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"Détente Again"

Bruce Herschensohn, KABC-TV Eyewitness News

Editors' Preview: *We are witnessing history-in-the-making as the Berlin Wall goes down and the cries for freedom mount in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union. Yet we need to recall, as Bruce Herschensohn points out in this address, originally presented to nearly 400 attendees of the May 1989 Shavano Institute for National Leadership seminar, "The Future of U.S. — Soviet Relations" in Newport Beach, that "glasnost" and "perestroika" are not new, nor are they the only factors which we should take into account when it comes to a strong U.S. defense. Our thanks to the* Orange County Register *for hosting this program.*

The sky was very gray above Red Square. Old women with heavy rolled-down socks bunched at the ankles were sweeping the remains of a snowstorm into pools of water with straw brooms. Where they were going to move all that water, I had no idea. There was a long line of people, the usual two hundred or so, waiting to get into the Mausoleum outside of the Kremlin. Other than these figures, there was only an occasional walker who crossed the vast, empty space of Red Square. But directly opposite the Mausoleum, a long way across the Square, was a government store where a small crowd gathered around me. Here are some of their comments to me:

"Our new leader is so different than those we have known before."

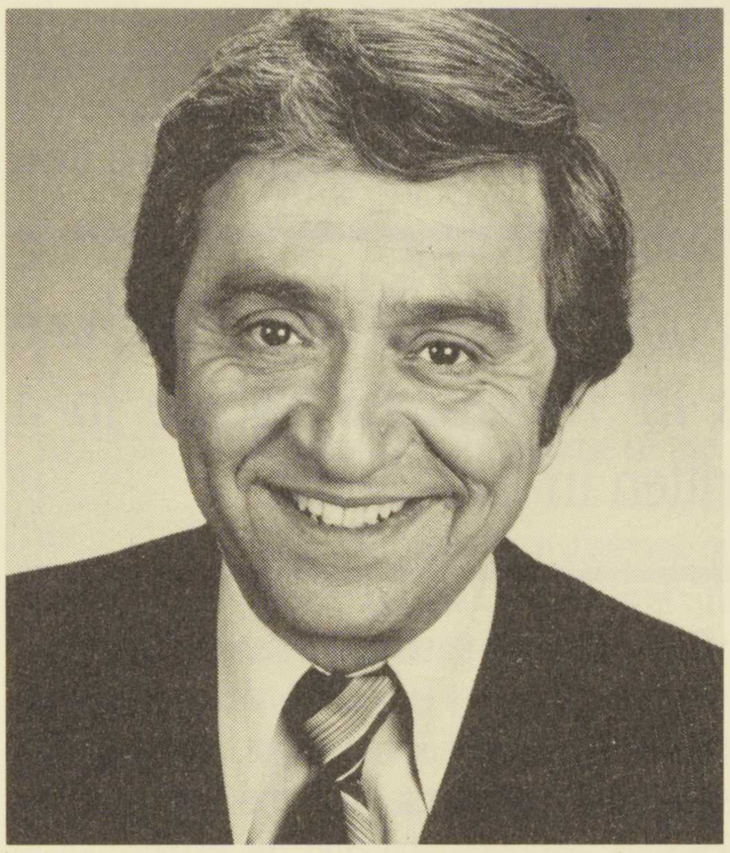
"He has given creative people new freedoms."

"He is changing our economic system."

"He wants a nuclear moratorium. He wants to rid the world of nuclear weapons."

"He has told us the truth about Stalin and what Stalin did."

"We always knew it, but we could never say it before and now we can."



"We have new freedoms."

"He has given us access to books that we have never been able to read before."

"He has released political prisoners and he has taken them out of exile."

"He is truly bringing about a new era of democratization."

It was an experience I will never forget, that day in Red Square with these Soviet citizens who were so proud of their new leader. It was in 1960, and they were speaking of Nikita Khrushchev.

Two Policies for U.S. Defense

They had good grounds for optimism. Amazing reforms appeared to be taking place. But one year later the Berlin Wall was erected. Two years later came the Cuban missile crisis. Eight years later we saw the invasion of Czechoslovakia and nineteen years later the invasion of Afghanistan.

During all of the Khrushchev-Brezhnev years, the Soviet Union indulged in the greatest military build-up and the largest expansion of any single nation's conquests in the history of the world. In the same era, the United States settled first for military parity, then inferiority and then détente.

I was born into a generation of Americans that learned in their youth a three-word policy for defense: Remember Pearl Harbor. What this simple sentence meant was that our nation should always strive for military superiority over any foreign power with the means to attack us, no matter how unlikely it appeared that they would do so. Nearly two decades after World War II, President John F. Kennedy delivered his own foreign policy pronouncement in his inaugural address: Support any friend, oppose any foe.

If we did nothing more and nothing less than live by those two policies, the United States would be forever unchallenged and governments around the globe would be anxious to be known as our allies. But simple policies, no matter how clear or forthright or sensible, are not simple to live up to.

They are especially hard to follow when so many of our foreign policy and defense experts are asking all the wrong questions about the state of the world. For example, there has been far too much emphasis on Mikhail Gorbachev: Is he sincere? What are his motivations? Will he be able to stay in power? Well, for the moment, let us assume that the experts are right and that U.S. — Soviet relations hinge on the true character of the General Secretary. In such a context, my trip to the Soviet Union in 1960 was very revealing.

Red Square Revisited

I returned to Moscow in 1987 and visited Red Square once more. It was like going back in time. The sky was the same shade of dull gray. The old women, dressed much as they had been almost thirty years