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# SOVIET STRATEGY IN THE 1970'S AND BEYOND

by

DR. ROBERT H. DONALDSON

**A**t the conclusion of the 1960's, as the Soviet Union moved into its second half-century, the leaders in the Kremlin faced a novel political prospect. Brezhnev's world was as different from Khrushchev's as Khrushchev's had been from Stalin's. The changes were evident both in the internal structure of Soviet society and in the external shape of international relations.

Probably the most fundamental development concerned the general structure of the international system. Since the 1960's, international relations seem to have been in a period of transition from bipolarity to multipolarity. The US and USSR, in a state of strategic parity, still have military power which is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to that of other states. However, the nuclear weapons which give them that superiority count for less and less in the conduct of their diplomacy as the factors of economic strength and acquisition of raw materials and energy resources assume more importance. Moreover, the objectives of the superpowers seem to have moderated—neither seems bent on destroying the other, nor on seeking a direct and dramatic breakthrough in the other's backyard. The growing economic strength of Western Europe and Japan has led these states to practice a more autonomous diplomacy. China has broken its ideological links with the USSR and seeks to enlarge its own role as a leader of the "intermediate zone" of medium and small states. Indeed, the main centers of world power have become Washington, Moscow, and Peking; but,

whereas a decade earlier the two Communist powers clearly considered the United States to be their principal opponent, by the beginning of the 1970's, each considered the other to be its "enemy number one."

In strategic military terms, however, the Soviet Union and the United States remain the primary contestants. By 1970, the Soviet Union had achieved a position of approximate military parity with the United States, reversing its seemingly permanent inferiority of the earlier cold war era. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, Khrushchev had attempted to bluff by claiming a greater capability than he in fact had, but the real weakness of the Soviet strategic position was exposed at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. Determined never again to be so vulnerable, Khrushchev embarked on a program of military expansion which his successors continued. By the end of the decade, the Soviets had achieved a rough balance, and by 1971, they had passed the United States in numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles. While the US remained ahead in most other categories, in overall military capability the US could no longer be considered preeminent. The political implications of this development were significant. It meant, for one thing, that in arms control negotiations the Soviet Union could negotiate from a position of equality. Moscow did not have to fear that an agreement would freeze her in a position of permanent inferiority. Thus, ironically, this increase in arms opened the way for a genuine effort in arms reduction or, failing that, at least a stabilization of the arms race.

Another major development was the pronounced decline in the rate of growth of the Soviet economy. As they prepared the Ninth Five-Year Plan for 1971-75, Soviet economic planners faced a worrisome condition. The limited reforms of the late 1960's had failed, and the rate of growth of the Soviet gross national product had dropped from 5.3 percent in 1958-67 to 3.7 percent in 1967-73.<sup>1</sup> At the heart of the problem lay the falling rate of growth in productivity.

By failing to address this problem, the Kremlin could be courting trouble. In a context of repeated but largely unfulfilled government promises, popular dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of consumer goods became widespread. In the face of the 1970 workers' riots in Poland and the consequent fall of the Gomulka government, the Soviet leaders could not automatically assume that they were immune to the anger of popular forces. One option open to them was radical reform of the economy, perhaps by major changes in the collective farm system and substantial decentralization of industrial administration. Such a course, however, would disrupt the power and perquisites of established interests in Soviet society—a prospect the Kremlin politicians could hardly welcome. The alternative path—increasing productivity by means of imported technology from the industrialized West—may thus have seemed a safer road to take. Accordingly, the Ninth Five-Year Plan provided for a growth in foreign trade of 35 percent; at its end in 1975, the actual growth turned out to be an astounding 186 percent.<sup>2</sup>

### POLICY FOR THE 1970's

These changes in the political landscape confronting Moscow—the emerging global multipolarity, military parity with the United States, and the stagnation of the Soviet economy—necessitated a rethinking of Soviet foreign policy for the 1970's. And the direction to which all these trends pointed was that of relaxation of tensions: detente. There was nothing fundamentally new in the idea; Stalin himself had on occasion

advocated and practiced limited cooperation with the West, and Khrushchev had extended the concept of peaceful coexistence into a permanent part of the Soviet general line. In its theoretical essence, Brezhnev's detente added nothing to the earlier concept of peaceful coexistence. But in practice, it was to encompass a much closer degree of cooperation with those countries that had theretofore been perceived as adversaries. It envisioned collaboration in areas such as arms control, trade, crisis settlement, science, technology, and the policy toward China. Brezhnev wanted not just the avoidance of conflict; he needed the active cooperation of the West.

These factors, however, were uneasily juxtaposed with the revolutionary and expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union, its global rivalry with the United States, and its perceptions of the industrialized capitalist nations as "imperialistic" adversaries. And, they were subject to the countervailing pressures of the Soviet military-industrial complex—the army and the "metal-eaters." Soviet policymaking under Brezhnev was not monolithic—if indeed it had been under anyone else. Brezhnev had to struggle for detente. Sometimes he won and sometimes not, and sometimes he put aside detente policies for other priorities.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the decade of the 1970's, Soviet policy has been characterized by ambiguities and

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contradictions. Detente has become the general line of policy, but the contradictions in it have been so numerous as to raise doubts as to the depth of the Soviet commitment.

In a speech to the Indian Parliament in 1973, Brezhnev waxed poetic in rejecting the path of cold war which "like a gloomy whirlwind . . . drew into its orbit even those who would like to remain aloof [and] threw a somber shadow on the entire situation on our planet." The alternative path, "gradually becoming a reality," called for eliminating hotbeds of war and tension, establishing normal relations between states, and developing extensive and equal cooperation. This path, in turn, would "create more favorable conditions for the accomplishment of many other important tasks—national liberation, social progress, [and] overcoming of the scandalous inequality between various countries."<sup>4</sup>

The lessening of cold war tensions between East and West is not, in Brezhnev's words, "a temporary phenomenon but the beginning of a fundamental restructuring of international relations." And the policy of peaceful coexistence, the Soviets say, is not a tactical expedient but a course rooted in objective factors, including the "very nature of the socialist system and its profound internal requirements." For the Soviet people, it produces the most favorable conditions for success in building Communism. But it is just as beneficial and necessary for the West, for the changed policies of "sober" politicians in the capitalist countries stem not from "well-meaning desire" but from a correlation of forces altered in favor of socialism.<sup>5</sup> And although detente could not preclude conflict situations, since the objective contradictions between the two systems could not be eliminated, experience has shown its effectiveness in impeding negative trends, restraining the imperialists, and promoting the solution to conflict situations.

**B**y no means does this confident and optimistic appraisal of the international situation denote a complacent outlook on the part of the Soviet

leaders. Tributes to the achievement of the Soviet "peace program" are almost invariably balanced with reminders of the obstacles yet to be overcome. Although the "imperialists" have been compelled to turn away from cold war policies, they do not share the Soviet interpretation of what "peaceful coexistence" requires. The most dangerous ones see detente as an instrument for interfering in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. Thus, ideological struggle becomes even more important as "supporters of the cold war . . . pretending to support relaxation and resorting to trojan horse tactics" find that they can no longer count on military means and economic blockade, and hence resort to "ideological subversion, slander against socialism and the rousing of nationalist and other survivals,"<sup>6</sup> much as they sought to do in Czechoslovakia. But the more "responsible" Western politicians, *Pravda* notes, will "shed their illusions and hopes for the transformation of communism, just as the socialists themselves realize the unchanged ideological hostility imperialism holds for them."<sup>7</sup>

Much of the effort of the dominant faction of the Kremlin leadership in recent years has been expended in rebutting those "incorrigible skeptics who are asking in smark-aleck tones: Where is the tangible proof that favorable changes have actually taken place in the international situation?"<sup>8</sup> Much of the counterattack has been directed at Peking and its alleged conviction that "Colossal upheavals are a good thing." No less insistent have been the doubts emerging from the Third World, questioning the Soviet Union's continuing dedication to the "national-liberation" and "anti-imperialist" struggles. But, there are also differences of opinion within the Soviet Union concerning the degree to which the "imperialists" were willing to channel their struggle with socialism along a peaceful path.

Early in 1974, Brezhnev sounded a relatively defensive note in insisting that "stubborn resistance from the most reactionary and aggressive circles of imperialism" had not caught the regime unprepared, and that the "sallies by the

enemies of peace" had been no surprise.<sup>9</sup> And yet, avowing that failure to halt the arms race led the regime to "pay unrelenting attention to strengthening the defense might" of the USSR, he declared: "The supporters of the arms race cite the argument that limiting arms, and all the more so reducing them, means taking a risk. In actual fact there is immeasurably greater risk in continuing the unrestrained accumulation of arms."<sup>10</sup>

### CAUSE FOR DEBATE

Other Soviet voices—prominently including some in the military—were not so confident. Thus, whereas *Pravda* had asserted in July 1973 that the "Dark clouds of military danger . . . are dispersing,"<sup>11</sup> the Soviet military's newspaper editorialized a year later that "The clouds of military danger still darken the sky above our planet."<sup>12</sup> Less frequent than such clear contradictions are distinct differences of emphasis among certain spokesmen. Marshal Grechko, for example, declared in February 1974 that "The world has changed but the aggressive, misanthropic nature of imperialism has remained unchanged."<sup>13</sup> The previous month, Georgi Arbatov had stated substantially the same premise with considerably different emphasis. He said that while the class nature of imperialists had not and could not change, "What has changed is the world in which they have to live and operate. . . . They have been compelled to adapt their policy to these changes and to the objective realities of the international situation."<sup>14</sup>

In effect, a sharp debate on the possibility of nuclear war, reminiscent of that which occurred two decades earlier, was taking place in Moscow. In February 1974, Rear Admiral (and Professor) V. V. Shelyag attacked assertions "in the west" that nuclear war would destroy civilization. While war would indeed be a great misfortune, the "mood of communists is far from one of futility and pessimism," he wrote. If Western powers should initiate a war, Soviet nuclear potential provides the means of "routing the aggressor and consequently defending

civilization."<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Marshal Grechko, refuting those "imperialist ideologues" who argue that war has ceased to be an instrument of policy, declared that "War and aggression always have been and will remain the inevitable accompaniment of capitalist society."<sup>16</sup> Reiterating the point in his election speech a few months later, the Soviet minister of defense said: "Imperialism is still sharpening its weapons for war. . . . The danger of war is still a grim reality."<sup>17</sup>

On the other side of the debate were some prominent civilian officials and academicians. Among them were party official V. G. Dolgin, who wrote that the growth in military potential of the two opposing systems "makes hopeless the solution of conflicts by military means,"<sup>18</sup> and researcher A. Ye. Bovin, who declared that it was "impossible to find arguments and to identify a goal which would justify the unleashing of a general nuclear-missile war."<sup>19</sup> Arbatov was on the opposite side from Grechko on this issue as well. Quoting Clausewitz on the need for correspondence between "the political ends of war" and the means, he argued that with the emergence of nuclear missiles this correspondence was lost, "since no policy can have the objective of destroying the enemy at the cost of complete self-annihilation." Even "bourgeois figures far removed from Marxism" were now acknowledging that the sphere of applicability of military force for national political ends was "inexorably shrinking."<sup>20</sup> But the debate virtually ceased in the second half of 1974, and a different theme began to be sounded in some Soviet commentaries on detente. An editorial in *Pravda* was the first to articulate the new (and yet quite venerable) note: The alleviation of international tension, together with "the intensification of the political and economic instability of capitalism," influenced the deployment of class forces by opening up to the "workers and democratic movements of the capitalist countries unprecedented opportunities."<sup>21</sup> Shortly thereafter, Boris Ponomarev was to declare that the conditions of detente and the "general crisis of capitalism" had opened up for nonruling Communist parties "greater

opportunities and resources than ever before for influencing the course of events in Europe.”<sup>22</sup>

### PERCEPTIONS OF DETENTE

It is in the context of the need for reassessing Communist strategy in light of the new international conditions of detente and capitalist “decay” that the Soviet perception of European security in the 1970’s should be assessed, for when the Soviets call for “abolition of blocs” and “ending the division of Europe,” they are giving these phrases a special meaning. In the words of one commentator, “The division of Europe into military-political groupings is one thing, and the existence of states with different social systems is another.”<sup>23</sup> The Warsaw Pact and its military organization, which was from the beginning “purely defensive and open,” can be disbanded simultaneously with NATO. But the division of Europe “on social and political lines” is a “natural result” of the advancement along the road of social progress, and it is “historically irreversible.” Such division can and will be overcome in the long term, but only as a result of the transformation to socialism in the West.<sup>24</sup> Simply put, the Soviet stance on political and social change is: What is mine is historically irreversible, and what is yours is open to inevitable transformations. The Soviets do not admit to the legitimacy of long-term American interests on the European Continent; in the view of *Pravda*, the position of the US “is alien to the fundamental interests of the European states.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, in its strategy regarding the future security of Europe, as in its larger conception of peaceful coexistence, the USSR perceives detente as inextricably linked to a continuing ideological and political struggle on behalf of “social progress.”

In its pursuit of a new relationship with the United States, the Soviet leadership perceived three fundamental objectives in detente: the imperative of avoiding a superpower nuclear confrontation, acquisition of American technology and trade in order to build the economy, and prevention of collusion

between Washington and Peking. For the Nixon and Ford Administrations, the meaning and purpose of detente was different. The Americans put far more emphasis on the notion that the superpowers would not only avoid military confrontation but would also demonstrate self-restraint and a willingness to forego efforts to obtain unilateral advantage at the expense of the other. The basic American understanding of self-restraint and “linkage” was expressed by President Nixon in 1973:

The basic criterion would be a willingness to act with restraint . . . progress in one area would help maintain momentum in other negotiations. We would also make it clear that aggressive behavior could imperil our entire relationship. By linking all aspects of Soviet-American relations, we could hope that progress, if it came, could lead to a broadly based understanding about international conduct.<sup>26</sup>

It was soon apparent that this conception was at fundamental variance with the Soviet interpretation, which saw no obligation on Moscow’s part to bring about a quieting of the forces of revolutionary change or a “freezing” of the status quo. The resulting American disillusionment was so sharp as to cause President Ford ultimately (in the wake of the Angola disaster) to banish the very word “detente” from his vocabulary. In seeking the explanation for this situation, we may find more than a grain of truth in the reported comment of an unnamed Soviet analyst: “You Americans tried to sell detente like detergent and claimed it would do everything a detergent would do.”<sup>27</sup>

On top of this apparent contradiction was added another: The Soviet Union appeared to some observers to want to achieve a military superiority over the United States while it also sought to negotiate a strategic agreement to reduce the dangers of a nuclear confrontation. Western cries of alarm greeted the continuing growth in Soviet weaponry, both strategic and conventional,

beyond the approximate parity reached in the early 1970's. Seemingly, the Soviet arms procurement program was unaffected by the improvement in political relations. In the military sphere, Soviet behavior and doctrine seemed to conflict with the underlying logic of both arms control and detente itself.

While the dilemma was real enough, it was frequently overstated in the West. Analysts such as Richard Pipes pointed to the writings of military professionals, such as those quoted above, to buttress their own alarming conclusions, even while conceding that foreign and defense policy decisionmaking is in the hands of the politicians—the Politburo.<sup>28</sup> They too easily dismissed as “for foreign consumption only” the views of the Arbatovs—civilian analysts who hold differing views from the military professionals—and yet the evidence shows that such persons are actually quite close to Brezhnev and his faction. In short, what such analyses overlook is that there is actually no consensus on these matters in the USSR. Debate over the intentions of the other side rages in each country. Moreover, in the process of debate, the Pipes and the Grechkos seemed to feed off each other quite well. Finally, it is worth remembering that Soviet weapons deployments of the mid-1970's reflected budgetary and strategic decisions actually made in the late 1960's—before the new congruence of unfavorable trends brought the major policy reassessments in Moscow.<sup>29</sup> To confuse the momentum of “organizational process” as the calculated decision of the present era is only to invite further entanglement in the web of self-fulfilling prophecy.

### CONTINUING SOVIET PROBLEMS

Those who are quick to point to the “advantages” which detente has brought to the Soviet Union need to be reminded of the continuing dilemmas and limitations confronting the Brezhnev regime as it conducts its foreign policy in the waning years of the decade. Foremost among these is the continuing problem of China. Moscow's polemics of recent years—aimed at proving

that, despite Soviet efforts at normalization, China had finally forfeited all pretense of following a socialist policy—have accompanied a revived Soviet effort to strip the Chinese regime of its Marxist-Leninist credentials in international circles. In 1973, the Soviet press accused Peking's leaders of “having made a full break with Marxism-Leninism” and of becoming “more and more frequently the immediate ally of the most reactionary imperialist circles.”<sup>30</sup> The following year, the Soviets began to refer to Peking's policy as “anti-communist.”<sup>31</sup>

Long resigned to the notion that prospects for improved relations would come only with the departure of the Maoist leadership in China, the USSR made a notable attempt in the fall and winter of 1976-77 to reach a rapprochement with the successor regime of Hua Kuo-feng. But, to the evident relief of Washington, Peking's new leaders proved no more willing than Mao and Chou had been to compromise their differences with Moscow. The end of the post-Mao Soviet efforts at reconciliation was heralded in an authoritative *Pravda* article in May 1977. It warned the world that China constituted a distinctive danger to world peace: “China is the only country in the world whose official circles advocate publicly and without any camouflage a new world slaughter.” Western circles in particular were warned not to “delude themselves with the hope that they would be able to ward off Peking's expansionism from themselves and channel it to a different direction.”<sup>32</sup> With the resumption of such sharp polemics, it seemed clear that for the foreseeable future the Sino-Soviet split would be a permanent feature of international politics.

Compounding this dilemma, the Soviet Union now found itself confronted, within the international Communist movement, with the challenge of “Eurocommunism.” This underlined the conflict between the Kremlin's demand for unity within the Communist movement and the desire of the parties of Europe—both West and East—for relative independence. The Spanish, Italian, and French parties, motivated in part by the prospect of acquiring political power through

democratic elections, challenged the authority of the Soviet Union (as expressed in the codeword "proletarian internationalism"). The all-European meeting of Communist parties held in Berlin in June 1975, convoked originally to affirm Moscow's leadership of the international Communist movement, ended up denying it and thereby underscoring the continuing challenge of polycentrism, with its particular dangers for the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.

### THE THIRD WORLD

As a final dilemma in its detente policy, the Soviet Union was plagued with difficulties in its policy toward the Third World. Moscow began to discover in numerous regions that its substantial political and military investments not only were failing to win the gratitude of their intended beneficiaries, but were also occasionally being dissipated in internecine struggles among "progressive" friends of the USSR.

During the 1970's, Soviet aid and trade relations have been concentrated in a few areas which—despite the frequent reaffirmations of revolutionary zeal in Moscow—are evidently chosen according to considerations of strategic benefit rather than by criteria of "progressiveness" alone. Even in cases where radical pro-Soviet regimes have been replaced by more moderate and less friendly governments, the Soviets have demonstrated a concern for protecting their considerable investments by maintaining "businesslike relations." In addition to economic factors such as debt repayment, the acquisition of new markets, or access to raw materials, the Soviets consider in choosing their targets such strategic factors as the degree of Chinese or Western interest in a country, its importance to Soviet security, or its ability to provide support facilities—including airports, harbors, or sites for communication stations—for Soviet military activities. These latter factors have assumed greater importance in recent years as the Soviet Union has deployed a substantial naval presence in the oceans and seas

surrounding the Third World, and as it has sought to use this new capability not merely for military defense and strategic deterrence but for the political purpose of "protecting state interests in time of peace."<sup>33</sup>

In using its expanded naval capability for the purpose of "showing the flag" and supporting its foreign policy objectives, the Soviet leadership seems to be following the examples of the "imperialist" British and American Navies and the teachings of their 19th-century mentor, Admiral A. T. Mahan. Their activities demonstrate that they have mastered the principle that subjective *perception* of relative superiority weighs heavily in the competition for influence. However, while it is true that the Soviet Navy has achieved wide-ranging capabilities in strategic deterrence and naval presence, it remains inferior in its mission of sea control and in its ability to project power ashore.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the expansion of the Soviet Navy in the Brezhnev era has signalled Moscow's determination to achieve the status of a global superpower not confined to the Eurasian land mass but capable of projecting its power far beyond its own borders. In pursuit of this objective, the Soviets have thus given renewed importance to the achievement of a strong position in strategic areas of the Third World. For these objectives and the supporting range of tactics, Richard Lowenthal's term "counterimperialism" indeed seems most appropriate.<sup>35</sup> This complex of economic and military interests, much more than the revolutionary impulse or ideological affinity, seems to provide Moscow's major criteria for the concentration of energies and resources in the Third World.

In fact, the assumptions underlying the "revolutionary conscience" and "Communist convictions" of the Soviet leaders have been under constant challenge in the Third World, and the wells of "creative Marxism-Leninism" seem to have run dry in the effort to salvage them. Socioeconomic change occurs in the Third World in ways quite different from the Soviet expectations; political change has been notoriously resistant to the neat categorization of Marxist analysis.



**I**ronically, states which are judged most "progressive" by one set of measures may still prove to be very reluctant to follow the ideological prescriptions or policy advice of the Soviet Union. The record of Soviet relations with states such as Egypt, India, Indonesia, Ghana, Sudan, and Somalia is replete with instances of Moscow's inability to influence its supposed friends and clients. When the issue is of marginal importance, a state might be disposed to follow its patron's lead, but in cases where its vital interests diverge from those of its great-power friend, the Third World state will frequently pursue an independent course. The patron, given its own stake in the region and its fear of being displaced by a rival power, usually is unable or unwilling to dictate or compel in such circumstances. As a recent study of Soviet and Chinese influence in the Third World concluded, "Soviet and Chinese policies seem to have made adjustments to the needs of Third World countries more often than the latter's decisions have yielded to the preferences of the Communist courtiers."<sup>6</sup>

The powerful force of nationalism has thus been a major obstacle standing in the way of Moscow's effort to enlist the resources and support of the countries of the Third World behind its own vital objectives. Moreover, the Third World's growing determination to exert full political and economic sovereignty has recently underscored the large degree of incompatibility between its own purposes and preferences and those of the industrialized powers. At the United Nations and in special settings such as the May 1976 Nairobi UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IV) or the August 1976 Colombo Conference of Nonaligned Nations, the USSR has been finding itself in the uncomfortable position of being lumped with other developed countries and forced into a defensive position regarding its policies and tactics.

In response to this challenge, Moscow has sought to emphasize that its own economic strength and developmental experience are resources freely available to the less developed countries and to reinforce the notion that there is a natural community of

interests between itself and the Third World. The problems of underdevelopment, including food scarcity, overpopulation, illiteracy, and mass underemployment, are all portrayed as consequences of the "crisis of capitalism" and the neocolonialist policies of the Western imperialists. To the extent that the program for a "New International Economic Order" attacks the policies and practices of the West, the Soviets are willing to give it their full support. And yet its sponsors (the "Group of 77," which included 111 countries at the time of UNCTAD IV) have also included in their platform demands for changes in the policies and behavior of the USSR and its East European allies. The barter system of trade, the nonconvertibility of Communist-bloc currencies, and the refusal of the bloc to grant trade preferences to Third World products have been particular objects of Third World dissatisfaction. The efforts of Soviet representatives to deny that the USSR bears any specific "obligation" or shares any collective responsibility for the worsening economic plight of the Third World are increasingly resented by spokesmen for the less developed countries.

These trends suggest that as the Third World collectively mobilizes its strength and resources in order to pursue its platform of demands against the industrialized countries, the Soviet leaders may find it increasingly difficult to define their interests in a way which is compatible with those of Third World states. Despite their efforts to distance themselves from the "imperialist" West, the Soviets are increasingly associated with "the other superpower" in the eyes of the world's "have-nots." The major challenge for Soviet policy in the coming decade may lie in Moscow's ability to adjust its doctrine and strategy to take account of the growing North-South conflict. And whether and how the Soviets accomplish this may well determine whether that conflict evolves into constructive dialogue or destructive confrontation.

## THE OUTLOOK

To focus, as this article has done, on the

multiple dilemmas confronting Soviet foreign policy today is not to suggest corresponding victories for the adversaries of Moscow in world politics. On the contrary, the latter half of the 1970's has witnessed several disasters and a proliferation of unresolved problems for the West. The last quarter of the 20th century gives every indication of being a time of profound social and economic dislocation for all the major powers, whatever their ideology or politics. It is clear that the structure of international politics that emerged at the conclusion of World War II is gone; what is not so clear are the parameters of the structure that is replacing it.

What prognosis can we draw for Soviet foreign policy in the period beyond the 1970's? One factor which certainly must be addressed is the inevitability of impending leadership change. Leonid Brezhnev, having completed his 13th year in power, has ruled the USSR longer than any other ruler save Stalin. He has already made his mark on Soviet politics (more in foreign than in domestic policy) and, except for the possibility of a SALT II agreement signed at the summit, there appear to be few peaks that he is yet likely to scale. Brezhnev has turned 71, and amid continuing press reports of poor health, it seems quite likely that his administration is nearing a conclusion. His elevation to the Presidency in the summer of 1977 represented more the culmination of a career than the acquisition of new power.

Nor are Brezhnev's immediate colleagues likely to tarry long behind him. The average age of the full members of the Soviet Politburo is 66.5, and even the expanded group of 25 men in the Politburo and Secretariat averages 64 years. Yet despite the actuarial table's suggestion that substantial change in leadership personnel is imminent, there is no reason to anticipate any dramatic changes in Soviet foreign policy. From our knowledge of the backgrounds and attitudes of the group of men just below the top ranks (themselves in their middle or late fifties), as well as from our understanding of the considerable bureaucratic groupings whom they represent, we may expect a fundamental continuity in Soviet policy in the coming few years.<sup>37</sup>

Quite probably the Kremlin will continue to pursue a detente with the West, if for no other reason than the continued existence of those factors which gave rise to detente in the first place: the danger of nuclear war, the need for Western technology, and the conflict with China. But the two superpowers can be expected to pursue the quest for closer relations more realistically and soberly. There is not likely to recur the euphoria and soaring rhetoric which accompanied the origins of detente. Both sides have reason to be disappointed with some of the fruits of their collaboration and are now presumably able to assess its limits more realistically. And there are limits, rooted in the profoundly different societies and political systems which gave birth to their foreign policies. Ideology and clashing great-power interests combine to make both nations adversaries—even though they are rivals who of necessity must cooperate.

Communist ideology may not be a guide to Soviet behavior, but it is a creed which continues to infuse Soviet policy with a certain dynamism. It identifies a cause, defines the enemy, and inspires the faith. Without an enemy and a cause, there would be no justification for the Soviet claim to world leadership. Without the doctrine, there would be no basis for the dictatorship of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the whole logic of domestic repression is based upon a foreign threat. Thus, the very nature of the Soviet system sets limits on how far detente can progress.

#### NOTES

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