant political unit, both domestically and globally, this dominance has been increasingly challenged.

The political dominance of the state in the domestic sphere has been weakened by the following factors:

- (i) The increasing complexity of the domestic political economy has increased so rapidly and so extensively that the state has frequently been unable to adapt sufficiently. Vital issues of tax policy, social security and welfare systems thus remain neglected.

- (ii) Formerly homogeneous states have shown a tendency to fragment politically on economic, ethnic, linguistic and regional issues. States such as Canada and the United Kingdom have been characterized by a return to cleavages based upon ethnic or regional issues. In the foreign policy realm, states such as the United States have seen their former national consensuses eroded with the consequence that ethnic and other groups have advocated their particularistic conceptions of foreign policies with renewed vigour.
- (iii) Non-governmental groups such as multi-national corporations have accumulated significant powers, and although they have rarely challenged states directly, they have developed ways of avoiding or escaping from some of the more onerous elements of state policy.
- (iv) The process of governing has become so demanding, the issues so complex, that much government activity is devoted to the basic administration of the welfare state. To an increasing extent, the state in its domestic context has been described as 'over-loaded' and over-committed.

The position of the state in the global arena has also been weakened, the following factors being most important:

- (i) States have become increasingly permeable. In the security realm this means that states no longer have the means to guarantee their security. To the extent that states do enjoy political security, it is no longer because they have the capacity to defend themselves, but because of a generalized inhibition, based upon the threat of deterrence. This in turn may be far more fragile than is often realized, because the technological basis of mutual destruction may change radically. Hence the Soviet concern over Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative.
- (ii) In the economic sphere, permeability has taken the form of interdependence. To an increasing extent, individual states have become 'open systems'. Thus they are to a considerable degree influenced, both positively and negatively, by events beyond their borders and outside their control. Desirable economic values—price stability, growth, equity are determined in large part by systemic forces. The capacity of a state to tax its affluent must be influenced by the ease with which the affluent, especially the talented earning *quasi-rents*, can relocate. The state of the major economies affects the others— inflation and recessions are imported and re-exported, price shocks in basic commodities such as energy send major reverberations throughout the system, and the individual actions and reactions of states are cumbersome and relatively ineffective mechanisms for adjusting to the systemic disturbances.

From a utilitarian perspective, the state thus performs its functions with decreasing effectiveness. It can no longer alone guarantee its security and physical survival. It can with reduced effectiveness regulate its economic

system and protect itself from outside influences. The basic tools of economic policy—fiscal and monetary instruments, have become increasingly internationalized.

(b) *The rise of global issues*

For the first time in human history, it is possible to conceive of the world as a global community. No major area is outside of this community, and the revolution in communications has brought all significant participants within a single global network.

Thus the problems have become global in nature and, as indicated above, no longer amenable to solution by states acting independently. The concept of 'spaceship earth' has become an empirical reality. Between now and the end of the century two billion more people will live on earth than do at present. With the exception of coal and uranium, the world supply of traditional sources of energy will be close to exhaustion. Environmental problems of unique proportions may emerge if present trends continue uninterruptedly.

It has been shown repeatedly that individuals rationally following their own self-interests may contribute to collectively irrational and indeed destructive outcomes. The economist's 'paradox of thrift', the ecologist's 'end of the commons' are all examples of this phenomenon. It may thus be predicted with confidence that, if the emerging global issues of over-population, resource over-consumption and environmental neglect continue to unfold in a context of nation-state dominance and the absence of supernatural or collective co-operation, disaster must at some point intervene.

Globally less significant but politically potent is the related issue of the unequal distribution of income and wealth generated by different regions of the world. Usually summarized as the 'North-South' issue, this emotionally powerful theme revolves around the vast inequalities which exist between the wealthy and industrialized northern states (especially North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australasia and the Soviet Union) and the poverty-stricken states of Africa, Latin America and most of South Asia. Indeed, the gap is so vast that it is almost impossible to conceive of its elimination, as the table below illustrates:

*Table 1— The North-South Income Gap and Projections 1980*

<i>Country</i>	<i>GNP per capita (US\$)</i>	<i>Number of years until gap closed*</i>
OECD countries	6 390	—
Singapore	2 815	22
Israel	4 010	37
Korea	705	60



Iraq	1 440	223
Brazil	1 130	362
Tunisia	848	422
Lesotho	196	454
Malawi	167	1 920
Mauritania	311	3 224

\* These calculations are based upon extrapolations of the growth rates of the OECD states and the selected developing states listed above.

It would clearly be a mirage to aim to equalize the income levels between the different economic regions of the globe. The logical solution to the problem, i.e. complete factor mobility, is simply not politically feasible. The issue of global inequalities is thus likely to contain considerable conflict potential for the foreseeable future.

### Trends

The state of the states reflects a fundamental dilemma. States can neither escape from an obsolete *realpolitik* nor transcend the imperatives of a global system. The inescapability of *realpolitik* has been captured as follows:

Striving to attain security from such attack [the states] are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure . . . the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.<sup>1</sup>

However, the necessity of transcending state-based *realpolitik* is illustrated by the following:

. . . under global conditions of expanding populations, rising expectations and diminishing resources, disaster is probable. Unbridled sovereign freedom and the invisible hand of unrestrained competition have visibly failed to avert an impending disaster.<sup>2</sup>

The state system of independent political actors cannot provide the foundation for resolving global issues which require collective action. Yet there appear to be neither systemic alternatives to the status quo, nor methods to escape from the vicious cycle of power politics. At the same time it is simply not possible for the future to be a mere continuation of the past and present.

<sup>1</sup> Hedley Bull, *Anarchic Society*, London, Macmillan, 1977, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> B. Russett and H. Starr, *World Politics, The Menu for Choice*, San Francisco, W.H. Freeman, 1981, p. 546.

### 3. Implications for South Africa

The unresolved issues outlined above have important implications for South Africa. Reactions to South Africa, and the salience of South Africa to members of the world community, will be shaped significantly by this larger context.

Perhaps the key factor will be the degree to which independent political units can co-operate to resolve issues which are not amenable to independent state action. A schematic outline of the two possibilities is presented below.

#### **A Co-operative International Regime**

Basic units	— independent states
	— multi-national functional organizations and limited delegated authority
Mode of interaction	— bilateral bargaining
	— multinational negotiations
Implications for SA	— global system of increasing harmony
	— decline in bipolar competition
	— global issues more salient than national issues

Under this co-operative regime, an unreformed South Africa would be excluded from membership in multinational co-operative arrangements. In general, however, the pressures from external sources would not be as great as they are at present, or would be under other regimes (see below).

#### **A Competitive International Regime**

Basic units	— independent states
	— weak, international propaganda organizations
Mode of interaction	— bargaining
	— selective use of armed might
	— limited co-operation
Outcomes	— increase in inter-state conflict
	— deterioration in global condition

Under these conditions, an unreformed South Africa would face increased pressures. As inter-state competition increased, so would issues such as South Africa become increasingly a component of this competition.

### **South Africa and the Global Community**

Historically the global community has shaped South Africa through the following mechanisms:

- (1) The export of people.
- (2) The export of capital.

- (3) Trade.
- (4) The exchange of ideas and technology.
- (5) The political framework.

For many reasons, the population of South Africa is unlikely to be increased through large-scale European or African immigration. Although it would be unwise to be dogmatic, it seems unlikely that large-scale flows of capital will re-enter the South African economy. Profit rates for the near to medium term future are likely to remain low, while the political risks will be perceived to be high. Similarly, no dramatic increases in trade appear likely.

The key influence of the global community on South Africa will thus be in the areas of ideas and technology and the global political framework.

The South African issue has taken on a salience out of proportion to its intrinsic importance. At the same time, truly vital issues such as global poverty have been minimized. To at least some extent, this is as much a result of the nature of the international system as it is of the conditions within South Africa itself. A shift to a co-operative international regime may serve to reduce the attention devoted to Southern African issues, while a competitive international regime may achieve the reverse.

Ultimately, however, it will be the actions and inactions of the peoples of South Africa themselves that will shape most profoundly the content of South Africa's relations with the global community.

## Book Review

RETHINKING THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE: POLITICS AND HISTORY SINCE 1917

Stephen F. Cohen, Oxford University Press 1985

Stephen F. Cohen is Professor of Soviet Politics and History at Princeton University and his most recent book, as its title indicates, places the emphasis on Cohen the historian. The reviewer, an historian herself, can only welcome with relief the contribution that a writer trained in this discipline can make to a field in which short perspectives and jargon-riddled clichés tend to hold sway. In this connection especial praise must be accorded to Professor Cohen's elegant and economical use of the English language which makes reading a pleasure and has limited the book's length to a manageable 158 pages of text. There are extensive footnotes for each of the five chapters, directing the reader to a huge variety of sources in English and Russian, often expanded by helpful and scholarly comments. Perhaps it would be too much to expect a full bibliography in addition, but I must confess to wishing that one had been provided.

Professor Cohen has set out to offer a fresh interpretation of Soviet history since 1917 and to challenge many Western and Soviet assumptions. He tries to show how these tend to reflect contemporary perceptions and influence both East-West relations and the reformist-conservative debate within the USSR.

His comments and insights have the most relevance for the present day in the introduction and in chapters 1 and 5. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide a scholarly re-casting of the events that occurred between 1917 and the present. At this juncture, it should be emphasised that Professor Cohen's book is not for someone who knows nothing about the period and the events, people and issues involved, but the reader with an informed interest in Soviet history will find in it much that is challenging and insightful.

In the book's central chapters, Professor Cohen debates what he sees as the major issues of Soviet history. He does not pay much attention to the Bolshevik revolution itself. His central focus is the enigma of Stalin and one of his first questions concerns the nature of Stalin's Bolshevik inheritance. Whatever Stalin's acknowledgement of Lenin's leadership and example, Cohen believes, as many do, that Stalinism was 'a radical departure from Bolshevik programmatic thinking' and especially from the New Economic Policy of Lenin and Bukharin. He spends some time rehabilitating the reputation of the latter and describes the persecution that he, his family and associates endured at Stalin's hands. Cohen sees Bukharin as a 'reformist': a category to which he returns in greater detail later in his book, whereas Stalinism involved all the trappings of industrial modernization but was in reality 'traditional and even retrogressive . . . imposed anachronisms having

more to do with the Russian past than with Western patterns of modernization.' He cites as examples of this 'a tsar-like political autocracy, a medieval-like leader cult, the semi-serfdom of collectivized peasants, and the widespread use of virtual slave labor.'

All of this, however well-expressed, is not particularly original, but Cohen rightly criticizes the assumption, that there was something 'inevitable' about the *Stalinshchina*, or Stalin period and insists that there is no 'straight line' from Bolshevism to Stalin and that 'there are always historical alternatives'. As he rightly says, the interesting questions in history concern the choice or imposition of one alternative rather than another.

Cohen's fourth Chapter entitled 'The Stalin Question Since Stalin' throws further light on the murky history of de-Stalinisation and the traumas it involved. A man whose deification went so far as the invocation 'O Great Stalin, O Leader of the Peoples, Thou who didst give birth to man, Thou who didst make fertile the earth' had a long way to fall. And fall he did, in 1956 and further in 1961, after details of the crimes perpetrated by his régime emerged from Khrushchev's two seminal 20th and 21st Party Congress speeches and the flood of revelations which ensued. However, this was not the end of Stalin. Cohen reveals strong neo-Stalinist trends in today's USSR, linking this phenomenon to the resurgence of Russian nationalism (always, in fact, a potent force) and to contemporary social and economic problems which there, as elsewhere, tend to encourage a nostalgic and rose-coloured vision of a more glorious past.

Cohen posits a dialectical struggle between pro- and anti-Stalinist currents in the USSR and links these to Soviet conservatism and reformism in his final chapter which reveals his strong bias in favour of the latter. He compares the abiding conflict between the opposing factions to the nineteenth century debate between Slavophiles and Westernizers in Russia, a valid historical reflection if ever there was one. After discussing the Brezhnev era, which he sees as essentially conservative, Cohen explains why conservatism is the dominant force in Russia. The 'joint pillars' of this conservatism are 'a towering pride in the nation's modernizing, wartime, and great-power achievements, together with an abiding anxiety that another disaster forever looms', an observation that anyone who has visited the USSR or studied its foreign policy will immediately recognise as correct.

In the concluding pages, Cohen discusses the prospects for reform in the later 1980s and finds them quite bright, provided that reform from above can find allies in the fundamentally conservative Soviet bureaucracy so as to create 'a consensus for change'. One is reminded of Gorbachev's statement at the recent 27th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party to the effect that Marxism-Leninism must be reinterpreted creatively and to fit the times while remaining, (he implied), orthodox enough to still conservative anxieties.

One other point he makes in his closing paragraphs is that East-West

relations have played a major role in determining the pace of reform. Cold War conditions, he says 'abet conservative and even neo-Stalinist forces' and 'Soviet reformers stand a chance only in conditions of East-West détente.' This bodes well for the Gorbachev era, if Summit II can be brought about, but seems to contradict the widely-held view that the early 1970s, generally held to be a period of Soviet-American détente, was nevertheless one which the Brezhnevian bureaucracy established its dead hand over the Soviet system.

I have left until last a brief consideration of Professor Cohen's first Chapter entitled 'Sovietology as a Vocation', because I think it has a particular relevance to South African readers and to all those here who wish to study the USSR in as detached and scholarly manner as possible. Professor Cohen follows the development of American Sovietology through the Cold War period when it was confined within a totalitarian 'strait-jacket' but was a well-funded and a burgeoning field of study, to the 1980s when the behavioural/empirical approach predominates but the money has moved elsewhere.

During the Cold War period, writes Cohen, 'academic Soviet studies became . . . a highly politicized profession combined with topical political concerns, a crusading spirit and a know-the-enemy *raison d'être*'. A few pages later, Cohen traces the early history of the Russian Institute of Columbia University and the harrowing time some of its professors underwent during the 'loyalty-security' McCarthyist 'crusade' of the early 1950s.

Cohen's ultimate message is that scholarly analysis must 'go beyond facades, dig deeply, and think critically'. Cold-war ideology in the US 'helped shape and perpetuate an untenable scholarly consensus . . . narrowed the range of topics and interpretations, minimized intellectual space . . . and made scholarly concepts hard and orthodox': He concludes his first chapter with a plea that is as relevant here as anywhere:

Sovietologists must steer between political orthodoxies on all sides. They must forsake abstractions, axioms and predictions . . . for historical, empirical knowledge . . . The real scholarly mission is the further development of Sovietology into a field of competing perspectives, approaches, and interpretations, grappling with the changing, multicoloured complexity of the Soviet experience.

If I have quoted at length it is because Cohen's book has an important message for those South Africans who purport to take an interest in the Soviet Union. For them, it provides an essential perspective from which critically to re-examine both the 'rooi gevaar' itself and their approach to it.

Sara Pienaar  
Manning Director of Research  
SAIIA.

## Correspondence

In *International Affairs Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 1, we encouraged letters commenting on articles or on international affairs in general. Sadly, we have had little response, despite the fact that the *Bulletin* is widely distributed (and, we hope, read) in South Africa and abroad.

The honourable exception to this rule is Professor Peter Vale, former Research Director of the Institute, whose letter appears below together with the Editor's reply.

Dear Madam Editor,

Thank you for the invitation in the latest Smuts House Notes (*International Affairs Bulletin* Vol. 9 No. 1) to comment on the articles which appear in the *Bulletin*. I hope this will revive the once fairly lively correspondence in the publication.

Permit me to take up the invitation by raising a fairly fundamental question posed by the contents of Vol. 9 No. 1. I refer to the inclusion of the 'South African government's recent report to the United Nations on its activities in Antarctica.' Immediately, let me allay the fears of those who might presume that I do not regard Antarctica as an international issue of any priority. On the contrary, there can be no doubt that it will tax the minds of the practitioners of international relations in the years ahead. The looming tension over the Treaty with its conflicting territorial claims, arms control aspects *et al* and the promise of conflict over the potential mineral deposits will also tax minds of scholars in the coming decade. I therefore welcome the debate which the Institute promises to initiate on the *Antarctic* in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

My concern is, perhaps, more substantial than this; I refer to the desirability of publishing a South African government statement in the *Bulletin*. Now, of course, the Republic has a position on Antarctica and it is perfectly proper, that as one of the original signatories, it should broadcast this. However, I question whether a publication of the Institute, particularly the *Bulletin*, should be a vehicle through which this position is broadcast? I believe that both the Institute and its publications should maintain a distance from the government — any government, whatever the political hue — even on a seemingly uncontentious issue like Antarctica. Only by keeping such a distance can the Institute's objectivity be guaranteed.

Not too many years ago, Derrick de Villiers, quite correctly, fought a valiant fight for the Institute's integrity. Throughout that battle he said the Institute should be, like Caesar's wife, beyond reproach. During the course of that battle, I thought that Derrick was wrong. I now know that he was absolutely correct and that this position should be maintained at all costs.

This still leaves the issue open of which vehicle the government or, more

correctly, the Department of Foreign Affairs can use to put across messages like the one carried in Vol. 9 No. 1 of the *Bulletin*. Other Departments of Foreign Affairs have initiated publications to put such propaganda across. In fact, the Australians frequently put their position on the Antarctic in their excellent publication *Australian Foreign Affairs Review*.

Thank you  
Yours sincerely,  
Peter Vale (Professor)  
Director  
Institute of Social & Economic Research,  
Rhodes University,  
Grahamstown.

**Reply:**

Dear Professor Vale,

Thank you for raising such a fundamental issue as the appearance of a South African government statement in the *Bulletin*.

Dealing first with the question of principle, I entirely agree that the Institute and the *International Affairs Bulletin*, as its main organ of academic expression, must be, as they always have been, entirely beyond any suspicion that they are a mouthpiece for the South African government or, for that matter, of any other organisation within this country or beyond. We do, however, act as a platform for many differing views, including Pretoria's (if appropriate) without, I would submit, compromising ourselves.

You will be familiar with our *Southern Africa Record* which contains documentary material from the South African government as well as from many other official sources in the region and further afield. While the *Record* would normally have been the correct place for the South African report on its activities in Antarctica, we felt that as an introduction to a scholarly assessment of the Antarctic issue by Martin de Wit which appeared in Vol. 9, No. 2, the report was on this occasion more appropriately presented in the *Bulletin*.

I am most grateful for your interested concern in what we are trying to do and hope that you will continue to be on the alert for any hint of partiality or other failing of which we may unwittingly be guilty in the future. We will try not only to maintain our independent approach but also to attract writing of the highest academic standard and integrity.

With my renewed thanks for your letter and in the hope that it will stimulate further correspondence and debate from our readers.

Sara Picenaar (Editor)



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