

I said that on the question of openness — and this is also the party's declared view — there could be no area exempt from analysis and criticism. I expounded that this is a splendid goal that is beginning to take but we have to face the facts. There are still areas in which it is difficult to objectively analyze certain decisions. For me as a foreign affairs journalist the activities of the Foreign and Defense Ministries are such areas. They have a direct influence on foreign policy, but as a journalist I can by no means criticize the decisions of these ministries.<sup>127</sup>

We should not misinterpret the absence of public criticism of Soviet foreign policy. It is, to be sure, a sign of the leadership's continued secretiveness on sensitive matters of public policy. But it is not an indication that the members of the Politburo are satisfied with past or present performance in this area.

Changes in Soviet foreign policy have been slow in coming, but we should not be surprised at this situation nor discouraged by it. Time and again, Gorbachev has declared: "Our foreign policy today stems directly from our domestic policy to a larger extent than ever before," and there is no reason to doubt him on this point.<sup>128</sup> For the moment, his major goal in foreign policy is that of damage limitation. He is proceeding cautiously and prudently so as not to do anything that would undercut his very ambitious programme for the transformation of the Soviet economy.

Gorbachev's actions indicate that he would like to see a significant improvement in the effectiveness of Soviet foreign policy. During Brezhnev's last years, Soviet relations with the United States, Western Europe, China, and Japan either stagnated or deteriorated. The Soviet Union remains a relatively minor player in the politics of the Middle East, and it has become mired in the Afghanistan quagmire. Gorbachev would like to change all this. But he also sees foreign policy as a dangerous mine field. Costly initiatives might be

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<sup>127</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Soviet Union*, 31 March 1987, p. R15.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1987, p. G4.