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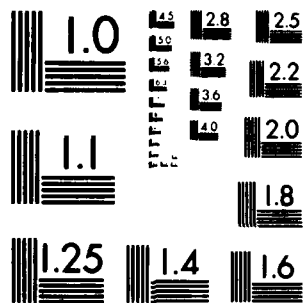
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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013**

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

by

Joseph L. Noguee

1 October 1981

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FOREWORD

This memorandum examines the origins of detente in the 1970's and the reasons for its collapse at the end of the decade. The author focuses on four crises which will dominate Soviet foreign policy in the early 1980's: the succession struggle; economic vulnerabilities; US-Soviet relations; and, polycentric trends in the Socialist camp. He concludes that Soviet tendencies toward expansion are to some extent balanced by factors working toward stability in East-West relations.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. JOSEPH L. NOGEE is a Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Russian Studies Program at the University of Houston. From August 1979 until August 1980 he was the visiting research professor with the Strategic Studies Institute. He earned a bachelor's degree in foreign service from the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago, and a doctorate in international relations from Yale University. Dr. Noguee is the author of *Soviet Policy Toward International Control of Atomic Energy*. He is a member of the editorial board of *American Political Science Review*.

SUMMARY

Detente as it developed in the early 1970's is clearly dead. Soviet-American relations are again in a state of transition. It is not clear yet in what directions US-Soviet relations will go, whether we are headed toward a period of confrontation, reminiscent of the Cold War, or whether some form of a rapprochement can be established.

To assist in understanding why detente failed and what may follow, this memorandum examines the factors that led the Soviet Union in the early 1980's to embrace detente. Essentially they were three: (1) the Sino-Soviet rupture (Moscow wanted to forestall a Sino-American rapprochement); (2) the development of military parity with the United States which made strategic arms control a viable national objective for the first time; and (3) the deteriorating state of the Soviet economy which necessitated either the importation of Western technology or radical reform. As events developed, detente failed to bring to the USSR the benefits anticipated: China moved closer to the United States; arms control became stymied after SALT I; and US-Soviet trade languished. Thus Moscow was prepared to pursue a more aggressive policy in the Third World because the costs of sacrificing detente were not as great as the potential benefits.

Looking to the 1980's one can see that the Soviet Union is operating from a position of military strength, but political weakness. In the immediate future Moscow is faced with four serious crises: (1) the crisis of leadership succession (not only is Brezhnev aged and in poor health, the entire politburo consists of aging oligarchs; there does not exist a constitutional procedure for leadership renewal in the USSR, but the actuarial tables mandate a change and soon); (2) the economic crisis (the Tenth 5-Year Plan failed to overcome the difficulties of an economy that is overregimented and inefficient; public morale is known to be low; Moscow is again faced with the necessity to undertake radical reform or to import Western technology and grain); (3) the crisis in Afghanistan (the Soviet invasion has not been a notable success; even with almost 85,000 well-supplied troops, Moscow is having difficulty suppressing a genuine national insurgency); (4) the crisis in the Socialist camp. Poland's democratic movement poses a no-win situation for Moscow. If Solidarity survives, communism in Poland will be fundamentally changed in a way incompatible with

Marxist-Leninist principles. Yet Moscow cannot afford to crush Poland's "renewal" without enormous political and economic costs to itself.

Because of these crises, the Soviet Union currently operates from a position of relative weakness. This suggests that Moscow will seek to resurrect some form of detente. Brezhnev's behavior at the 26th Party Congress strongly points toward that direction. If detente is restored a second time, it will have to be more reciprocal to last longer than the first detente.

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dramatically underscored the deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. Detente as it developed in the early 1970's is clearly dead.¹ For some this comes as a revelation. We have former President Carter's well-known statement to a television reporter that "This action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time I've been in office."² For some, Afghanistan was the culmination of a trend that began with Soviet intervention with proxies in Africa in the mid-1970's; for others, detente was an illusion from the beginning. If detente is dead, what will follow it? Are we headed toward a confrontation with the Soviet Union reminiscent of the Cold War? What were the causes of the short life and death of detente?

We might begin by briefly reviewing the origins of detente in the early 1970's from the Soviet perspective. The Soviet decision to seek a rapprochement with the United States was taken sometime between their consolidation of control over Czechoslovakia in 1969 and the 24th Party Congress in 1971. There are three reasons why

the Soviet leadership undertook the policy of detente when it did. They had to do with Moscow's political relationship with China; its military relationship with the United States; and, the condition of the Soviet economy.

In seeking a rapprochement with the United States at the end of the 1960's, Moscow was maneuvering along classical balance of power lines. The brief but bitter military encounter along the Ussuri River in March 1969 was tangible evidence that the Sino-Soviet split was an irrevocable part of the international landscape at least for the foreseeable future. For Moscow the most dangerous global scenario was the prospect of collusion between its two main adversaries. One of the reasons why the Kremlin moved toward detente with the United States was because—the Cold War notwithstanding—it was easier to shift toward the West than the East.

Second, detente became a viable option for Moscow because, for the first time in its history, the Soviet Union had reached a position of military parity with the United States. One could argue that this development would tend to sustain a more aggressive posture on Moscow's part; and indeed this was a possibility. On the other hand, parity did make it possible for the Kremlin to negotiate seriously toward an arms control agreement. For so long as the Soviet Union was in a position of military inferiority, there was little prospect that Moscow could accept an arrangement that froze that relationship, and little likelihood that the United States would legalize a Soviet buildup to parity. Thus the SALT I agreement, the centerpiece of detente, was a direct outgrowth of military parity.

Third, the Brezhnev administration wanted detente to bolster its faltering economy. By the end of the Eighth 5-Year Plan in 1970 it had become clear that the so-called Liberman reforms, widely known as "market socialism," were a failure. A few figures will show the pattern of economic decline. Between 1950 and 1958 the Gross National Product grew by 6.4 percent; from 1958 to 1967 the rate of GNP growth dropped to 5.3 percent; and, in the period 1967-73 it plummeted to 3.7 percent.³ At the heart of the problem was productivity: how to increase it?

There were two basic alternatives: one would be to radically restructure the economic system by liberalizing and decentralizing it; and the other would be to rely upon technology imported from the United States to increase productivity. Popular dissatisfaction

with the quantity and quality of consumer goods was high. It should be kept in mind that in spite of the system of police control over the populace, the ruling oligarchy is not immune to popular dissatisfaction. Khrushchev, for one, was overthrown in large part because of his failure to improve the economy, a fact his successors knew only too well. Closer to their consciousness were the events in Poland in 1970. Economic mismanagement there had led to widespread shortages of food and consumer goods which in turn led to rioting in several cities. The outcome of that upheaval was the fall of party leader Wladyslaw Gomulka. The lessons for the Kremlin were clear.

These in summary were the sources of detente in Soviet policy. What were the causes of its collapse? Since we are looking at this question from the Soviet perspective, we need to keep in mind that the official Soviet line is that detente is not dead. If it has faltered, it is because of the policies of American imperialism. Detente remains the official line of Soviet foreign policy today. The gist of the question really boils down to this: Why have the Soviets been willing to risk detente (ultimately sacrificing it) by aggressive moves in the international arena?

Part of the answer is in the failure of detente to cope with those problems which gave rise to it in the first place. As noted above, detente was designed to forestall Sino-American collusion. It failed to do that, as we know. The same Henry Kissinger who was engineering detente with the Russians was playing what today is called "the China card." Richard Nixon's homage to Mao Zedong in 1972 was the beginning of a Sino-American rapprochement. Since then the United States has recognized the People's Republic, terminated its defense treaty with Taiwan, received Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping, and has even considered selling military equipment to China. All of this is a far cry from any kind of an alliance, but it is a source of considerable concern to Moscow.

Then there is arms control. The SALT process to date is characterized more by its promise than its accomplishment. It is now apparent that, even when successful, arms control agreements are not going to slow the arms race, reduce military expenditures, or stop the development of new weapons as much as had been expected when the negotiations began. In addition, the Soviet Union found the United States to be a tougher negotiator than expected. While SALT I took three years to negotiate, SALT II

required seven. Furthermore, after the American President signed SALT II, the Kremlin observed to its dismay the reluctance of the Senate to consent to its ratification. Indeed, it was clear even before Afghanistan that, if ratified, the treaty was almost certain to contain amendments, reservations, or interpretations unacceptable to the Soviets. Thus, Moscow may well have calculated that in overthrowing Hafizullah Amin, they were risking nothing that had not been already lost.

Finally, there is the question of Soviet-American trade. If the Soviet Union hoped to import American technology (and grain), then it would have to export as well. One obstacle to Soviet-American trade was the lack of Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status for Soviet exports to the United States. This barrier was presumably overcome on October 18, 1973 with the signing of a trade agreement which *inter alia* would confer MFN status on Soviet goods. The agreement was never implemented, however. Congress enacted two amendments (the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments) which the Soviets found objectionable and which caused them in January 1975 to repudiate the trade agreement. Trade, thus, never developed in the 1970's as the means for improving the Soviet economy as Moscow had hoped and apparently expected.

Taken together, these developments show that, in the short run, detente did not bring Moscow the benefits it anticipated. It might be noted that these benefits were largely of a defensive nature, reflecting the fact that in part the Soviet Union was operating from real or perceived positions of weakness. This was true of its fear of Sino-American collusion and the state of the economy. On the other hand, its increasing military power, as suggested earlier, gave the Soviet Union a capability to take a more aggressive stance vis-a-vis the United States should it choose to do so.

This brings us to a consideration of the role of detente within the larger context of Soviet foreign policy. Detente is only the latest phase in a cycle which alternates between policies of confrontation and policies of accommodation. Before detente the accommodating phase was "peace coexistence." There is in all of these phases an inherent element of contradiction. Ideologically the United States as the leader of the capitalist (in their terminology, imperialist) world is an adversary. At no time has any Soviet spokesman ever disavowed the underlying conflict that must

characterize the relationship between a Communist USSR and a capitalist United States. How then can the Soviets reconcile a quest for cooperation in detente with the fundamental conflict that is rooted in opposing social systems? The answer is that Soviet ideologists make a distinction between interstate relations which can be good and interclass relations which cannot. Thus a prominent Soviet publicist writes:

Peaceful coexistence is a principle of relations between states which does not extend to relations between the exploited and the exploiters, the oppressed peoples and the colonialists Marxists-Leninists see in peaceful coexistence a special form of the class struggle between socialism and capitalism in the world, a principle whose implementation ensures the most favorable conditions for the world revolutionary process.⁴

What this means in political terms is that detente was not meant to freeze the *status quo*, for history itself has foreordained the ultimate destruction of capitalism and with it imperialism. The object of detente was not to eliminate the struggle between the superpowers—for that was inherent in their social systems—but to set the ground rules governing that struggle. If the references here to Soviet ideology seem excessively academic, it should be noted that there is ample historical evidence to support the contention that the Soviets have acted generally the way they say they believe.

If detente is dead, what can we expect to replace it? Prediction in international relations is always a hazardous enterprise, but it is particularly so now because of the larger than usual number of uncertainties affecting Soviet politics. Indeed, rarely in its entire history has the Soviet Union been so poised for domestic change as it is now. The oligarchy which now holds power in the Kremlin is confronted with a number of crises whose resolution will have a profound impact on Soviet foreign policy in the early 1980's. Four crises stand out: the crisis of leadership and the succession struggle; the economic crisis; the crisis in US-Soviet relations; and, the crisis within the Socialist camp.

THE IMPENDING LEADERSHIP CHANGE

The word crisis to describe the impending change in Soviet leadership is used advisedly, though with some qualification. Every change in Soviet leadership since the death of Lenin has involved a struggle for power with some potential for civil disorder. The

Soviet system has achieved sufficient stability that the prospects for an orderly change of administration are high today. However, the lack of a constitutional means of transferring power from one leader to the next constitutes a major weakness of the Soviet political system. Neither we nor the Soviet people know when a change of leadership will take place, nor exactly who will initiate that decision, nor even the full range of possible contenders. Previous successions have resulted from the death of the incumbent (Lenin and Stalin) and from a political coup (Khrushchev).⁵ Leonid Brezhnev could be the first Soviet leader to abandon power willingly and voluntarily go into retirement. Characteristically, there is not a hint of an impending political change in the controlled Soviet media. We simply assume it because Brezhnev is 74 years old and in poor health.

The impending political succession will involve more than simply a new General-Secretary of the Communist Party. Executive power in the Soviet system is today collective, and within the decade of the 1980's almost certainly half of the hierarchs will be replaced. At the present time the ruling oligarchy consists of 26 men: 14 full members of the Politburo; 8 candidate Politburo members and 10 members of the Central Committee Secretariat. (There is some overlap of Politburo and Secretariat memberships.) It is almost an understatement to describe them as on the elderly side. It is virtually government by gerontocracy. One is in his eighties; seven are in their seventies; another four are over 63; and only two of this group are in their fifties. The 26th Party Congress in March 1981 reelected the same membership of the Politburo and Secretariat as before.⁶ This was the first time that a party congress failed to register a single change in the membership of the ruling oligarchy. In postponing yet again the succession decision, the Kremlin revealed a more desperate situation than heretofore imagined.

Actuarial tables suggest that the succession, when it comes, will be a prolonged one, probably evolving in two stages. In the first stage Brezhnev will be replaced as General-Secretary by one of his cohorts. When that will be is only a matter of speculation because Brezhnev has not only not groomed a successor, he has deliberately frustrated the advancement of qualified younger leaders. In recent years the name of A. P. Kirilenko has been mentioned as a likely successor, though he is slightly older than Brezhnev. Three other possibilities are Constantine Chernenko or Mikhail Solomentsev,

both in their late sixties and Vladimir Shcherbitsky in his early sixties. Whoever is selected will very likely be a caretaker leader until the second stage brings a younger generation to power.

During this first stage Soviet politics will probably continue along the same lines as during the latter Brezhnev years. The new General-Secretary will have shared many of the same experiences with Brezhnev in the exercise of power over the previous years and be committed to the same general goals as his predecessor. He will require some time to consolidate his position. Soviet foreign policy might go into a quiescent phase as it did during 1953-55 and 1964-67 when new leaders were consolidating their positions. Almost certainly the new General-Secretary will be compelled to operate even more within the framework of collective leadership than did Brezhnev, who slowly acquired his power over a period of years.

Sometime during the decade of the 1980's there will take place a more fundamental second stage in the succession in which a younger generation should begin to take over. Two men who appear now to have a lot of promise for the future leadership are Gregori Romanov (age 56) and Vladimir Dolgikh (age 57). Besides their youth both have reputations as vigorous administrators who get things done. Whoever takes charge at this stage will come from a fundamentally different background than the generation now in power. He will have no memories of prerevolutionary Russia and probably not even pre-Stalin Soviet Union. All of his secondary education will have occurred under Stalin and his higher education after the Second World War. His adult political career will have been largely post-Stalin, and his senior service will have been largely in the post-Khrushchev period. Such an individual may very well bring a different orientation to Soviet foreign policy, possibly introducing a dynamism that may break the expected stalemate of the immediate post-Brezhnev years. Whether this bodes good or ill for the West can only be a matter of speculation, but it should be noted that this younger leadership may come to power at a time when the momentum of Soviet military growth crests, giving the Kremlin military and political options which Brezhnev never had.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The Soviet economy is in trouble. Policies that worked reasonably well in the 1950's and 1960's have yielded diminishing

returns in the 1970's and now face the prospect of failure in the 1980's. Like many other industrial economies the Soviet economy has been experiencing declining growth coupled with serious inflationary pressures. In addition, the USSR suffers from problems that are unique to it. Chief among them is a lack of consumer goods, particularly public housing. This is due in part to the priority of Soviet investment for decades in heavy and militarily related industries. The poor quality of consumer goods that are available, the high prices, the long consumer queues have noticeably affected public morale and have led to pervasive economically inefficient behavior and widespread corruption. Production costs in the USSR are high. The cost of obtaining and using natural resources (particularly energy) has been rising in real terms as a consequence of the depletion of well-located and high-grade resources. Soviet agriculture remains among the world's least efficient, unable now to supply the basic food needs of the nation's population. Serious shortfalls in grain harvests in the 1970's have set back agricultural growth and the standard of living. Finally, Soviet technology continues to lag behind the industrial nations with market economies because of the inability of the Soviet system to innovate.

Formerly, Soviet output growth was assured by increased input, but that input is no longer available. The decreasing availability of surplus labor necessitates an increase in per-worker productivity, heretofore notoriously low. There is pressure in the economy to shift from quantitative goals to qualitative goals. This will involve changes in incentives both for Soviet workers and management. It will mean a vast overhaul in the system of information collection and processing which links all levels of production and administration into a national network of centralized economic management. To accomplish this the Soviets will need to do more than modernize their computer networks. They will have to develop facilities to provide the users of computer hardware adequate servicing, and they will have to abandon the longstanding Soviet practice of treating economic data as highly restricted material. In short, what is involved is a major revision of the organizational structure of the Soviet economy. This will be a central issue in the adoption of the 11th 5-Year Plan for the period 1981-85.

There are two basic directions in which economic change could go under the 11th 5-Year Plan: a shift toward a liberal policy or a

re-Stalinization of economic administration. A liberal scenario would involve permitting economic managers at the local level to have much more freedom than they now have. It would encourage innovation without drastically penalizing mistakes. Resources would be allocated according to market factors and less by administrative fiat. Labor and materials would be shifted to reflect the changing opportunity costs of production. One of the consequences of a liberalization of the economy would be a greater investment in light industry and consumer goods. An alternative scenario would be a reversion to more centralized controls from Moscow, a tightening of labor discipline, and a renewed emphasis upon quantitative quotas as a measure of enterprise success. As in the past, priority would be given to capital goods production, heavy industry, and military weapons.

There are foreign policy implications of both these approaches. A more liberal domestic orientation would encourage increased Soviet involvement in the world economy. If this led to an improvement in the quality of Soviet manufactured goods, the Soviet Union would become more competitive in a world market. At the same time, by making concessions to popular demand for greater quality in consumer items and a higher standard of living, the Soviet Union would be compelled to import more. Economic interdependence would presumably give the Kremlin a greater stake in peace and international stability. With less resources available for military construction the Soviet Union would be more inclined to move toward more substantial cuts in armaments through disarmament and arms control negotiations. The foreign policy consequences of a shift toward a re-Stalinization of the economy would be just the opposite. It would portend economy autarky, international tension, and a heightening of the arms race.

It is possible that the coincidence of major changes in the economic and political sphere will have a synergistic effect on foreign policy, so that the end result will be greater than would have been the case had each development occurred at a different time.⁷

THE CRISIS IN RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Coinciding with its internal political and economic problems is the external crisis which has developed in Soviet-American

relations as a result of events in Afghanistan. This raises the questions: why did the Kremlin jettison detente for Afghanistan? In partial answer I have suggested above that by the end of 1979 Moscow already had discounted the loss of some of the fruits of detente. This was a necessary, though not the efficient, cause of its actions.

Analysts and commentators tend toward one of two schools to explain Moscow's "Afghan gamble." Some, like George F. Kennan, argue that it was essentially a defensive action, and others like Vernon Aspaturian see it as an aggressive maneuver. The truth is that it was both. States, like individuals, operate at several levels of motivation simultaneously. The argument that the Soviet Union acted defensively asserts that Moscow moved in order to protect communism in Kabul and that Hafizullah Amin so alienated the Afghan population that it was only a matter of time before his Popular Democratic Party would have been overthrown by Moslem insurgents. Since Afghanistan moved into the Soviet orbit as a result of the seizure of power in April 1978 by the Marxist Noor Mohammed Taraki, Moscow was really only protecting what it already possessed. Another element of the defensive argument is that the Soviets feared the prospect of a solid block of reactionary, fundamentalist, anti-Communist, Islamic republics on the periphery of Soviet Central Asia. They feared that the success of Islamic revolution would incite the Islamic populations in Soviet Azerbaijan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakstan, Kirghizstan, and Uzbekistan to seek autonomy for themselves. It is further argued that Moscow feared the possibility that Iran and Pakistan would mend their fences with Washington and eventually join Afghanistan in a pro-Western alliance.

That Moscow moved to maintain a pro-Soviet *status quo* is undeniable. Whether this can legitimately be considered defensive is another question. Certainly an Islamic government in Kabul would not have constituted a threat to the Soviet Union as the term threat is usually used in international politics. To make the defensive argument one has to assume that Moscow is entitled to guarantee the preservation of socialist governments in countries where that is contrary to the manifest will of the people. In other words, the defensive thesis implies acceptance of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

It is interesting that the Soviet response to Afghanistan's Islamic revolution was the very opposite of its response to Iran's Islamic

revolution. During the Islamic upheaval against the Shah in 1978, Moscow acted to prevent any outside force (the United States) from interfering with the revolutionary course of events taking place in the country. That was the purpose of Leonid Brezhnev's warning to the United States on November 18th that "It must be made clear that any interference, let alone military intervention in the affairs of Iran—a state which has a common frontier with the Soviet Union—would be regarded by the USSR as a matter affecting its security interests."⁸ In Afghanistan, by maintaining the *status quo* through stifling the revolution, Moscow is doing precisely what it demanded that the United States not do in Iran. The underlying consistency between this apparent inconsistency should be obvious.

Those arguing that Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan is aggressive believe that the ultimate objectives of the Soviet Union are to position itself so that it can threaten Western access to Persian Gulf oil, perhaps to seize the Iranian oilfields for itself, to obtain a naval base on the Indian Ocean by carving up Pakistan, and in general to extend Soviet influence throughout the Middle East and South Asia. They note that airfields in Afghanistan will position the Soviets approximately 500 miles closer to the vital Persian Gulf region. It seems unlikely that such geostrategic considerations were in the forefront of the thoughts of the Politburo members when they decided to invade Afghanistan. However, if they do succeed (and few expect them to fail) in making Afghanistan a Soviet satellite, they will clearly be in a stronger position than now to influence events in the Persian Gulf region. Thus it may not be so much a question as to what Moscow's ambitions are today as what they may be tomorrow.

It seems clear that the Soviet leadership was surprised by the intensity of the US response to its aggression. Some believe that Moscow overestimated the apparent aversion of President Carter to confrontation and conflict. It is suggested that Carter's adjustment to situations, which he has defined as intolerable, led them to conclude that after the initial furor, he would adjust to a new *status quo* in Afghanistan too. Possibly Moscow was encouraged by the reluctance of the United States to use force in Iran, particularly after the seizure of the American hostages in the US Embassy.

Certainly Moscow's behavior in this crisis was extraordinarily cynical even by Soviet standards. When US Ambassador Thomas

Watson early in December expressed concern to Andrei Gromyko about reports of Soviet troop movements on the Afghanistan border, the Soviet Foreign Minister stated: "The reports are wrong. We don't know what you're talking about." When the crisis began, President Carter called Leonid Brezhnev on the Hot Line and was so shocked by the duplicity of the Soviet leader's response that he publicly accused him of lying. Not long afterward Brezhnev reciprocated the charge with the claim that "Mountains of lies are being built up around these events and a shameless anti-Soviet campaign is being mounted."

Afghanistan will likely dominate US-Soviet relations in the early 1980's as the Berlin Blockade did in the late 1940's and the Korean War in the early 1950's. Whatever distinctions may have been made between the Cold War and the detente that followed it, no one should have illusion that the fundamental differences between the Soviet Union and the West were ever resolved. Moscow is going to pursue its involvement in Afghanistan to a successful conclusion whatever the cost. There is currently every indication that the Soviet Union intends to maintain a permanent military presence in that hapless country. There is nothing that the United States can do to undo that situation. All that the United States can do is to minimize the damage done so far. And here our best guide might be the basic lesson of the Cold War: Moscow showed restraint and demonstrated a willingness to negotiate differences seriously only when confronted by a determined United States prepared to back up its diplomacy with force.

THE CRISIS WITHIN THE SOCIALIST CAMP

Second only to its relationship with the United States is Moscow's concern with the maintenance of the integrity of the system of states known as the "Socialist camp." Including the Soviet Union, that camp today comprises 17 states of which three (Albania, China, and Yugoslavia) pursue policies independently of Moscow. Six Asian Communist states (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, North Korea, and Vietnam) and Cuba are either Soviet satellites or are closely aligned to the Soviet Union. The six Eastern European states (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania) bear a special relationship to the Soviet Union as members of the Warsaw Pact.

Keeping the Warsaw Pact intact is a vital Soviet interest for two reasons: Moscow wants Eastern Europe to be a protective buffer against potential enemies in Western Europe; and, the collapse of Communist regimes in these countries would undermine Moscow's claim that history inexorably leads to communism, and thereby undermine the legitimacy of Communist Party rule everywhere, including the Soviet Union itself. The Warsaw Pact is a vital instrument for the maintenance of Moscow's control over the region.

In an age that has seen the decline of virtually all the world's empires, the Soviet Union has had to struggle to maintain its own. Indeed, every postwar Soviet administration has been challenged by a crisis of control in Eastern Europe: Stalin with Tito in 1948, Khrushchev with Poland and Hungary in 1956, Brezhnev with Czechoslovakia in 1968, and now Poland.

The Polish crisis originated in the summer of 1980 as a result of workers' dissatisfaction with low wages and the high cost of food. In August labor unrest at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk led to the formation of a strike committee which made 16 demands of the Polish government including several of a political nature. They demanded, *inter alia*, the right of Polish workers to strike, the release of political prisoners, the abolition of government censorship, and the free access to the media for religious groups. Clearly what was at stake in this struggle was the maintenance of a Communist regime in Poland. Party leader Edward Gierek warned the strikers that: "... no authority that strikes at the political order of Poland can be tolerated. On this fundamental problem no compromise is possible."¹⁰ But the unity of the strikers combined with the skillful leadership of Lech Walesa not only brought about a change in the leadership of Poland's Communist Party, but it also forced the government to give official recognition to a labor union independent of government or party control (called "Solidarity"). Within a matter of weeks some 50 labor unions representing 10 million Polish workers affiliated with Solidarity.

The creation of Solidarity has put Poland on a collision course with the Soviet Union, for the implications of a workers' organization independent of Communist Party rule in a Communist society are profound. At stake is the continuation of Communist Party rule in Poland, or as the Soviets see it, the

existence of Polish socialism. Already Polish workers have begun to press for economic and political reforms which could result in fundamental changes in the structure of the economy and the political system. Poland's economy is in desperate shape as reflected in the more than \$25 billion owed to the West as of early 1981. Worker productivity and efficiency are low; consumer goods are scarce; and food is in such short supply that the government has resorted to rationing. Like the Soviet Union, Poland may be forced to experiment with economic decentralization in order to increase productivity, and that would threaten the power of the party bureaucracy.

Equally disturbing to Poland's Communist leaders is the prospect that Solidarity may become the nucleus of an alternative center of political power. Although forced to recognize the supremacy of the Communist Party, Solidarity has made demands of a political as well as an economic nature. It has pressed for the release of political dissidents, demanded budget cuts for the Ministry of Interior, and called for the creation of a parliamentary commission to investigate the operations of the police and state prosecutor. These demands prompted party chief Stanislaw Kania to warn that "there cannot be two centers of power in the country."¹¹

All of this raises the question: Will the Soviet Union intervene to suppress the Polish revolution with arms? Clearly, the Kremlin would prefer not to; but it is equally certain that Moscow will not permit Poland's Communist Party to lose control. That could lead to the disintegration of Moscow's East European empire. Soviet authorities have warned the Polish workers that there are limits beyond which they may not go. As Radio Moscow put it: "He who goes against socialism goes against the independence of the [Polish] people."¹² Czechoslovakia's experience in 1968 and the Brezhnev Doctrine are reminders that Moscow will not accept a genuinely democratic regime in Eastern Europe. It seems evident that Kania and Walesa and the forces each represent are going to have to calculate carefully how far each can go without triggering a Soviet armed invasion which neither wants. But it is not just the Poles who are required to consider carefully their actions. President Reagan has put Moscow on notice that an invasion of Poland would have serious consequences for Soviet relations with the West.

HUMAN RIGHTS

During the Carter administration human rights was a major source of contention between Moscow and Washington. The issue is not likely to be as salient with Carter's successor. Still, the Reagan administration is not likely to abandon entirely concern with the issue. More likely the difference will be one of emphasis rather than a total change of direction. To some extent current American concern that Russian troops stay out of Warsaw reflects genuine concern for the human rights of the Polish people. A Russian occupation of Poland, after all, will not confer any geopolitical advantage which Moscow does not already possess. The issue of human rights is an important one dividing the USSR and the United States, not because it is such an important point of contention between the superpowers, but because it reflects the profound differences between the two countries and exposes the limits of detente. Soviet-American differences over human rights involve not the conflict of interests which ordinarily pit states against each other, but a clash of values.

There are several reasons why the Kremlin reacts so negatively to the human rights issue. Undoubtedly the Soviet leadership sees the American stance as a propaganda ploy in the continual battle for men's minds throughout the world. Already on the defensive over its repression of dissidents in Soviet society, the Soviets certainly do not wish to be called on the carpet every time they undertake to stifle dissent at home. More serious than propaganda alone, however, is the subversive character of the issue for the Soviet political system. Though the rhetoric of the campaign for human rights has not defined precisely what those rights are or the conditions for their application, it is widely assumed that they include what might be classified as political rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, fair trials, and the like. These are rights whose presence is clearly identified with democratic political systems and whose absence is most notable in authoritarian systems. Whether we classify the Soviet Union as a totalitarian society or simply an authoritarian or autocratic one, there is little doubt that these political rights are simply absent in Soviet society. Indeed the political and philosophical foundations of the Soviet regime—that is, Leninism—oppose the implementation of these rights, often derided as “bourgeois rights” in Soviet writings, as fundamentally

inimical to a Communist society. Thus open criticism of political leaders or their actions can be and have been punished under Soviet criminal law as "slander" against the Soviet system.

The point is that the issue of human rights cannot be divorced from the nature of a society's political system. To condemn a political system from denying these rights is to brand it as nondemocratic. Yet, if the Kremlin permitted its citizens to exercise the rights urged upon them by the United States, the entire character of the Soviet regime would be fundamentally altered. One suspects the Soviet leaders understand this better than the Americans. It is precisely these democratic rights which have been so insistently demanded by such Soviet dissidents as Andrei Amalrik, Vladimir Bukovski, Valeria Chalidze, Yuri Galanskov, Alexander Ginsburg, Roy and Zhores Medvedev, Yuri Orlov, Andrei Sakharov, Anatoly Shcharansky, and Andrei Tyerdokhlebov to name just a few. Thus Brezhnev and his colleagues in the Politburo rightly view American encouragement of the dissidents as subversive, or as Georgii Arbatov and others put it "interference in the internal affairs of the USSR."¹³

But there is a more profound significance to the issue of human rights than the political consequences of their espousal. When pressed, Soviet spokesmen deny that these rights are lacking in Soviet society, just as, of course, they insist that their government is a democratic one. We are confronted with what would appear to be a semantic problem: How are concepts, adjectives, terms to be defined? In Soviet eyes, for example, military occupation becomes "fraternal assistance," invasion is "liberation," dictatorship is "democracy." Obviously there are different realities for the same event or circumstance: the Communist reality and the non-Communist reality.

Article 50 of the new Soviet constitution guarantees to Soviet citizens the rights of speech, press, meeting, and assembly. These rights are identical to those guaranteed under the previous constitution (in Article 125); yet for doing nothing more than criticizing government foreign policy, noted scientist Andrei Sakharov is sent into exile. Lesser known figures are suffering a worse fate for similar behavior. Are these violations of human rights or rights protected by the Soviet constitution? The problem in answering this question is that there is no common measure by which Soviet and Western observers can evaluate the actions of the

Soviet state. In the realm of social behavior there do not exist standards common to the Soviet and non-Soviet world by which the truth—objective reality—can be determined. This difficulty may well be the most intractable of all the dilemmas confronting Soviet relations with the West.

CONCLUSION

We began by noting that detente as it developed a decade ago is dead. Basically the Soviet impulse toward accommodation with the United States stemmed from a perception of vulnerability and a belief that cooperation could bring more benefits than confrontation. Detente failed in part because the hoped for benefits were not forthcoming and in part because the Kremlin limited detente to the central arenas of conflict with the United States but not the periphery, i.e., the Third World.

There is every reason to believe that Moscow seriously wants to resurrect some form of detente. "We are ready," Brezhnev told the 26th Party Congress, "for a dialog."¹⁴ Several of the speeches at the Congress suggested the beginning of a new peace campaign on the part of the Soviet Union. Indeed, all of the factors which gave birth to detente a decade ago continue to exist: the Soviet economy is in serious difficulty; the arms race is costlier than ever; China remains a potential threat on the horizon; and now Moscow is faced with intractable problems on its southern and western borders.

Complicating Moscow's problems is the advent of an American administration committed to taking a harder line against the Soviets than its predecessor. Clearly, if detente is to be restored, the Soviets are going to have to pay a higher price than before. The Reagan administration is willing to go along with arms control negotiations, but it insists that the SALT II Treaty be revised. There will be a sharp increase in US defense spending; and Secretary of State Haig has announced the restoration of the Kissingerian principle of linkage. If Moscow wants cooperation on issues vital to the Soviet Union, it must be prepared to give in on issues vital to the United States.

In sum, Soviet expansionist tendencies are to some extent balanced by factors working toward stability in East-West relations. The determination of the United States to resist Soviet

aggression, coupled with a strengthening of its military capabilities, should put the United States in a strong position to compel the Soviets to pay a meaningful (albeit reasonable) price for detente. At a minimum, Washington should insist that detente apply to the Third World as well as to Europe and the strategic arena. If detente is restored a second time, it should be more reciprocal than the first time. Only in that way can it last longer than a few years.

ENDNOTES

1. For a description of the events leading to the collapse of detente, see Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1981, especially Chapter 8, "Detente in Decline."
2. *The New York Times*, January 6, 1980, p. 2E.
3. See the testimony of Herbert S. Levin before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in *Detente*, Hearings Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, US Senate, 93d Congress, 2d Session, August 15, 20, 21; September 10, 12, 18, 19, 24, 25; October 1, 8, 1974, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1975, pp. 19-30.
4. Shalva Sanakoyev, *The World Socialist System*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 289-290.
5. For an indepth examination of the leadership problem, see Jerry F. Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1980. For two perceptive assessments of the immediate prospects, see R. Judson Mitchell, "The Soviet Succession: Who and What Will Follow Brezhnev?," *Orbis*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Spring 1979, pp. 9-34 and William G. Hyland, "Brezhnev and Beyond," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Fall 1979), pp. 51-66.
6. *Pravda*, March 4, 1981.
7. See Holland Hunter, "Soviet Economic Problems and Alternative Policy Responses," in *Soviet Economy in a Time of Change*, Joint Economic Committee, 96th Congress, 1st Session, October 10, 1979, Washington, DC.
8. *Pravda*, November 18, 1978.
9. Craig R. Whitney, "The View From the Kremlin," *The New York Times Magazine*, April 20, 1980, p. 91.
10. *Facts on File*, Vol. 40, No. 2076, August 22, 1980, p. 625.
11. *Time Magazine*, December 15, 1980, p. 42.
12. *Radio Liberty*, RL/435/80, November 13, 1980, p. 3.
13. *The New York Times*, August 4, 1977.
14. *Pravda*, February 24, 1981.

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