

CORD MEYER

Waiting for us to grow weary

Now that the Nicholas Daniloff case no longer monopolizes public attention, there is time to take a hard look at a more significant aspect of Soviet policy and to ask what General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev is really trying to accomplish in the Third World.

In his speech to the 27th Party Congress, Mr. Gorbachev appeared to downgrade the importance of revolutionary movements in the underdeveloped nations. Skeptical of his disinterest, this reporter joined a well-informed group of academic experts, journalists, intelligence analysts, and State Department officials who met in Washington for two days last week to weigh the evidence and to reach their own conclusions.

Convened under the auspices of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Russian Studies, the assembled experts issued no formal statement, but reached broad agreement that the Soviets are running what one participant described as "an extraordinarily fluid, diverse, and complex strategy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America."

Although evidently more cautious than Leonid Brezhnev and less willing to take on expensive new commitments, Mr. Gorbachev emerges from a close look at his actions as a tough, resourceful Communist leader.

He is clearly determined to maintain Marxist regimes in power wherever they have been established and seems willing to respond to new cost-effective opportunities when they present themselves.

Nothing that is likely to happen at the pre-summit meeting in Iceland is going to change the flexible opportunism with which the Soviets seek to expand their system into the Third World. Highly desirable as new verifiable arms control agreements may be, they will do nothing to prevent the gradual increase in the number of one-party Marxist states aligned with Moscow that now stretch from Vietnam to Angola and from Nicaragua to Ethiopia.

From the intense discussion and informed debate at the Kennan Institute, a clear picture emerges of the peculiar advantages the Soviets derive from being both a powerful national state and the leader of a worldwide revolutionary movement. The provision of Soviet arms and the propagation of Marxist ideology have in too many cases worked together both to impose and justify dictatorial rule by a single vanguard party under the Kremlin's control.

To an extent that most Americans do not realize, the Soviet governmental structure and budgetary priorities are designed to support and expand the number of Marxist regimes that occupy strategic positions on the world's map.

In the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Secretary General Gorbachev has installed Anatoly Dobrynin as the head of a more influential International Department that serves as the general staff of the world revolution in coordinating military, pro-

paganda, and intelligence activity.

As one U.S. intelligence official commented at the Kennan Institute meeting, "If one could expect Marxist regimes to be reversible, then one could accept them with more equanimity." But the harsh reality is that no Marxist regime once firmly in control of the party, army, and security forces has ever been overthrown from within, and only one, Grenada, has been removed from outside. The Soviets have learned "the technology of regime preservation."

Moreover, once established, such regimes have a proven tendency to proliferate, as the Cuban revolution helped sponsor the Nicaraguan revolt, which in turn supports the guerrillas in El Salvador. It is for this reason that the Reagan doctrine has evolved to assist anti-Communist guerrillas in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua with covert U.S. aid.

By now it is obvious that Mr. Gorbachev's reaction to this American initiative is to raise the ante and to increase substantially the Soviet

military support to the Marxist regimes in all three countries. The Soviet expectation seems to be that over the long haul the United States will weary of its interventionary burden, as it did in Vietnam.

In an informal poll of a number of Kennan Institute conferees, they were asked to guess which Third World states were now at the top of the Soviet list for destabilization and Communist takeover.

Interestingly, Chile and South Africa were picked unanimously. In

both countries, oppressive right-wing regimes are obvious targets for polarization. Well-organized Communist parties stand ready to pick up the pieces and to confront the United States with another strategic retreat.

Many of humanity's hopes in the next few days will be concentrated on the lofty summit in Iceland, but what happens in the dusty backyards of the Third World may have more to do with the eventual outcome.

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