
LECTURE

Translated by Tim Ennis

**SOVIET INTELLIGENCE IN LATIN
AMERICA DURING THE COLD WAR***

Nikolai Leonov

In these pages we present a transcript of the lecture and dialog given by former Sub-Director of the State Security Committee (KGB) of the Soviet Union, General Nikolai Leonov, in the *Centro de Estudios Públicos* on September 22nd, 1998. After giving his view of the guidelines that oriented Soviet foreign policy in the Third World during the Cold War, General Leonov highlights the decisive role the Cuban Revolution played in Soviet policy towards Latin America, arguing that both Cuba (the triumph of socialism without foreign intervention) and Chile (the installation of socialism by electoral means) were two landmarks for socialist forces worldwide. As regards Chile, he also refers to the aid provided by the USSR to the government of Salvador Allende, and reveals that in the northern

* Lecture and dialogue edited by Maria Teresa Miranda. See also the interview with General Nikolai Leonov in this edition.

Between 1983 and January 1991, General Nikolai Leonov was Sub-Director of the State Security Committee (KGB) of the Soviet Union, the second most important post within the KGB structure. Previously he was Sub-Director of the KGB's Analysis and Information Department (1973-1982) and Sub-Director of its Latin American Department (1968-1972). General Leonov is Doctor in Latin American History, at the USSR Academy of Sciences, and author of the book, *Essays on Contemporary Central American History* (Moscow: Ed. Nauka, Academy of Sciences, 1973). In 1985 he published his memoirs under the title *Difficult Times* (Moscow: International Relations). Currently he is a professor at the Institute of International Relations in Moscow.

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hemisphere summer of 1973, approval had been given to send weapons (artillery, tanks) to the Chilean Army. However, when information was subsequently received about the imminence of a coup d'état to depose Allende, the order was given to unload the weapons in another country. He also tells of the plan drawn up by Soviet Intelligence -which in the end was not carried out- to free the Secretary General of the Chilean Communist Party, Luis Corvalán, from prison on Dawson Island after the military takeover on September 11th 1973. General Leonov also describes the circumstances that led to the breakup of the USSR and puts forward his view of the acute crisis Russia is going through today.

Esteemed ladies and gentlemen, today I have a difficult task: namely, in a very brief space of time, to give a description of Soviet Intelligence activities of in this area of the world called Latin America. Before getting down to the essence of the topic, something needs to be said about the general attitude of the Soviet Union and the USSR Communist Party towards the Third World, which Latin America belonged to at that time, and to which it still largely belongs today.

1. The Khrushchev policy line: 1953-1964

The Third World played a big role in the East-West confrontation, in the confrontation between capitalism and socialism, between the United States and the Soviet Union—especially in the post-war years. And in the era of Nikita Khrushchev, in particular, the Soviet Union's policy was very aggressive, energetic and proselytizing: in those years, Soviet agencies adhered to the lemma that the destiny of the world, its future, depended on the outcome of the struggle in the Third World. In other words, this was considered the preserve of socialism; as also it was considered the preserve of capitalism. Using the vocabulary of that time, which I imagine you understand perfectly, in the contest between the socialist camp and capitalist power, whoever got in on the ground floor in the Third World would ultimately be the winner of the titanic struggle being waged between two different worlds.

What variants, or what material forms did this policy take? It was materialized in big investments of Soviet capital in Third World countries.

You may recall that in those years we built the famous Aswan dam on the River Nile in Egypt, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars; a big iron and steel plant in Bhilai, in India; stadiums, hospitals and factories in Indonesia, etc. In other words there was massive injection of Soviet capital. The ideological basis of this policy was very clear: as we developed industries in Third World countries, so these industries would generate a proletariat, and our strength would multiply with these new proletarian detachments, our class allies.

That was the basic classical idea, calculated over many years, which Nikita Khrushchev was even willing to sustain by somewhat adventurous measures. Perhaps the clearest example you'll know of in this regard is the Soviet presence in Cuba, which culminated in the famous 1962 Missiles Crisis. But few people know that there was almost an entire army of Soviet troops in Cuba in this period. In fact about 40,000 Soviet soldiers were stationed on Cuba, and about 150 nuclear warheads had been installed or at least transported there. In other words, this was a highly dangerous situation, but one that the United States did not notice because its intelligence services failed to calculate the potential risk hanging over them in the event of a full-scale conflagration. Due partly to the unfolding of the missiles crisis in Cuba, Nikita Khrushchev was overthrown in October (Autumn) 1964, and a about-turn took place in Soviet policy. The crisis was too dangerous for the Soviet State; we had been one step away from nuclear war. The whole world was stricken with fear, and the leaders of the respective countries, Kennedy and Khrushchev paid with their lives — physical or political—for the way the crisis unfolded: Kennedy was killed a year later in 1963; Nikita Khrushchev was deposed in 1964.

2. The Brezhnev Administration

Khrushchev was replaced in the Soviet Union by Leonid Brezhnev, whose administration introduced substantial changes to USSR policy in the Third World. Whereas, before, all bets were big ones and Nikita indulged in threatening and challenging language —such as when he said in the United States that we, the Soviets, would make the Yankees grovel—Brezhnev changed the language and began to talk of peaceful coexistence. And, of course, if there is to be peaceful coexistence, then policies must change. Already in the first year of the Brezhnev administration everything was different from the Khrushchev era: a policy of moderation began to be applied, one of caution; some might say cowardice... From then on, in the

most tense of situations, Soviet policy would be confined to sending advisers and material supplies.

In this period the Soviet Union let highly advantageous situations pass by—not only in the Third World— which could have meant a territorial, as well as an ideological and economic expansion of its power.

Recall, for example, what we call the “Crocodile Plot” in Egypt, in 1972. Egypt is a key player in the near East, and at that time Soviet penetration was quite deep. One day several Egyptian politicians including ministers and others, turned up in the Soviet ambassador’s office and said to him, “What would you do, Mr. Ambassador, if we were to take power tomorrow, if we overthrow President Sadat and declare socialism in Egypt?”

The ambassador, who more or less understood the general tenor of the change in Soviet policy in the Third World, stayed silent. He kept quiet, he did not reply. One day went by, then another; then President Sadat, who had his information sources, suddenly carried out a coup d’état, summoned his closest collaborators, the ministers that had made the approach to the Soviet embassy, and arrested them. I believe each of them got 20 years’ prison. And so the possibility of beginning to construct socialism in Egypt passed by almost unnoticed.

1972 saw the failure of our illusions in Egypt: the discovery of the “Crocodile Plot” destroyed our relations with Sadat. Soviet military advisers were expelled from the country and Sadat refused to repay Egypt’s military debt of three million dollars. This meant a serious crisis in the area, where the USSR had very big interests.

Then other occasions came along that were also highly propitious. You may recall the famous “Carnation Revolution” in Portugal: a NATO country where a highly pro-western government, very pro-Yankee, was overthrown, opening up far-reaching prospects for Soviet expansion in Europe. The weakening of NATO had always been our most desired objective, but the Brezhnev administration let this occasion go by too without trying to make a strike. Later on, other similar cases followed.

As regards Angola and Mozambique, we became involved in the events of those countries against our will. The Cubans were first violin here, and the Russians, playing second fiddle, had to provide material sustenance; but these were not Russian initiatives.

Naturally, I’m talking of tendencies.

So, what were the reasons for this change of Soviet policy towards the Third World, which later was reflected in Latin America? I believe the first reason was a weakening of socialism itself in Europe, clearly visible in

the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, when Warsaw Pact troops had to go in to restore the unity of the bloc and the purity of its economic and social doctrine. For Russia this was a very loud alarm bell. Imagine the fear and worry this episode caused in the leadership of the Soviet Union. Of course, compared to a situation like this, the Third World seemed very remote...

The second reason that has to be considered was the aggravation of tensions and disagreements with China. Precisely when you were experimenting with socialism here during the time of Salvador Allende, our confrontations with China became more acute. In 1969 these had already given rise to armed border conflicts. As you may recall, the older among you perhaps, we ended up solving the territorial dispute by force of arms. In those skirmishes, which in fact were big, there were many deaths. The losses must have been extremely high, thousands and thousands, especially on the Chinese side, because the Soviet army of that time decided to launch a heavy artillery attack on Chinese national territory, in reprisal for the aggression it had suffered.

It should also be taken into consideration that Henry Kissinger made a secret journey to China in 1971, to the Soviet leadership's amazement and fear as this raised the specter of a possible alliance between the United States and China.

Of course, it is clear that problems of such dimensions, as well as the evident scarcity of technical resources and materials for greater expansion, forced the Soviet government and the Communist Party to seriously change their attitudes in the Third World. In the Latin American scenario this can be seen in the frictions that arose in relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1960s.

The situation that developed around the operations being carried out by Ché Guevara in Bolivia caused a serious distancing between the Soviet Union and Cuba. The Soviet leadership did not share the famous slogan of creating 100 Vietnams in the world, it was already too afraid of the situation in its own backyard; moreover 100 Vietnams would cost too much in human and material resources. The policies of Cuba and the Soviet Union were therefore different.

I even recall, when Ché Guevara died there in Bolivia, that the Soviet leaders spent two or three days pondering on how to write the famous guerrilla's obituary, as if this were a complex international matter. What should the tone be? Eulogize? Criticize? Or written in an objective way? In the end the obituary appeared but it was hard work.

Such was the background of world and Latin American politics in the 1960s and 1970s.

What were the factors that guided Soviet foreign policy in the Third World, including Latin America, and Chile in particular?

The first thing that needs to be recognized here is that the Soviet Union itself had developed as an autarchic power: it was self-sufficient in everything. This general line, approved at the dawning of Soviet power in 1924, stuck rigidly to the principle of living with what one produces. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union never depended on foreign markets or external sources. In minerals, for example, we had copper, lead, etc. So when one asks what interest the Soviet Union would have in foreign resources, above all Latin American ones, it has to said quite honestly that such imperialistic appetites for the resources of other countries did not exist.

Our trade with Latin America (Cuba apart) has been very modest, as well as irregular. When we lacked something, meat or grain for example, we made big purchases from Argentina. We also bought coffee and soya from Brazil. With Mexico, for example, there was never any major commercial exchange, and with Chile it was also very small. In 1969, Chilean-Soviet trade amounted to about US\$ 300 thousand per year, and nearly always this was Chilean products bought by the USSR. In 1970, it rose to US\$ 800 thousand and in 1971, US\$ 8 million. The maximum commercial exchange with Chile, worth 28 million rubles, occurred in 1973 during Salvador Allende's last year in power. Of this trade, a little over half were our shipments and a bit less than half were Chilean products (copper, wool and iodine) sent to the Soviet Union. In other words, we did not have economic reasons here to mobilize intelligence resources to defend Soviet interests. For example, the copper in the regions of Bolkhash, Dzhzhkazgan and the Urals satisfied our national needs.

As for strategic military aspects, here again we were not interested in acquiring military bases abroad. The United States and the Soviet Union had different military doctrines as regards how to prepare for the third World War—because both sides *were* preparing for this. While the United States relied on a network of military bases spread around the world, the Russians had no military bases outside their own territory.

The few bases that we acquired as a result of the World War II, such as the one in Finland, or Port Arthur on the Korean Peninsular, were handed back to Finland and China respectively in an act of unilateral generosity. We had no military bases abroad because Soviet armed forces relied on our weaponry installed in Soviet national territory. In other words, our military strategy was based on the development of heavy rockets and nuclear weapons. With this type of armament, the conventional

weaponry of the two powers was largely leveled out. So all efforts were aimed in this direction: developing rockets that would surely reach the territory of the possible enemy, causing unacceptable damage (much of this military power is still preserved). From this viewpoint none of the accusations that appeared in the press in those years bear even minimal resemblance to the truth.

The missiles in Cuba were a case apart, having nothing to do with strategic military doctrine.

It is another matter if we analyze the third factor, the political dimension.

Chile and Latin America did represent for the Soviet Union a political factor of enormous importance. As the Latin American flock was seen as a voting machine in the United Nations in favor of the United States, with the Latin American countries under the United States' sphere of influence and its capital, so for the Soviet Union it was politically very important to weaken U.S. influence in this region as far as possible.

Accordingly, all political efforts by the Soviet government, and hence our country's Intelligence Service, were aimed at causing the greatest possible harm to North American dominance in this part of the world. So we supported politically, sometimes by sending weaponry or other aid, anyone who was against United States dominance —any government, any national liberation movement, any revolutionary group. However, with few exceptions, the extreme left did not enjoy great popularity in the Kremlin at that time. They were feared, and for that reason were always sidelined. But reasonable patriotic center-left forces in Latin America always found strong support in the USSR. I personally took part in many operations of this type: I worked with many Latin American leaders, trying at least to encourage them, to help them as far as possible in their anti-North American stance.

In my book of recollections, published in Russia, I confess to some operations of this type¹. We took steps to help Panama, for example, in the process of recovering the Canal. For several years I had direct contact with General Torrijos. He knew who I was, where I came from and what I was there for. I was even alluded to in a book by Graham Greene, *Getting to Know the General*, where my visits to General Torrijos are described without mentioning my name. Of course, Torrijos and his people only knew that I was a representative of the Soviet Union, but to be more precise, I worked for the Intelligence Service. Once, we even did some

¹ Nikolai Leonov, *Ljioletie* (Difficult times), Moscow:1995. (Editor's Note)

harmless but highly effective things together (General Torrijos and I). One day Torrijos said to me, "Hey Nikolai, you know the Yanks are intercepting all my telephone conversations and communications systems, I am sure they are. So, as we are in the middle of the most difficult conversations on the Canal and they are very stubborn in discussing the clauses of the future treaty, let's do the following: you return to Moscow and I, from time to time, am going to call you up by phone at your apartment in Moscow, and in very vague terms I am going to explain the state of the negotiations. And you, also in vaguest and most sophisticated language, will more or less tell me the line I should take in continuing the conversations. They will intercept everything and will not understand in the slightest, but I bet you we'll have much smoother dealings than before. We held these conversations several times, sowing panic among the Soviets and in my family: "General Torrijos on the phone and wants to talk to you!"

There were many such cases. I visited at least half a dozen Latin American presidents. We had contacts with each one of them, not Intelligence or direct spying of course, but contacts of a political nature relating to the struggle against United States dominance of this hemisphere.

When the Sandinista revolution triumphed I was the first to arrive in Managua. The city was still smoking and we had no embassy, but I was there under the cover of a journalist. When the military movement in Peru occurred in 1968, I was immediately sent to Chile, also under the cover of a journalist, because that was the easiest way. I had to come to Chile because we had an embassy there and I could unload the information, make the first contacts and the initial assessments of the process. In Peru we had no embassy, not even a deciphering office, no communications, nothing; As a result there was no way of passing my information to Moscow, so in early 1969 I came to Chile for the first time, and in fact that was the only time have been here apart from now.

As I said, we were working politically against the United States and we put all our heart into this task.

The communist parties of Latin America were an important factor in the world communist movement. Numerically they were a strong nucleus of about twenty parties. Nearly always these parties were in tune with the political line of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party. Hence, relations of cooperation, contact and friendship were very strong. The communist party leaders enjoyed great prestige not only among the communist leadership, but also in Soviet society. For that reason Luis Corvalán was well known there in our country, and highly respected. The

same was true of Rodney Arismendi of Uruguay, and Victorio Codovila of Argentina; but perhaps more so the Chilean. And, for the same reason, when I now look at the sums of money that the communists of the Soviet Union sent as solidarity aid to Chilean communists, I see that the amounts assigned to this country were the biggest or second biggest among all communist parties². They were not extremely large figures, not Moscow gold, it wasn't that much. However, it was a show of class solidarity among parties.

All political work in Latin America was of the utmost importance for us. Of course, apart from that, there was the other line of work, the direct work of Soviet Intelligence in Latin America.

3. The KGB in Latin America

What was Soviet Intelligence up to in Latin America? What things did it do?

The work we carried out in practice was the classical type, but it limited by a basic frontier: the Latin American countries were not the target of Soviet Intelligence activities. And for this simple reason: no Latin American country, including Chile, was seen as an enemy of the Soviet Union. At no time, even when you had a military regime, did we perceive Chile as an enemy country. Hence there was no need to carry out work against you.

Rather, we saw the whole territory of Latin America as a hunting ground for opportunities in our work against the United States. We always ask forgiveness of the Latin Americans for having used their territory for this purpose.

It was easy for us to receive our U.S. contacts here. Here we could talk with them, receive information, pass them money if necessary, or provide them with technical things needed in the spying profession, as some call it (we never used that name).

Counterintelligence inside the United States is rigorous and strong, but when a North American leaves his country he is another person completely. And if we receive him in Rio de Janeiro, or here, or in Acapulco, the situation is completely different...

² Here General Leonov is alluding to the revelations relating to the economic aid provided by the USSR to the Chilean Communist Party which appeared in research by Olga Uliánova and Eugenia Fediakova, "Aspects of Financial Aid from the USSR CP to Chilean Communism during the Cold War," *Estudios Públicos*, 72, (Spring 1998). (Editor's Note)

There are a huge number of North Americans in Latin America —businessmen, journalists, politicians and others. It was much easier to work with them here than in the United States, above all when we had Latin American friends who helped us to study them, to see them through an infra-red light and discover their weaknesses. This also allowed us to acquire North American citizens who could be useful to us. And of course, the Latin American who had direct access to certain North American secrets also came in to our field of vision. A businessman who worked with the United States could buy us things we needed, for example. These are the classical intelligence tasks.

On the other hand, the “scientific-technical” work, as we call it, was quite well developed too. You largely used North American technology, and as we were surrounded by a technical-scientific blockade, we used all means to break that blockade.

So Latin America was one of the places we got technology from. We even sought things for agriculture, seeds for example, or what our ministries requested for our “popular” economy as we called it. If they asked us for a type of potato that was resistant to insects, the cold or damp, then of course we sought it here, in this continent where the potato came from. This was a classical task, but did no harm to the Latin American countries.

As regards Chile, we only had diplomatic relations for nine years: between 1964 and 1973. Part of this period corresponded to the *Unidad Popular* government, when there was no need to set up a more or less large-scale investigation structure; there were no objectives, nor time for that.

In the KGB there was a rule banning the recruitment of informants among communists (of other countries) so as not to harm the doctrine or brother parties. In Chile, the socialists of that time were more left-wing than the communists, for which reason they were outside the contingent of possible agents. We had an observation point that served simply as an information monitor on the domestic situation in Chile, which was too simple and obvious to make the potential of the Intelligence Service operate.

Now, when so many years have gone by and we see our country, the Soviet Union, completely destroyed; when we see our nation, Russia, relegated to the bottom rung of the world’s states, at times looking back over the road we have traveled one wants to echo Simón Bolívar’s famous remark: “we have plowed the sea”. It is true, there are many things we pursued but did not achieve. But I also remember what my Latin American

friends once told me in a conversation: “No you are wrong; see what Latin America is like now, look at how strong her states are and the amount of independence they gained in those forty years we dedicated to intelligence work. Look at what is happening in Cuba, see how the influence of the United States has been weakened in this area of the world, the influence that seemed untouchable. In practice, that is our grain of sand, that is our achievement from those many years of intelligence work in this region.”

Thank you very much.

DIALOG WITH SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

— *How do you explain the so rapid and surprising breakup of the Soviet Union?*

—This question is a global and very important one. I believe our generation will only be able to sketch out an answer... But I can give my view on this, a personal view, of course, which may or may not be correct. I am a citizen of that country, I devoted many years of work in Intelligence in the State Security Committee (the KGB) to it, and I see this catastrophe in a sweeping projection covering over seventy years of history of the Soviet State.

What do I base this on? The Russian empire was a unitary state; it was not divided into republics according to the nation living in them. True, Russia as an empire was divided into administrative units, but all were equal under imperial law. Now, when the Bolshevik communist revolution began, nationalist aspirations also sprang up. It has to be remembered that the Bolsheviks were resisted by many *caciques* far from St. Petersburg and Moscow. And Russian social democracy itself —Lenin and Stalin— always referred to the Russian Empire as “the prison of the peoples”, the prison that had to be destroyed. So, to win over the sympathies of the nationalities that populated the Czarist empire, the Bolsheviks promised to grant some autonomy to each of the peoples that inhabited the vast areas of the country. So different republics, which we called federated, began to arise in the former territory of the Russian Empire, and each republic began, little by little, to acquire practically all the attributes of an independent state.

Instead of controlling this separatist process, central power in Moscow closed its eyes to it, and in the end each republic came to have its own communist party, its own government with ministers, a council of

ministers, parliament, etc. Each republic came to have its Academy of Sciences, Literary Union, Painters' Union, Composers' Union, and each republic came to have its own communist party with its own central committee and its own ideology, lightly tinged with nationalism. So there was a communist party of the Ukraine, at the same time as there was the communist party of the Soviet Union. A contradiction, don't you think? If a person was a militant of the Ukrainian party, was he not also a militant of the Soviet Union party at the same time?

The borders between the republics were arbitrarily drawn on the map with a pencil. Worse still, our governors thought that giving Ukraine more land from Central Russia, for example, would dissolve the Ukrainian element in the Russian population, and hence separatist and nationalistic tendencies would be diminished. As a consequence, territories populated by Russians were ceded to Ukraine, such as the area of Kharkov, an important industrial city. Later, in 1954, always believing the Russian element would help to maintain cohesion among the republics, the Crimean peninsular was given to Ukraine, an area whose population was mostly Russian. By the same criterion, a huge piece of Russian territory was handed to Kazakhstan—which never before in history had been an independent state—and Russians now account for half the population of Kazakhstan.

The Soviet leaders thought this situation could be maintained over time, that it would only be a domestic phenomenon of the Soviet Union. But as the years went by, the leaders of these national republics came to acquire more and more rights, more and more privileges, and they increasingly isolated themselves from the center. So, by the time Gorbachev came to power, the practical situation was considerably undermined. It was very dangerous. Placards and posters even began to appear representing the Soviet Union in the form of a hand grenade, with the names of the republics written on it. All that was missing was to throw the grenade which would explode precisely where those imaginary borderlines between the republics were drawn. This situation, extremely dangerous from the historical and political point of view, was created by Soviet power itself. Nobody ever thought that one day it could work as a time bomb. But when the nationalist danger became apparent, it was too late. I remember when our KGB chief, Andropov, whom I knew personally, received the report on the situation in Uzbekistan. The party chief there, i.e. the all-powerful leader, was Rashidov. The KGB report on Uzbekistan presented a spine-chilling picture: it showed how the leaders of that republic had become a group of ferocious nationalists who where

thinking of breaking away from the center, for it is better to be a head of state than head of a republic which is a member of a country. When Andropov read this report, he didn't dare take any practical repressive measures against the republic's leadership; of course, in the Stalin era they would all have been arrested, and the problem would have been resolved easily. But in this case, Andropov preferred to pull the KGB chief out of Uzbekistan and send him to one of the Eastern European Embassies so as to save his life—for they would have killed him if they found out he had drawn up the report.

To tell the truth, the situation was highly dangerous. Hence Andropov's famous remark: "We eradicated nationalism as we inherited it, from the Czarist era, but it appeared in other forms, in other guises, so we have to work very hard over a long period to eradicate this evil." Andropov was extremely careful because he knew there was a danger of detonation.

When Gorbachev came to power, he made a tremendous mistake. Knowing that this problem existed, that it was already evident, he takes a drastic step: he fires the First Secretary of the Communist Party in Kazakhstan, whose name was Kunaev, and replaces him with Kaolin, a Russian from the center. This was an error of major proportions.

Days later, the first armed mutinies broke out in the Kazakhstan capital. The youth of Kazakh nationality came out in protest against this change in head of Republic, and the forces of law and order had to move in. Skirmishes occurred and the inevitable happened: the leaders of the different republics realized that this could also happen to any one of them, and began to revise the terms of the treaty that had served as the basis of the Soviet Union. Thus the process of disintegration began.

Later on, other difficulties arose, such as ethnic conflicts between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, between Turks and Uzbeks, etc. This chain of fires could only be put out by an iron hand. But Gorbachev was not a fireman; he was a firebrand. He lit fuses all over the place; he threw tapers everywhere and conflicts broke out.

By 1990 the idea of converting the Soviet Union into a confederation had gathered strength, and so comes the final stage: the breakup of the Soviet Union.

It was then that a group of influential politicians, including the Vice-President, the Defense Minister, the Interior Minister and the KGB president—all of them against the treaty Gorbachev was preparing with national leaders—tried to halt this process of disintegration in a sort of parody of a plot. The day before the signing of the new treaty to convert the Soviet union into a confederation, the failed clash of August 1991

occurred. They called it a “putsch”, but it was not a putsch, or anything of the sort, because there was no use of force. It was only a gesture by old men, a show and nothing else.

Thus the Soviet Union disappeared.

When Gorbachev was forced out of the post of President of the Soviet Union, the first thing Yeltsin did was to go to Belorussia and sign the paper putting an end to the Soviet Union. This was a totally illegal and arbitrary act, because when the Soviet Union was set up in 1922, 4,000 delegates from all the future republics were present in the Kremlin, in Moscow. They discussed and deliberated over the question of setting up a unitary state, voted in favor of it and thus legalized the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The very scenario of the liquidation of the Soviet Union is something out of story books. Three leaders, the Ukrainian, the Belorussian and the Russian³, met in a little hunting lodge deep in the forest, in a zone populated by bison; an extremely remote area. The lodge itself is some 500 or 600 meters from the border with Poland. Apparently they were afraid that the army would rise up if they signed; so there, at least, in a leap and a bound they would be on the other side of the border.

Historic acts of great significance are never done this way; they are always held in a central square or in an important place. But this time it was like thieves sharing out the loot: you get this, you get that. No other head of republic was invited to participate. Thus, in the act of liquidation of the Soviet Union, leaders of three of the fifteen republics took part, but the twelve remaining republics were not represented. Their deputies were in Moscow waiting for the outcome, and they did not leave the Kremlin for weeks because they could not bring themselves to believe that the Soviet Union had been dissolved and they hadn't even been consulted. When eventually they had to accept the inevitable, they left the Kremlin almost in tears. It was an imposed independence.

Thus the Soviet Union was liquidated. I don't know if I have managed to give you an idea of how this happened, of where the delayed-action mine was, that had been placed under the Soviet Union by the communist leaders themselves in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.

—*My next question, General, relates to the current and future situation in Russia. What do you see as the way out of the extremely serious crisis that Russia is going through today? What are the possible scenarios, and what role do you think nationalism is playing at the moment?*

³ Kravchuk from the Ukraine, Shushkevich of Belorussia and Yeltsin of the Russian Federation. (Editor's Note)

—I believe there are only two alternatives for getting out of the situation we are in. Alternative №1, which is often mentioned in Russia, goes by the name of “Pinochet”. If you were in Russia you would be surprised how often you hear it said that we need a Pinochet, a General Franco, or someone to put an end to this decomposition of state and society. So this is one road; a path of force and some violence to bring this dramatic, tragic decomposition process to an end. The other road or alternative involves a strengthening of democracy, the installation of the so-called Rule of Law; in other words, reclaiming what we proclaimed in words on paper in 1991, but which we have not yet fulfilled. A combination of these alternatives might be possible: a strongman, right? With some trappings of democracy; but it is difficult to envisage this.

If neither of these options works, a third alternative is also possible: schism, separation into several more republics, of several regions. In fact we are now moving in this direction... The citizens of Russia today are not all equal under the law, nor are we now a homogeneous country. We are now a country made up of different nuclei, ethnic or administrative, which keep themselves quite independent.

Take Tartary for example, a very important region whose capital is Kasan, with aircraft and helicopter factories, and basically inhabited by Tartars. The Tartars have already declared that their sons will not serve in the Russian army outside the borders of Tartary, that they are not going to pay federal taxes higher than those they themselves have set. And other republics are following them.

Now with the financial crisis many governors are taking measures of self-defense: banning the export of food products, for example. The are not letting flour, wheat or meat leave, as they say everyone should survive within their own region. And the regions are big; some are perhaps bigger than Chile...

Due to lack of maintenance in the army, some governors are seeking powers to provision and assume responsibility for the armies quartered in their territories. Perhaps you have heard of General Lebed, governor of one the most extensive and wealthiest areas of Siberia, with a territory several times as big as Chile. The first thing Lebed did on taking office, a short while ago, was to reclaim command of the troops stationed in that zone, where, by the way, there are several missile installations. Lebed says the troops are going hungry and that this is dangerous; if they are going to feed the military and maintain them, then they must have command of these troops... Thus the dismemberment of the army is beginning.

At this moment, the process of breakup in Russia is evident. Most analysts and politicians who fully realize this danger are talking of this. The famous Brzezinski, in his latest book, *The Chessboard*, talks precisely of that⁴. He says that the main task of the Russian leaders now is to maintain the unity of the country. He insists that Russia, or what remains of it, should be divided into states: one state in the European part of Russia, another in the far east, and a third state in Siberia and the Urals. He says this openly. People read it and they comment on it.

Yes; this is now a real danger. When really there is no government, when the President is nothing either physically or intellectually, this is the real variant that is being played out in Russia.

Going back to the Augusto Pinochet alternative, it is difficult to see this being adopted in such a pure way as in Chile, because in Russia there is no homogeneous military force, a cohesive force that could serve as a platform of support for a general, or a civilian, who wanted to turn himself into the savior of Russia. The Russian army is not the Chilean army. Here in Chile, from the soldier in the ranks up to the general, everyone is united institutionally, they have the same corporate spirit, they have more or less the same interests. In Russia the army is different: firstly it is not professional. The soldier does not want to remain in the army today, and seeks the first opportunity to desert. Young people invent thousands of pretexts to avoid recruitment, pamphlets are even sold in the metro stations explaining how to avoid military service!

The officer corps, on the other hand, is attached to the military apparatus. But due to lack of payment and lack of housing, the officers are all now looking for a way to find work outside the army, or else they are trying to hold out as long as possible to reach the age when they have to right to an officer's pension, which although a pittance, at least gets paid more regularly than wages. So the officers are very demoralized. Many of them had been idealists in the socialist era, people serving the socialist ideal who did not have to worry about things like housing, because Soviet power guaranteed every retired officer an apartment; but this now is not being complied with.

On the other hand, the generals, who had wide ranging access to the enormous material and financial assets of the Soviet army, have thus enriched themselves, and are so distant from the rest of the army that there is nobody with enough authority to lead a gesture of patriotic salvation.

⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Harper Collins, 1998.

For the moment, I do not see any of them, nor the army, in a situation where they would be capable of replicating the deeds or exploits of the Latin American military, which has often intervened in politics as saviors of their fatherland. I believe this would be very difficult in Russia. Perhaps it could be achieved by a strong personality, but then he would have to convoke the entire population and initiate a veritable revolution to create new armed forces. A popular militia would have to be set up, or military leverage would have to be available to halt the disorder reigning in the country, perhaps taking the rest of the army, especially certain strategic units, missile divisions, which still have some degree of some combativeness... This might be possible, because the desire of the people is there, precisely because what remains of us as a people, as a Russian ethnicity, is on the brink of survival.

On the other hand, I see the democratic alternative as most unlikely in Russia. Difficult as it maybe to acknowledge this, our country was not ready for democracy. It had never known it before. The Russian empire was absolutist, and Soviet power was totalitarian, as they say; but unitarism was always there: ideological, economic, administrative, military. Democracy did not form part of life, except in caricaturesque forms which don't count. We had never had real democracy. From one day to the next, however, democracy was declared with freedom for all; and liberty became libertarianism, because there were no institutions to underpin its fulfillment. Parliament issues laws but nobody respects them, not even the President himself. Everyone breaks the law. The law's loss of prestige is complete, total. So to seek the democratic solution now would be very difficult. States of mind among the political forces are too contradictory. Corruption and theft, are too widespread: the country is in practice riddled with the cancerous metastasis of corruption. The United States recognizes this; we ourselves recognize it. It is no secret.

It is sad to talk like this about the situation of the country itself, but we must seek some solution to our current ills. For that reason we are looking at the possibilities of different alternatives. One alternative is the strongman, involving violence and even some bloodshed (only a little I hope, for we don't really have much left). The other alternative is democracy, which is still not ruled out. For example, the idea has recently been proposed, with the President's consent, of calling an assembly to reform the Constitution that was imposed in an absolutist way. But the list of all the amendments to the Constitution is so long that I don't believe even half of today's Russians will still be around by the time we manage to reform it, elect a new President and all swear respect for the Law. So while

the democratic alternative may be discussed, really I see it as highly improbable in our country.

I believe we will seek a strongman in the elections of 2000. The two front runners at the moment are of this type. Unless someone else appears, one candidate will be Lushkov, the mayor of Moscow, a short stubby man, bald, but energetic. Lushkov has real constructive abilities, as well as energy and administrative talent, because he runs Moscow. He also has financial resources and the support of many governors. So it may be him. But he will have to run the country through extraordinary laws, relying on repressive force; otherwise it will be impossible to halt corruption, theft...

The other candidate may be General Lebed, of Siberia, whom I mentioned earlier. If the Moscow mayor has a more or less clear political profile, more understandable at least, the same cannot be said of Lebed. Lushkov is a patriot, a hard-liner, a good administrator, and he is quite concerned for the needs of the people. For example, he authorized poor pensioners, who have no way of paying urban transport fares, to travel free on the metro. When this terrible present crisis broke out, Lushkov raised retirement pensions for people living in Moscow, in defiance of federal law. It was not much, but he raised all of their pensions. He has also been concerned that we should preserve some of our automobile industry and has managed to keep two large automobile plants going, even using resources from the west, through the rent of office buildings, etc.

Lebed, on the other hand, a man who seems authoritarian —you may have seen him on television, with a gruff voice, expressing himself very directly and at times with a sophisticated tone— is a candidate I have little confidence in, because he has changed position and switched from one side to the other on several occasions. So it is very difficult to say where Lebed is finally heading...

To give you an idea, Lebed was a general of the parachute regiment in the Soviet era. He was appointed to lead the troops that were supposed to assault the famous Moscow White House⁵ and arrest Yeltsin. However, he presented himself at the White House which is the government headquarters, and put himself at Yeltsin's disposal. The latter promised him something —neither of the two says what it was— and Lebed left, saying it was impossible to take the White House by force, as it is a veritable fortress, impregnable... But that ended. Yeltsin did not give Lebed the post of Defense Minister as he had promised him, and Lebed, annoyed, takes off

⁵ The white marble building which between 1991 and 1993 was the headquarters of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, and was known by the Muscovite people as the "White House". (Editor's Note)

his Yeltsin-defender badge, throws it in his face and goes off in a huff. So Yeltsin sends him far away to Moldavia, where there is a small army, the 14th Army, an army of cadres, as we say, i.e. basically officers of the General Staff, but where also there were enormous deposits of military provisions and equipment destined for the third world war. Lebed, then, makes hay with all the wealth that was at his disposal there.

He stayed there, as head of this military unit far from Russia, for two years. But the time came when he got fed up with selling off what was there, which was a lot, and suddenly he decided to turn to politics. He comes to Moscow and puts out a couple of highly nationalistic patriotic documents. He retires from the army, again by way of opposition to Yeltsin, and emerges as a presidential candidate in the 1996 campaign. The people believe him because his propaganda has an effect and many people are now afraid of the communists, whereas Lebed appears as a patriot like them but without their stigma. Fifteen million Russians voted for General Lebed.

Yeltsin, leader of the democrats, wins the elections. And General Lebed, who had run his entire campaign from the opposition, suddenly makes another alliance with Yeltsin, handing him his followers' 15 million votes to become an official in Yeltsin's government. The man who yesterday was criticizing Yeltsin, is today his right hand man in the war in Chechnya. I believe three or four months of collaboration went by, and then Lebed breaks with him once more. He wasn't content with the post he had been given. He resigns, and after spending nearly a year in the shadows, re-emerges as candidate for governor of that Siberian region. And with the money he obtained from army assets, and help from the Mafia, as they say, who control the aluminum industry concentrated in this area, he now takes over as governor. Is Lebed an ally or an opponent of Yeltsin? Is he a patriot, or is he a puppet of the aluminum Mafia? I do not know, but I would never give my vote to someone like him, even if he told me he was going to impose order and everything else... Apart from that, his intellectual baggage is practically nil.

—I would like to go back a bit to the Latin American problem. My first question relates to Cuba. What did Cuba and the Cuban revolution mean to the Soviet Union? To what extent did the Cuban revolution have a global impact, as it were, or affect the foreign policy of the USSR and the work of the Intelligence Service in Latin America? Was Cuba a satellite of Soviet policy, or did it have an independent policy? What did the Soviet Union and Cuba have in common, and where did they differ on Latin American issues?

The second question is about Chile. What did Chile mean to the Soviet Union and to what extent did Salvador Allende's victory affect the Soviet Union's view of this country?

—The Cuban revolution played a very important role in the policy of the Soviet Union. Its victory traced out a dividing line in the Soviet Union's Latin American policy. Before Fidel's triumph, Latin America was seen as part of a continent that included the United States: i.e. the region was not separate from the North American problem. For example, in the Soviet Foreign Ministry there was an America Department that covered both the United States and Latin America. The same was true in Intelligence itself, where I worked. But as a result of Fidel's triumph, interest in Latin America grew, and strategic interests emerged which made it necessary to study the region and pay attention to it as an area with its own *sui generis* characteristics. It is then that institutions dedicated to Latin America were set up in the Soviet Union: a Latin American Department was established in the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and Latin American Intelligence was separated from the United States; a Latin American Institute is established within the USSR Academy of Sciences, and the journal *Latin America* is founded. In other words, Latin America entered the Soviet political arena thanks to Cuba, because previously there was a much more limited interest. So the answer is, yes: Cuba did play a very big role.

Was Cuba a satellite of the Soviet Union or not? Well, I know the Cuban leaders and I have followed its process very closely since the assault in the Moncada right up to my most recent visit to the country last August, and I can assure you that the Cubans have always had their own political, economic and social line. They were never satellites of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, diplomatic relations with Cuba were established one and a half years after the triumph of the Cuban revolution. So they did not go running desperately to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Embassy in Havana only opened in May 1960. It was only the difficulties and obstacles the Cuban leaders had with the United States in the initial years of the revolution that led them to the conclusion that they could find shelter, aid and support on the other side of the world. Of course, relations became closer after the Bay of Pigs episode and the complicated missiles crises.

But Cuba always maintained a very independent policy. The Cubans never consulted the Soviet Union about what they were doing in Latin America. They considered it an area of their own: the same language, the same religion, the same history, the same mentality.

For the Cubans, the Russians in Latin America were, well, desirable people, but second or third in terms of importance. At times we had to consult them about measures we were thinking of employing here; but they always acted independently wherever it was. In Africa, for example, I recall that when they helped Ethiopia in the war against Somalia, there were disagreements between the Cuban and Soviet military. The Cubans were planning to carry out maneuvers of deep penetration in the Somali rearward, and the Soviet generals there expressed doubts, saying it was impossible. The Cubans insisted and won the war, thereby gaining prestige among their Soviet colleagues. The same happened in Angola, where the troops were Cuban. Afterwards, we had to go in to sustain them materially, with arms, etc. But when the Russians gave advice, Fidel often replied, "the blood being spilt here is Cuban, your advice is hollow."

And this is what happened everywhere. I mentioned earlier Ché Guevara's operations in Bolivia. We didn't know anything about this; it was a matter for the Cubans.

So the Cubans were never satellites. They often approached us or distanced themselves from us for tactical reasons, but it can't be said that they were satellites.

Another example: in the statutes of the Soviet Communist Party there is a paragraph that states: "Militancy in the Party is incompatible with religious beliefs". Fidel Castro said that this was a mistake, a believer could be a member of the Communist Party, without any ideological incompatibility. "Our party, our society, has its own characteristics", and he did whatever he chose. Fidel was very independent in everything, but he always enjoyed enormous prestige in the Soviet Union, and at times this aroused envy. One might mention here —because in the end all political leaders are men of flesh and blood with their weaknesses— the irritation that must have been caused among a wide variety of leaders by the resounding applause Castro always received in the Congresses of the Soviet Union Communist Party, which were held in full solemnity in those years in the great palace of the Kremlin. People used to watch the applause the leaders of foreign delegations from brother parties received in the auditorium: the winner was always Castro.

As regards Chile, well, this country had enormous value and historical importance for us because of the installation of socialism by Salvador Allende's democratic path.

Chile represented a unique opportunity to show the world that socialism could triumph by electoral, peaceful means. Herein lay its attraction and political importance for the whole world, especially for leftist forces.

To be more explicit, it would have to be said that previously the installation of socialism had always been linked to the use of force, to violence, revolution and civil war. So it was in the Soviet Union with the October Revolution. In China the triumph of the revolution was largely the Soviet Union's doing, because we gave them territories liberated from the Japanese, we gave them weapons in abundance: armaments that we had collected as booty in the Second World War. And in Eastern Europe it was the Soviet army that set up socialist regimes in those countries, in the course of pursuing the Nazis.

Latin America has provided two unique and singular examples: Cuba, where the triumph of socialism occurred with no foreign intervention (the revolution in China was carried out with help from the USSR), and Chile with its peaceful route. All of this enriched socialist political thinking worldwide; this really represented something new for the theory of socialism. Salvador Allende built a new society without destroying the old government machine: the existing army was preserved, the old judicial system...

This had never been seen before, not only did public opinion in the Soviet Union perceive it as such, but in Europe too. Would it prove possible? Everyone was watching the Chilean case; we were following it day by day very anxiously. If Allende triumphed, the whole of Marxian theory would be turned upside down, because Marxism says that revolution, or the construction of socialism, necessarily requires the destruction of the state apparatus, the dissolution of the old army and a complete transformation. The theory was clearly set out in Lenin's famous book *Revolution and State*.

Of course, all our sympathies were with this experiment, and for that reason we followed the Chilean case with great attention. But we did not believe in its success, because what was happening in Chile completely contradicted what was written and what we had learnt.

If the experiment had in fact triumphed, I believe you would have been pioneers of modern human history, for you would have opened up a new route, an unknown path.

Fidel says the catastrophe socialism is now suffering is only temporary, it is a transitory thing. Some people say that communist and socialism are disappearing as a doctrine, as a path to the future, but many other people disagree. I don't think the door can remain closed for ever either. The Soviet Union disappeared, but there are many communist parties, in Europe, in Latin America, which still keep the flag flying. Mankind will never stop dreaming of the principles of equality and justice,

in one way or another. Also, it would be utterly wrong to believe that what we have now, you here and us there, is the end of mankind's social development -that after this there is nothing else. I believe the revolution will continue on, that we'll see other forms of living together, and the elements of socialism will survive.

Fidel himself, when he talks about the situation in his country now, says that we have to recognize that the defeat of socialism is temporary and we should hitch up to this changed world; however, there are two values that have to be defended whatever the situation. The first is the great social conquest of free access for all Cubans to all levels of education and training. The other is equal access for all Cubans to free medical service. These two values says Fidel, "We will never sacrifice".

That, in the end, is the essence of any just society. It is unfair when people have different starting points in life, as we say. The socialists of the last century thought God created us all equal and that we should all have the same opportunities for success in life. They believed that a person should keep what he or she could earn from their own personal abilities, but should not bequeath inheritances, because inheritance makes people unequal in the race of life. It is unfair when someone already has an inheritance, connections, friends, etc., and consequently starts one kilometer ahead of the others in life's race. Socialists have always sought to put an end to this. But that is another story...

—I would like you to go little deeper into what you said about Chile: what did you do to help the government of the Unidad Popular or, rather why did you let it fall? Or was it like the "Carnations Revolution" or the "Crocodile Plot"? What exactly happened?

—Listen, I am sure that the correlation of forces at that time was unfavorable for Salvador Allende's experiment. As I explained earlier, at that time Russia was facing conflicts with China and with the United States, as well as a weakening of the socialist system in our backyard (in Eastern Europe); moreover, material resources were already largely exhausted.

Having a profound respect for political experiment, and towards this country, I have to say that there was no decision to intervene very deeply in such far-off lands, nor any way of doing so when the correlation of forces, including those in Chile, were totally against it. North American investments here amounted to a billion dollars. The United States had large-scale interests here, and those interests were linked to many Chileans. The Russians had no support in Chile other than the Communist Party of

Chile or some union or other. This had an emotional ideological nature, but it was not a concrete material thing.

Russia did the most it could at the time. Apart from political and moral support, loans were granted. At the beginning there was a credit of US\$ 57 million, then another one. Three fishing ships were sent here to operate in Chilean waters and distribute their catch to the population. When the earthquake in 1971 occurred here, with its devastating after-effects, the Soviet Union donated a factory with the capacity to built 70,000 square meters of pre-fabricated homes per year. The first ship, the “Lunacharsky”, arrived in February 1972 with the equipment for the factory. In January 1973 setting up was complete, and in July 1973 the first two buildings were put up with 48 apartments each.

At the end of 1971, the first three factory ships arrived off the Chilean coast, “Promyslovik”, “Sumy” and “Yantar”. They were floating factories, and worked right up to the very day of the coup d’état providing Chileans 17,000 tons of frozen fish and 2.5 tons of fish meal. Allende greatly appreciated the aid from those ships.

Also there were plans to build a large fishing industry center in the city of Colcura (Arauco province) including a port for 50 large fishing boats, with refrigerators and equipment for ice production.

During the Allende administration, we provided Chile with 3,100 tractors, and we had a plan to build a lubricant factory, to come on line in 1975, with production levels that would have covered the country’s entire needs by 1980.

There was talk of a loan to send Soviet armaments, at Salvador Allende’s request—I believe (General) Prats asked for it... Well, nobody imagined calling in those loans afterwards. The materialization of this loan took some time, but in the Northern hemisphere summer of 1973 the ships carrying weapons for Chile were already on their way. But President Allende’s reaction to the assassination of his military aide-de-camp caused a very negative impression: he did not take advantage of the moment to mobilize the masses and come out on to the street. Because tragedy was already looming, and by the reports received through the CIA—where we had sources, as they were always our number one target—we had secure data that a coup d’état would occur, as it was already practically prepared. So, to make sure it wasn’t Soviet tanks that came out into the square to fire on the La Moneda palace, the ships were ordered to turn round, to change course and unload the weapons elsewhere, where they were sold.

Within our commercial possibilities, quite a lot of food was sent here: about 74,000 tons of wheat; more than a million tins of condensed

milk, quite a lot of frozen meat, which we took from the relatively parsimonious reserves that we had.

So, in the end, we did what was possible. But it cannot be said that we left you to your fate, because really the correlation of military, financial and all other forces were against the government of the *Unidad Popular*.

And I confess to you that Intelligence also gave a ruling. I have it noted in my book of memoirs. In the (northern) spring of 1973—I don't now recall the exact date—Andropov, who was KGB Head and a Politburo member, turned up at Intelligence headquarters near Moscow. He summoned everyone who had anything to do with Latin America and put a single question to us: how did we view the Chilean case? Did it have a chance or not? Should we use our last resources, or was it already too late to risk them? The discussion was quite profound; we met for an hour and a half. I also spoke because I was Head of the Information and Analysis Department. And considering your reality, seen from back there so far away at Intelligence Headquarters, we came to the conclusion that the measure being planned for granting a cash loan, I believe US\$ 30 million was being talked about, would be unable to rescue the situation in Chile. It would be like putting a patch on a worn-out tire.

We analyzed the situation in the army, the Chilean economy, all the propaganda media—television, radio, press—which were molding the conscience of Chilean society at that time. And we analyzed the internal situation among the forces comprising the *Unidad Popular*, because there were many contradictions, as you know better than I do. We considered Salvador Allende's refusal to resort to measures that we theoretically considered to be just, i.e. applying certain violence, a certain iron-hand. We also had clear in our minds that a revolution is worth something when it learns to defend itself. Salvador Allende wanted to do everything within the limits of democracy—bourgeois or representative democracy, as we call it.

Analyzing all these factors plus other external ones in Intelligence, we came to the conclusion that the money would be lost very quickly. We ended the meeting on this somewhat dramatic final note, because you don't know how sad it is to say these words, as a heartfelt supporter of the process.

—General, given the historical interest of what you have told us— that this loan to buy weapons, was requested by President Allende, and would have materialized around June 1973, because ships bringing armaments were already on their way— my question is, was this weaponry going to the army? What type of weaponry was it?

—I am not aware of the details. As I have said many times, the government structure in the Soviet Union was like an orange: when you look at it from above, it looks like a single fruit, right? But when it is peeled you see it is divided into sections, each independent of the others. One of these was the Defense Ministry and another was the Ministry of Foreign Relations, another was the State Security Committee. Often the one would not know what the others were doing.

The military loan and the sending of arms was a entirely matter for the army and the Defense Ministry. We as KGB or Intelligence always had our differences with them; there were always things that kept us apart, and each had its secrets. So I don't know the details of the type of weaponry that was on board those ships. I know there were tanks, yes. How many? I don't know. Some pieces of artillery, but again I don't know how many. Now I do know for certain —through the person who informed President Allende that the loan had been approved— that the amount was for US\$ 100 million.

—A final question on this point, because it seems to me to be an issue of great historical interest for us: from what part of the orange did the order come to not disembark the weapons in Chile?

—In this case in the Soviet Union the direct order could only emanate from a single person: the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, who at that time was Brezhnev. He alone could deal with things relating to state security, armaments, troops, and all that. Of course, the information reached him via various paths: through Intelligence, through the Ministry of Foreign Relations, through the Defense Ministry, which had their military intelligence and which was also represented here, so I imagine it had its contacts in the Chilean army. But all of that converged there at the top, from where the order came to halt the course of the ships.

—General, I was going to ask you about the “Deep Russia” that Solzhenitsyn speaks of, about how it has adapted to the changes, and whether it is possible that in the long run the neo-communists and nationalists are adapting. But I can't not ask you about Chile. You said that Salvador Allende was a revolutionary. At the same time, we have the case of Augusto Pinochet, who for many was also a revolutionary because of the economic changes he introduced in Chile. Who would you say was more revolutionary in Chile: Salvador Allende or Augusto Pinochet?

We also consider someone who radically changes the existing regime, be it from positions on the left or on the right, as revolutionary. In this case General Pinochet was also a revolutionary, because he changed

the course of things in Chile. A conservative is someone who maintains the trend, who is concerned to conserve it. Augusto Pinochet was not a conserver. Latin America is full of revolutionaries on one side or the other.

And as I said a little while back, I believe the name most mentioned now in Moscow is that of General Pinochet. I have asked my hosts to help me understand the essence of the Chilean process engendered in the years of the Pinochet Administration, which then developed and turned Chile into one of the most respected countries outside Latin America. In my country they think this is a paradise, capitalist, flourishing; with contented people, satisfied, with no domestic problems. And I would like you to tell me what has to be done to achieve this.

As we say, at times remembering the Chinese saying: results are the best test of the fairness of one policy or another. We only judge by the final result.

—During the period of the military government, there were a hundred fishing boats, Russian, as well as from countries in the Soviet orbit, fishing and operating on the two-hundred mile limit, often penetrating inside 200 miles. I'd like to know whether any of them were carrying out military or intelligence operations, and what results were obtained.

—Well, the question is interesting but very specific, and my answer may be incomplete. I know that our ships came here in large numbers to fish, because in those years we had quite wide-ranging collaboration with Peru. There were hundreds of our fishing boats extracting the wealth from the oceans, which was shared with the Peruvians: one part for them and another part for us.

As regards other types of operations: yes the North American press spoke of some Soviet fishing boats equipped with sophisticated radio electronic apparatus. But that always seemed dubious to me. What on earth would they be doing here with sophisticated radio electronic apparatus? Radio electronics is used to intercept lines of communication or detect the presence of radar stations, military installations, etc. This might easily make sense in the Caribbean, where there was danger for our ships and war planes which stopped over in Cuba from time to time. But I can't see any reason to bring this type of boat to Chilean waters: there were no North American bases here, as far as I am aware at least. Maybe there was a ship which maintained communication with satellites close by, because we always had several ships in international waters doing this work. Frankly, I don't know if this type of boat was here or not; but I don't believe ships came here with military objectives.

— *General, ten years ago in a process of dubious legality, to say the least, some Cuban generals were involved, and the Cuban Interior Ministry—with which the KGB had special relations— was quite badly damaged by this process. How did the KGB see this situation and how do you assess it ten years on?*

—I have watched the Cuban process over the decades and also followed the process you mention attentively. There are some things which propaganda—above all North American— have exploited year after year for decades. For example the supposed differences between Ché Guevara and Fidel Castro; the story that Ché left Cuba because of disagreements with Fidel over the construction of socialism, etc. Now, as far as I know, these claims are just a blatant lie. It suffices to read the correspondence Ché Guevara left before leaving for Bolivia; you have to see the information he sent Castro from Bolivia. I knew Ché Guevara quite well, and I even served as his interpreter. Ché would never have allowed himself the luxury of feeling equal or superior to Fidel Castro. He was among Fidel's most loyal friends.

Once when talking with Cuban colleagues about the madness of going into the Bolivian jungle, a mediterranean country, where even if a socialist revolution triumphed, it would be impossible to maintain because it is surrounded by states on all sides with no possibility of receiving any help, for the first time I heard a variant, which might have been possible. I heard it said that Bolivia was not Ché Guevara's final aim, it was just a sort of training ground for the guerrillas, and the final goal would be Argentina, his homeland, where there was a strong clandestine movement that would rise up when troops entered from abroad. Thus, in this case it is not a question of some divergence between Fidel and Ché. It was a geopolitical project: in a way, a repetition of what Fidel himself had achieved, but on different scale in another region. So the disagreements between Ché and Castro are falsehoods which I have heard a thousand times and for which I do not see a single justification. Whenever I hear them, I say prove it to me please. The silence is deafening.

The other thing that gets repeated is the opposition between Fidel and

Raúl. From the beginning of the revolution it has been said that Raúl is a communist, a bloodthirsty man, highly addicted to the Kremlin and things like that. On the other hand Fidel is more democratic; which is something else. Of course, Raúl himself smiles when he hears this, because he has said a thousand and one times that he is the most faithful Fidel supporter in Cuba. But from time to time the same thing gets heard again.

You mention the process that took place in Cuba against certain generals. Of course it also began to be said: "There is a break in the ranks in the Cuban military..." The Cubans took type-written minutes of this judicial process against the generals, and I had access to the Spanish and Russian versions of these minutes in my country.

—*Did the process seem normal?*

— It seemed to me that the process was carried out in an entirely normal way, but it made a very strong impression on me. Are you Cuban?

—*Yes*

—Then you must have read them too. Look, when Fidel addresses the accused he says to them: "You entered into contact with drug-traffickers in Colombia, as citizens and officials of Cuba. But didn't you realize you were endangering the Cuban revolution itself? If they had caught you there red-handed at any time, the North Americans would have felt the right to invade Cuba, considering it an area of drug traffickers." Of course, that was highly dangerous.

After reading the minutes, I had no doubt that there had been a link with drug trafficking, and that this was highly dangerous for the Cuban revolution. Moreover, these people had already made several drug shipments to the United States. It is difficult to imagine that the contacts were not controlled by some security agency of the United States.

—*But bearing in mind the centralism of the Cuban model, doesn't it seem strange to you that there were generals with enough autonomy to set up this type of contact?*

—I do not have any other information apart from the type-written minutes of the process, and from these minutes it can be inferred that there were some nuclei, the officer group and the Interior Ministry General to whom you refer, who did indeed have great freedom of action. Look, this same type of group also existed in Bulgaria, in Germany and in our country, because at that time with the currency shortage, such groups were set up to carry out operations abroad in order to obtain currency: sometimes selling weapons, other times opening trading companies abroad. It would seem the Cuban generals—the De la Guardia brothers, as they were called if I remember correctly— had this same mission. I believe they operated companies in Panama and, according to what I have been told, as these companies were not meeting the targets the government had set for them, they decided to achieve these goals for the state by selling drugs, without telling anyone. In other words, they tried to obtain currency through illegal means. And of course, when you get into that there is almost no way out...

For that reason I have no doubts about this process; but everything that was said afterwards, that there was a plot, etc, I don't believe it. It was an open trial...

—*It was not open.*

—But there were many witnesses there.

—*What you saw was a "show" trial, not a "real" one. Only a very small group of people saw the real trial.*

—I am relying solely on the papers, on the type-written minutes and court documents, and these convinced me. Anything related to drug trafficking is something to be afraid of.

Look, in carrying out tasks for my government in Panama, I had many contacts with General Noriega. I thought it would be useful to establish diplomatic relations between Panama and the Soviet Union, and one day I suggested to General Noriega, simply over a drink, that to convince the Soviet leadership to set up diplomatic relations they had to be assured that he had no links with drug trafficking, as the United States press was alleging. I asked him this openly because it was something he could not evade. So he said to me: "I am not going to answer anything. You will have to have interviews with people in the government for them to explain to you the drug trafficking situation in Panama." So the Foreign Minister, the Procurator General of the Republic and the Head of the Anti-drug Administration all came to see me. In other words, I had a series of interviews. Each of them explained to me the different measures Panama was taking to avoid drug traffic: they showed me the Gold Medal they had received for their fight against drugs. They pointed out that North American companies flying in Latin America made their final stop in Panama to be checked by the anti-narcotics division before arriving in the United States, etc. They convinced me that Panama, as a country, had nothing to do with narcotics.

But nobody told me that General Noriega personally had no links. Certain things always have their subtleties. When I returned to the police headquarters in my country I handed in my report and told them I was sure that Panama was clean, but could not vouch for anything as regards General Noriega. In the end we established relations with Panama.

But Noriega never acknowledged this link to me, nor did anyone else; so in these things there always remain certain areas of doubt...

—*Returning to the topic of Chile, after the military coup, apparently—at least certain publications say so— there were attempts by your colleagues, the German Democratic Republic, for example, to help*

rescue supporters of the Salvador Allende government. Did your institution have any participation in activities or operations with this aim?

—Yes, there was a plan, or rather, a crazy idea, although it might have been possible to carry out. Its author is here before you now, so I tell you bearing full responsibility.

We were always spooked by the exploits of certain other intelligence services that did unusual and courageous things: especially the Israeli intelligence service. Maybe you recall the kidnapping of Eichmann in Argentina, when that country was celebrating the anniversary of the May revolution in 1960. Nobody noticed that only two delegations arrived in their own planes: one was the Soviet delegation with Prime Minister Kosygin; the other was the Israeli delegation. Both were very numerous, about 50 people each. The Israelis came to kidnap Eichmann. After arriving, they picked him up (they had located him beforehand) and one member of the Israeli delegation left the city. When boarding the plane back to Israel, they brought Eichmann, drugged and in a semi-somnolent state and told immigration that he was a colleague who had drunk too much because of the Argentine independence celebrations. Thus Eichmann, who took the seat in the plane of the delegation member who had vanished, appeared afterwards in Israel, where he was tried.

Of course things like this, which intelligence services do from time to time, are exciting. So when we knew that Luis Corvalán and some of his Chilean colleagues were being held on Dawson Island, down there in the Magellan Straits, the question arose of how to save them, of how to pay this respect to our class colleagues, our ideological brothers, if you will. So a somewhat adventurous plan was hatched, which involved freeing them by force but without leaving any trace.

The plan consisted of using a commercial cargo vessel of large tonnage with a hatch that opened, and a second hatch where there would be three helicopters, or four if necessary, armed with everything needed to put down resistance from the guards in the Dawson camp. We had views of the island taken from satellites, we also had models of the camp for carrying out the commando raid. It was quite simple. One or two submarines would be sent to the area, if necessary, and when the ship was some 15 km away from the camp, the helicopters would fly out and we would suddenly make a strike. We would destroy means of communication, aeriels, to avoid signals of the attack arriving, and afterwards put down the guard detachment, which was not very big, land and pick up Luis Corvalán. We would then take him by helicopter some 50 km away to a place assigned for the submarines. The helicopters would then be destroyed using a heavy

charge in an area of very deep water, so there would be no way of finding any trace of them.

That was the general plan: the technical aspects would come later. But when this plan was presented to the leadership they looked at us as if we were half crazy, and all our attempts to persuade them to study it in greater detail proved fruitless, although the military did agree to provide the means to carry it out. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I don't know which now, the plan was never carried out. But I do admit that one existed. I also describe it in my book, so it is already public knowledge. □