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THE SOVIET DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT AND UNITED STATES-USSR 'DETENTE'--ETC(U)
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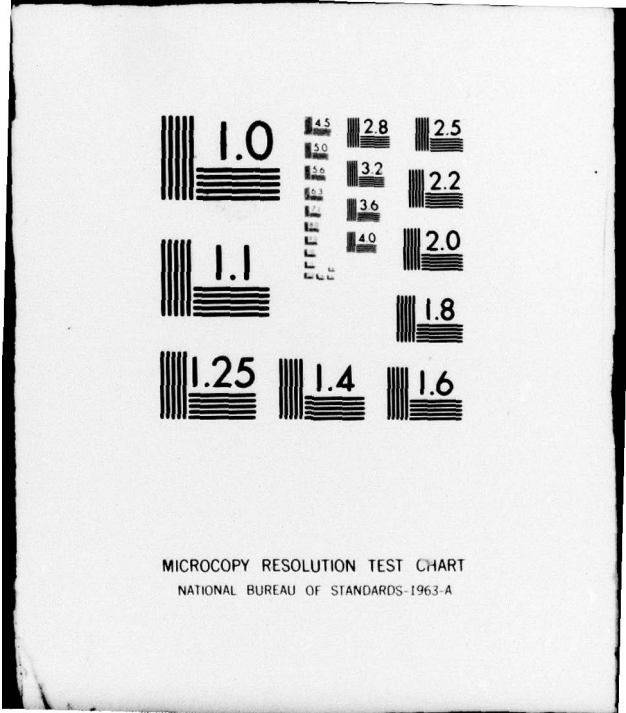
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SUMMARY

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THE SOVIET DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT and UNITED STATES-USSR 'DETENTE'

by

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The study summarized herein analyses relations between the current Soviet foreign policy of "detente" and the Kremlin's domestic policy of suppressing dissenters' demands for "democratization" of Soviet policy, both domestic and foreign. A basic assumption of the study is that Soviet foreign policy is largely shaped by, and cannot be understood without a deep knowledge of its domestic sources and practices, including suppression of elements whose outlook is far closer to the West's than is that of the Soviet rulers.

I contend that a reciprocal, two-way cooperative relationship, such as Academician Andrei Sakharov and other Soviet democrats have sought for years would confer inestimable benefits upon mankind, but that such an enlightened approach to world affairs is incomprehensible to the Soviet political elite. It is, moreover, incompatible with their interests and would undermine the Soviet system as now constituted. Recognition of the expedient, chauvinistic approach pursued by the Soviet rulers in their foreign relations, however, does not require rejection by the United States of wary and prudent efforts to achieve mutually beneficial adjustments of relations with Moscow, for example in such areas of concern to both sides as arms control. However, it is argued, the limits and potential dangers

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of "detente"--which in Soviet doctrine is subordinate to the concept of "coexistence" among states with antagonistic social systems--can be more clearly perceived in the light of Soviet dissenters' analysis of Soviet domestic and foreign policies.

Moreover, if we are to be fully cognizant of the political personality of our "detente" partner, we must pay close attention to the Soviet rulers' suppression of proposals made by thoughtful Soviet citizens which, in terms of Western democratic values are perfectly normal, but which the Kremlin punishes as "political crimes." The subversive nature of Western democratic ideals, in Kremlin eyes, was once again made crystal clear in an important speech by the chief of the Soviet secret police and Politbureau member, Yuri Andropov, in June 1975.

It is not, of course, argued in this report that all Soviet dissenters are Jeffersonian democrats. Critics of Soviet policy, ideology and institutions in the period since Stalin's death made it possible to dissent with greater hope of survival, have been remarkably diverse in their viewpoints. Some of them, indeed, are conservative, even reactionary nationalists. One of the giants of dissent, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, while passionately advocating freedom of expression, is somewhat ambivalent in his attitude toward Western parliamentary democracy--though his criticism of the West is to a large degree, and rightly I think, couched in terms of Western failure to display moral outrage and a healthy sense of self-preservation in the face of Soviet hostility and the Kremlin's determined pursuit of world power.

But, especially in the case of the adherents of what came in the 1960s to be known as the Democratic Movement, there was in Soviet Russia for

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several years, a movement in support of such democratic principles as the rule of law and freedom of information that, considering the circumstances, was remarkably vigorous.

So far as foreign affairs were concerned, the articulators of democratic aspirations criticized fundamental aspects of official Soviet policy and proposed significant alternatives. They vigorously protested the Warsaw Pact military intervention that snuffed out the Czechoslovak experiment, led by reformist communists, in "socialism with a human face." On this issue, criticism, reflecting burning indignation, was voiced both by reformist members of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) and by non-party intellectuals. Unfortunately--and this points to a major weakness of the Democratic Movement--Soviet public opinion in general appears either to have supported suppression of democracy in Czechoslovakia or to have been apathetic. Perhaps lingering memories of the repression visited upon protesters against the invasion of Hungary in 1956 contributed to caution in 1968.

While the debacle in Czechoslovakia, and the evidence that the invasion provided of the Kremlin's determination to suppress dissent wherever it deemed such action expedient, silenced many dissenters, it deepened the alienation of others, such as Sakharov, and their determination to criticize what they regarded as the pressing dangers to world peace and democracy represented by Soviet domestic and foreign policy.

Sakharov did not abandon the advocacy of a "convergence" of the American and Soviet political and social systems, which, he had asserted in his celebrated "Memorandum" written in 1968, before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but it became increasingly clear in his subsequent statements

on world affairs that if convergence were to occur it would involve, especially in the field of political practices and structures, a far greater change in the Soviet than in the American system.

Central to this study is the remarkable triologue on "detente" and related questions in which Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and the historian Roy Medvedev, twin brother of his perhaps equally well known dissident brother, the biologist Zhores Medvedev, took part in 1973-1975. All three men were sharply critical of what they characterized as an expansionist Soviet foreign policy, but their positions differed sharply on important issues. Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn warned the West regarding the danger, as Sakharov put it, of uncritically accepting the Soviet "rules of the game," in foreign affairs, and of "capitulation" to Moscow. Both men urged the peoples and governments of the West to bargain effectively and to exert pressure on the Soviet government, with a view to bringing about changes in Soviet policy, for example in the matter of emigration for Jews and members of other non-Russian national minorities. And both Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn advocated freeing the non-Russian minorities, and the communist-ruled peoples of Eastern Europe, from Soviet control, if these peoples so desired. In regard to this latter point the views of the two giants of dissent ran parallel to those expressed by the authors of the anonymous "Program of the Democrats of Russia, the Ukraine and the Baltic States," and of course to those of many non-Russian intellectuals, especially in the Ukraine. However, it should be noted that the demands of most leading Ukrainian dissenters, including the fiercely persecuted Valentine Moroz, stopped short of secession, though there was full agreement between them

and Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn on the need to put an end to Moscow's suppression of the cultural identity of the non-Russian peoples.

One of the most important areas of overlap between Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn--and also with Andrei Amalrik, whose analysis of Soviet foreign policy, in his brilliant book, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984, on several important points foreshadowed those of the former--consisted in agreement that the foreign policy behavior of the USSR was far and away the greatest threat to world peace.

On this last point Roy Medvedev, who, with his brother Zhores, took a reformist "Leninist" position on political, economic and social problems, differed sharply from Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and apparently from all or most other Soviet "democratizers." Roy Medvedev appeared to believe that blame for world tensions--and also credit for what he regarded as their significant relaxation in recent years--should be about equally apportioned to "East" and "West." Roy Medvedev was considerably more optimistic than Sakharov and somewhat more hopeful also than Solzhenitsyn, about prospects for world peace. The most important difference between his views and theirs, however, was ideological. Unlike Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, Roy Medvedev desired the further expansion in the world of the sphere of influence of "socialism," though not of the variety currently practiced in Russia. For him, socialism without democracy was--as he made clear in his major work, On Socialist Democracy--a travesty. Still, as a Leninist Roy Medvedev could not share the opinion of most activists of the "main-stream" Democratic Movement, or of Solzhenitsyn and his followers--it appeared to be the case as of 1974-1975 that most politically literate dissenters,

inside the USSR and in the growing emigration--tended to identify with either the Sakharov or the Solzhenitsyn group--that democratization in Russia could be promoted by Western pressure. No, said Roy Medvedev, excessive pressure from the "capitalist" West could stiffen regime and popular resistance to reform and harm the forces of liberalization in the USSR.

Now of course it is important to remember that the Soviet authorities subjected all three of these major figures to harassment and socioeconomic sanctions, although, presumably because of their world renown none had, as of August 1975 at least, been arrested, though Solzhenitsyn had, in February 1974 been forcibly expelled from his native land. Many men and women with less prestige, including not only militant young intellectuals such as Vladimir Bukovski, but a number of highly competent scientists such as Pavel Litvinov, Sergei Kovalev, Leonid Plyushch, and Andrei Tverdokhlebov, and of course the historian Andrei Amalrik and Valentine Moroz, to name a few of the hundreds who shared the views of Sakharov on the need for a democratic transformation of the USSR, suffered a far worse fate than did the famous trio. How strong, at its height, was support for the Democratic Movement? No definite answer is possible, but the testimony of Solzhenitsyn, which is confirmed by much other evidence, to the effect that most Soviet dissenters in the 1960s favored Western-style democracy, is significant. According to Roy Medvedev, in his above-mentioned book, even inside the CPSU there were reformist currents.

While the regime has doubtless, for the present, succeeded in largely destroying the Democratic Movement, its victory is less than complete. The world has learned a great deal about the repressive and regressive

nature of the Soviet system, from the writings of Soviet dissenters--not only from the major statements of men like Sakharov, but perhaps even more from the anonymous samizdat periodical, A Chronicle of Current Events, and many other similar samizdat journals and individual items. And, judging by the continued heavy volume of samizdat output, especially of a national and religious content, and also by the depth of commitment displayed by most dissenters still in the USSR, whether in labor camps and "psychiatric hospitals," or in precarious "freedom," the resistance is far from dead. Nor, short of a return to Stalin-style terror, is it likely to die. As both many Soviet samizdat writings and also such Western studies as Moshe Lewin's Political Undercurrents of Soviet Economic Debates, make clear, without fundamental reforms the Soviet system will continue to needlessly waste vast material and human resources and to alienate many of its most gifted people.

It seems to me, on the basis of what is known about the regime-dissenter confrontation in the USSR, that the West should do everything possible, short of policies that would jeopardize the highest priority objectives, such as arms control, to facilitate democratization in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Only governments can provide the resources necessary for creating the context indispensable for such an effort. However, governments must devote the bulk of their efforts to coping with a very powerful Soviet state, and must refrain from actions that might endanger peace. As a rule, they cannot profitably intervene, for example, on behalf of individual Soviet dissenters.

As far as direct action in this field is concerned, the lion's share of the job must be performed by the private sector. As Pavel Litvinov

pointed out after he emigrated from the USSR, he and his friends of the Democratic Movement survived because of the West and its press. Notable precedents have been set insofar as assistance to victims of Soviet oppression is concerned, such as the intervention by the President of the United States National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Philip Handler, in 1973 on behalf of Sakharov, or the sponsorship by the AFL-CIO of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's lectures in Washington and New York in the summer of 1975. Doubtless conscience and ingenuity will suggest innumerable follow-ups to these and similar past evidences of solidarity between American and Soviet democrats.