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Comments From a Soviet Perspective

Prof. Vladimir Kartashkin attended Restructuring European Security: The Role of International Law. He offered these comments at the conclusion of the symposium.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today, but I am not going to speak today about international law or constitutional law; I am going to speak more or less as a political scientist. We heard today and yesterday about the possibility of a military crackdown pertaining to the unitarian regime and about the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union. Dr. Risse-Kappen spoke about reversibility and nonreversibility of the different processes in Europe. He mentions that the most likely to be reversible is the future of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the Soviet Union. Along with other speakers, he mentioned the possibility of collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union. Of course, Dr. Risse-Kappen also told us that few people would be able to predict the direction in which the Soviet Union will develop. I will try to predict myself the direction of the Soviet Union's development based on facts which I know.

I. The Political Structure of the Soviet Union

There are three groups of political forces in the Soviet Union; people who belong to the hard-liners, people who belong to the center, and people who belong to the democrats or radicals. The hard-liners are headed by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party and by the *Loyuz* or Union, the block of deputies in the Supreme Soviet and in the National Congress. Because of their hard-line policy, many members of the Communist Party are feeling disappointed in its policy and leaders and are leaving the Party.

On the left, among the democrats and radicals, there are the majority of intellectuals in the country. The intellectuals are supported by working people—farmers, peasants, and the great majority of the Soviet

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people—who are now in favor of moving to a market economy and democracy. In the center is Mikhail Gorbachev himself, President of the USSR. Gorbachev is losing support of many Soviet people. When he came to power, he was not aware of the graveness of the crisis in the country. He believed that only cosmetic changes were necessary. But by using only cosmetic changes, the situation in the country cannot be improved. Gorbachev still believes in socialist values and socialist society, in the possibility of the reconstruction of the socialist economy. But the majority of the population no longer believes in socialist values and they want to move in the opposite direction. Seventy-five years of revolution did not produce the expected results. Now, more and more people are moving to the left with the democrats.

II. Federation Versus Confederation

Now in the Soviet Union, coal miners are on strike. One of their demands is that more power be given to the Federation Council. The Soviet Union consists of fifteen republics. In the opinion of many democrats and many people, the Federation Council has to decide the questions faced by the fifteen republics. Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, and the democrats have also requested the empowerment of the Federation Council. Interestingly, the more Yeltsin is criticized by official radio and TV, the more support he receives from ordinary people. In my country, the more a person is criticized by officials, radio and TV, the more support he has from ordinary people. This is another indication that the situation is shifting to the left, to the people who support the democratic movement in the country.

Gorbachev, himself, is in favor of the Federation but against a confederation. However, many republics, if not a majority of them, are in favor of a confederation. The republics believe that only a confederation of independent states can save the situation; however, they are not agreed on the basis of that confederation. The situation in the country concerning the future of the Union is not a desperate one. Step by step the Soviet Union will be united on the basis of a confederation of independent states. Of course, we have quite a few problems. But all those problems, to my belief, will be settled in the near future.

First, there is the problem of internal strife within the republics. Some of the republics have national minorities, for example, Georgia. Georgians are striving for independence, but at the same time Georgia refuses to recognize sovereignty of its autonomous republics. The same problem exists in Moldavia. Second, there are conflicts between the republics. For example, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In Azerbaijan there is the Nagorno-Karabakh Region inhabited by Armenians. The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh currently demands to be admitted as a region of the Armenian Republic, thus creating a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Third, the Baltic Republics are striving for independence. I believe that in the next few

years the Baltic states will become independent states because that process is irreversible. Even the majority of Russians living in the Baltic Regions voted for independence in the recent referenda in those republics. But even if three or four republics leave the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union will not disintegrate because the majority of the republics understand that they cannot exist without union—not in a federation, but in a confederation. For instance, currently there is a process of negotiation among the Russian Federated Republic, Byelorussia, Ukraine, and Kazakstan, economically the most powerful and highly populated republics, to conclude a treaty for confederation, to which other republics may also accede. As will be seen in the next few years the Soviet Union can solve its problems.

Much of the solution to the Soviet Union's problems will depend on the creation of a center-left coalition. Now President Gorbachev faces the challenge from the hard-liners, who are even against his support, as uncertain as it is, for the privatization and movement of the country to a free-market economy. Facing this resistance, it is in Gorbachev's interests to move to the left and to form a center-left coalition. Both Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Yeltsin need each other in order to withstand the pressure from the conservative forces within the party and military-industrial complex. Together they will be able to prevent revolt and repression and to move the country beyond *perestroika* to real democracy, market economy and the construction of a new civilized society.

III. Western Support

How can the democratic movement in the USSR be supported by Western Countries? I think there is a possibility, first of all, for a clear-cut policy by Western countries for economic assistance to the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union's economy were in better shape, we would not have any trouble in many Soviet Republics. A second "Marshall Plan" should be adopted for the Soviet Union, but not on the basis of equal distribution among the old republics. Assistance should be given instead to those republics that are moving toward a market economy and undergoing the process of democratization. The political center is in favor of a socialist market economy. But there is no socialist versus capitalist market economy; there is either a market economy or a non-market economy. Likewise, there is no socialist versus capitalist democratization; there is only one democratization. To encourage change in the Soviet Union, assistance should be given to those republics that are moving to a market economy and where the process of democratization is really taking place.

Conclusion

I cannot agree with those speakers who believe the Soviet Union is about to collapse and disintegrate. Many years ago, the American writer Mark Twain wrote "the rumors about my death are greatly exagger-

ated," and I believe the rumors about the collapse and death of the Soviet Union are greatly exaggerated. Even today the Soviet Union is a great power both militarily and economically. Its economy is one of the largest in the world. The potential of the country is enormous, and I think it will be able to settle the problems it faces in the future. With the assistance of Western countries, the Soviet Union will be able to settle them more quickly.