

Administration vows to save Gorbachov

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In a matched pair of speeches this month, billed by the administration as major statements on strategic and foreign policy, Secretary of State James Baker proclaimed that Gorbachov's *perestroika* represents a marvelous opportunity for moving "beyond containment" to a whole new era of chummy superpower relations, and, thus, it is obviously in the United States' supreme interest to ensure Gorbachov's success. The two speeches "clearly demonstrate a new U.S. approach to relations with the Soviet Union," Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vadim Perfiliev exulted on Oct. 25. "The stated principle of stability and predictability in strategic relations completely coincides with our own views."

Baker first announced that it is Washington's policy to underwrite *perestroika* in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association in New York Oct. 17. In what *The New York Times* hailed as the administration's most open endorsement yet of the Gorbachov regime, he repeatedly referred to the "historic opportunity" which *perestroika* supposedly offers for reversing the Cold War. Gorbachov's "process of *perestroika*, combined with our own achievements . . . offers promise for the future," Baker claimed.

"The President has said, and I have said, that we want *perestroika*, including the restructuring of Soviet-American relations, to succeed . . . because *perestroika* promises Soviet actions more advantageous to our interests. . . . By acting realistically to engage Moscow in the search for mutual interests, we can seize the opportunities inherent in Gorbachov's revolution. By standing pat, we would gain nothing and lose this chance to revolutionize East-West relations."

Baker elaborated in remarks to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco Oct. 23. The rubble-strewn city provided an apt setting for Baker's contention that "superpower relations are as promising as we have ever found them since the Second World War. . . . Looking forward, we face the clearest opportunity to reduce the risk of war since the dawn of the nuclear age."

Baker called for new breakthroughs in arms control, especially in the area of reducing conventional forces in Europe, arguing that such cutbacks would allow both the United States and the Soviet Union to save money on defense expenditures—when, in reality, they would feed directly into existing Soviet plans for streamlining its military into a more effective offensive force.

The next day, interviewed by the *New York Times*, President Bush confirmed that Washington is committed to drawing down its military presence in Western Europe. Asked whether he sees the "beginning of American troop withdrawal from Europe," Bush replied, "We've already seen that in our proposal" to the conventional forces talks. "So my answer would be definitely yes."

Strategic folly

These pronouncements represent the biggest blunder yet by the Bush administration. To all but the most willfully blind, it must now be clear that the Soviet Union is verging on a cataclysmic political and economic crisis (see *Feature*). The handwriting on the wall has been superseded in recent weeks by neon signs flashing the message that a crackdown bloodier than Tiananmen Square is in the offing, that Gorbachov's future is growing shorter by the minute.

Even the London *Economist*, a leading organ for Western pro-Soviet "Trust" networks, has just admitted that, under the mounting economic and political crisis conditions in the Soviet Union, the role of the Soviet military is not declining, as idiots in the West have been claiming, but is greatly increasing. In its Oct. 21 issue, the City of London weekly expresses "fear at the creeping influence of military commanders over political and economic decisions that should not concern them." With all Gorbachov's talk of reforms, the fact is that the country is taking on a fully militarized appearance, the *Economist* points out.

Thus far, the administration has not proffered any specific economic initiatives for propping up Gorbachov, at least in public, except for the proposal Baker extended in his Foreign Policy Association address, to supply technical economic assistance to the Soviet regime. Yet, there are numerous indications that the administration has several things up its sleeve—among them, extending Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to the Soviets.

President Bush conveyed to Moscow a private statement in mid-October on that topic, which insiders say reflects his desire to give Gorbachov such immediate, substantive assistance. The statement was brought to Moscow by U.S. agribusiness magnate Dwayne Andreas, protégé of Anti-Defamation League bigwig Burton Joseph, and currently president of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Trade and Economic Council. Andreas was in Moscow for a huge trade fair organized by the Council, where over 140 top U.S. corporations met Soviet officials, including Gorbachov, to explore "business opportunities" in the Soviet bloc.

A week later, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher participated in a conference of the Institute for East-West Security Studies in Frankfurt, West Germany, where a report was issued calling for giving the Soviets MFN status, as well as involving them in the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).