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THE SOVIET UNION:
A COMMUNIST POWER OR A RUSSIAN IMPERIAL POWER?

When outsiders observe and assess Soviet actions and policies, many tend to interpret these in one of two ways, depending on their own psychological and ideological bent. One group operates on the assumption that the Soviet Union represents a new type of revolutionary power, motivated and driven by its ideology, which provides all the clues needed to determine Soviet motivations. The other group believes that the ideology is no more than window dressing and that at the core the Soviet Union is simply a continuation of the Russian Empire, committed primarily to pursuing Russian national interests. Both groups can advance powerful arguments to support their approach.

Those who see ideology as the ultimate motivation point to the obvious facts that the Soviet regime bases its entire legitimacy on its ideology and therefore cannot abandon the ideology without destroying itself. Furthermore, all actions are explained in terms of ideology, and the ideology is used to subvert other nations and provide a rationale for Soviet penetration of other countries, and if the opportunity exists, for Soviet control of them. The "Brezhnev doctrine," which holds that the Soviet Union has not only the right but the duty to prevent the overthrow of "socialism" in another country, is seen as the ultimate expression of an ideological imperative.

Proponents of the "Russian imperial" approach would concede that the Soviet regime is clothed in ideological trappings, and that the ideology is used as an instrument of foreign policy and propaganda. But they would point out that very few Soviet officials really believe it, and that the ideology is simply used, in totally cynical fashion, to advance Russian national interests. Since Lenin's pronouncements go all over the lot, citations can be found to justify any policy decision. Therefore, Soviet political leaders can decide what they want to do, without any regard to ideology, and their propaganda technicians will always find an "ideologically correct" justification.

Those who denigrate the role of ideology as a motivating force, would also point out that many key characteristics of the Soviet system simply cannot be explained by communist ideology. Take hypersecrecy, for example. This is a pronounced Russian trait, going back to the Middle Ages, and has no basis in Marxism. And -- this group would add -- how can you reconcile Marxism with a policy which outlaws the workers' movement in Poland? Doesn't the Soviet attitude toward Solidarity have more in common with nineteenth century Tsarist

repression of Polish "rebels" (who also had the support of virtually all Poles)?

The truth is that both sides of this argument have cited factors which are critical for understanding the Soviet Union, but neither offers a full explanation. Their debate is like a argument over whether brass is copper or zinc. It is both, and the Soviet Union is both an ideological power and a modern-day embodiment of Russian imperial urges. What is important is not to debate which element is predominant, but to understand how the amalgam works.

The Ideological Element

The Soviets call their ideology Marxism-Leninism, but it should be called simply Leninism. Marx, after all, predicted that the working class would revolt against the ruling bourgeoisie, establish a dictatorship of the working class (not of an individual or a small group), and after eliminating other classes, live in a state of brotherly love and cooperation, without needing a government or repressive instruments. In fact, the state itself would "wither away" and no longer be necessary. This vision, though fundamentally flawed in itself, has nothing in common with the Bolshevik Revolution and the regime it established, a regime which controls the working class rather than being controlled by it, and which built the most awesome instruments of repression in human history, along with an enormous, bureaucratic state.

It was Lenin's adaptations -- some would say distortions -- of Marxist philosophy which created the ideological basis of the Soviet state. Lenin, seeing that the "working class" in Russia was small and unorganized, postulated that a small number of intellectuals and professional revolutionaries were the "vanguard" of the working class and could act in its name. Therefore, he created an elite party which arrogated to itself the right to determine the "true" interests of the workers, and to rule the country on their behalf. And what is more, he established a structure of authority and discipline in the elite party itself so that it could be controlled from the top. This was the structure which Stalin inherited (and Mao Tse-tung borrowed for China) which provided the instrument for the most repressive regimes mankind has known.

Leninism, therefore, is simply a mechanism for seizing, consolidating and perpetuating power. The fact that it is clothed in high-sounding phrases about social betterment does not alter its essence. Nevertheless, the pretense that the goal of this power is to improve the lot of the "masses" is

better suited to propaganda than Nazi "master race" theories, which are guaranteed to turn off anyone not a member of the "master race."

The Role of Ideology

Most persons who have dealt extensively with Soviet officials, even those officially charged with propaganda, are struck by how few really believe the ideology. In private, most are frank to say that the social theories are not consistent with reality and that Soviet-style "socialism" does not work very well in terms of meeting human needs. In Soviet schools, obligatory classes in ideology are considered dull make-work, good only for cynical jokes and material for opportunists who must master the "catechism" to make a career with little work. None seem to see their ideology as offering a practical guide to policy decisions. One senses none of the revolutionary elan today which observers described in the 1920's and 1930's.

But the loss of revolutionary elan is not the whole story. The fact is that those who run the Soviet system cannot give up the ideology, whether they believe it or not. They cannot because it provides the sole source of their own legitimacy as rulers. Their power does not stem from constitutional processes; it can only be justified on ideological grounds, both to their own people and to the world at large. When so much at home seems to be either unsuccessful or inconsistent with the proclaimed ideology, it becomes important to the rulers to claim victories of the ideology abroad. Such claims have a legitimizing impact and contribute an important element to Soviet objectives which were absent from the motivations of monarchs and would be absent from those of a real constitutional republic.

Leninist ideology has, moreover, struck deeper roots than the pattern of cynical manipulation which we often observe would suggest. The fact is that so much Soviet discourse has been forced into the mold of Leninist reasoning that it affects the thinking even of those who would privately profess disbelief in its fundamental tenets. Entirely aside from its use as a propaganda tool, it provides a framework for looking at the world and analyzing developments.

Thus, Soviet citizens are inclined to interpret events in democratic countries in terms of the "class struggle," and -- paradoxically -- to assume that official statements put out by other countries are as duplicitous as those put out by their own. They tend to see other countries as ruled by elites which oppress the "masses" and deny them social services such

as free education and medical care. And while the Soviet rulers do not find clear-cut answers to policy dilemmas in the ideology, the ideology acts to define options and to channel decisions in particular directions.

The ideology is also a dandy tool for an expansionist foreign policy. Its rhetorical element promising power to the masses and economic betterment for the poor has an appeal to naive reformers and provides a cloak of benign intent to cover Soviet attempts to extend their influence and establish control over others. Its Leninist core provides a rationale to would-be dictators to gain and retain power, and a propaganda "justification" for accepting "fraternal assistance" in the form of Soviet arms and Cuban troops.

The Russian Tradition

Leninist ideology explains a lot, but it does not explain it all. The Soviet system also exemplifies a number of characteristics which are deeply rooted in the non-communist Russian past.

One of the most striking and pervasive of these involves the relationship of the state and its citizens. Russia has no tradition of individual rights or of the rule of law binding on both rulers and the ruled. All inhabitants were considered servants of the state (or of the Tsar), and virtually the sovereign's property. A ruler might be liberal or repressive, but "rights" were not inherent but rather privileges dispensed from above. And he who giveth can also take away. This is still a deep-seated Russian attitude which underlies much of the regime's behavior on human rights issues and explains why the population as a whole is relatively indifferent to them. This tradition produces an unspoken and perhaps subconscious attitude which holds that foreigners who press for the right of emigration are, in effect, out to rob the Russian regime of its property, and those who want to leave are guilty of disloyalty which smacks of treason.

Another deep-seated Russian tradition is that of hyper-secrecy, especially as regards foreigners. Western visitors to Muscovy as far back as the fifteenth century wrote about this trait, which even then was carried to absurd extremes, not only by the authorities, but by ordinary people as well. Often the secrecy stemmed from a desire to cover up weaknesses or potential embarrassments and was connected with a feeling of technological and cultural inferiority in comparison with Western Europe. Even today tourists are often harassed by ordinary citizens if they photograph buildings in disrepair or

primitive-looking open-air markets. The popular assumption seems to be that any foreigner is a potential threat, actively trying to uncover weaknesses which can be exploited in some fashion. The Communist regime exploits and fans this attitude in its "vigilance" campaigns, and the traditional attitude bolsters official resistance to intrusive verification measures of arms control agreements. As Gromyko once remarked when pressed to agree to additional confidence-building measures, "What you want is a license to spy on us."

The Russian attitude toward Western Europe has always been ambivalent. On the one hand, the material prosperity, civic spirit and (for intellectuals at least) political freedoms have been envied. But, feeling that Russia was backward in all these respects, Russians indulged in psychological compensation by telling themselves that they were spiritually superior. Historically, this took various forms, sometimes with claims that their values were more spiritual and not so materialistic as the West, and sometimes with claims that they were more devoted to the good of the whole community rather than that of the most vigorous individuals who, in the West, were held to exploit others. Communist ideology exploits this deepseated ambivalence in numerous ways, by claiming that sacrifices are required today to build a better society for tomorrow, by picturing Western societies as marked by ruthless exploitation and callousness toward the unfortunate, and by stimulating the implicit xenophobic strain in these attitudes.

Traditionally the Russians have always been suspicious of their immediate neighbors and have striven to dominate them. Muscovy grew steadily from a tiny city state in the fourteenth century to a giant empire by adding, piece by piece, the territory of its neighbors. Usually territorial expansion was "justified" by claiming that the neighbor threatened them, or might be used by another powerful state to threaten them. Sometimes the threat was real, but often it did not exist at all. But whether or not the threat really existed, the Russian people as a whole seemed persuaded by their leaders' claims.

Expansion of the Russian Empire was also justified by many on grounds of ideology and religion. For centuries, it was commonplace to speak of Moscow as the "Third Rome," in the sense that it was the successor of Rome and Constantinople as the seat of true Christianity. According to this concept, Russia had both the right and duty to spread her rule over Orthodox Christians to protect them from the Turks (and Western Protestants and Catholics.) The great writer

Dostoevsky, for example, a fierce enemy of Marxism and all forms of socialism, supported aggressive wars against the Turks to protect Orthodox Christians in the Balkans.

At first it might seem that this has little to do with atheistic communism. But in fact it does, because the "Brezhnev doctrine" is really only a secular version of the traditional Russian messianic vision. What the Communists have done in this case, as in the others, is to fuse a distorted Marxian concept with a traditional Russian one. If Orthodox Tsarist Russia had the duty to "protect" Orthodox believers by establishing its rule over them, then the communist Soviet Union has a comparable duty as regards other "socialist" states.

The Amalgam

One of the achievements of the communist regime in Russia has been to convince the Russian people in general that the Soviet system is "theirs" -- that is, authentically Russian. This is important, since even those who complain about its failures rarely consider it an alien imposition. And for many, outside criticism of the system -- even for failures they know are real -- is resented as damaging to their national pride.

Russia's communist leaders have been able to do this precisely because they grafted elements of Leninist ideology on to the tree trunk of Russian nationalist tradition, so that they are able to tap and mobilize attitudes which have deep roots in the national psyche.

The result, however, resembles not so much a plant with grafts as a chemical amalgam, with ideology and Russian traditions intermixed in an intimate and complex fashion. In this intermixture, those traditions useful to centralized, totalitarian rule have been accentuated and those traditions which do not fit it have been resisted.

The Russian Empire was well known for its secret police, forced labor camps and censorship. The Bolsheviks adopted these institutions and made them much more efficient, pervasive and oppressive.

Religion is an good example of a tradition which was not adopted, but opposed. The Russian peasantry, in particular, has traditionally been deeply religious. The Orthodox Church, however, for several centuries operated under tight state controls. The communists did two things. They waged an unremitting campaign against the practice of religion, by propagating

atheism and at the same time trying to build up the cult of Lenin and the Party as a replacement for religious belief. At the same time they utilized the Russian tradition of state control of the Orthodox Church to bring the Church under their ultimate control, which makes it possible to monitor and limit what the Church does, and when the opportunity occurs -- as with contacts with foreign religious groups and "peace" organizations -- to use it as an instrument of official policy.

Ideas of Western-style constitutional government and the rule of law penetrated the Russian intellectual class in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Russia seemed to be evolving belatedly in that direction when World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution cut this evolution short. The Revolution, however, swept away most of the educated class which espoused these ideas. Many were killed, many others were driven into emigration, and those who survived and stayed in the country were driven to the fringes of society and were further decimated in the purges of the 1930's. In their place there arose a new "upper class" which came primarily from the peasantry, a group steeped in traditional, non-Western attitudes and little touched by the influx of Western ideas.

The regime has never succeeded in extirpating either religion or Western ideals of constitutional government. By all accounts, the practice of religion is growing, particularly among the young, and the dissident movement and figures like Andrei Sakharov make clear that, while they may be down, those who strive to establish a government of limited powers subject to the rule of law are not entirely out. Up to now, however, the communist regime has demonstrated the capability of keeping the practice of religion within tolerable bounds and of preventing ideas of constitutional government from spreading to the population as a whole.

For us, the fundamental fact to bear in mind in managing our relations with the Soviet Union and dealing with its leaders is that the system and its motivations cannot be explained exclusively in either ideological or traditional Russian geopolitical terms. We are dealing with a superpower which combines, in ways unique to it, ideological and traditional attitudes, institutions and motivations. Subsequent essays will probe in more detail how this "amalgam" works out in practice.

Prepared by
Jack f. Matlock

SOVIET RUSSIAN PSYCHOLOGY:
SOME COMMON TRAITS

Yes, they lie and cheat. And they can stonewall a negotiation when it seems in their interest to strike a deal. They have a sense of pride and "face" that makes the proverbial oriental variety pale in comparison. Yet, in private, with people he trusts, the Russian can be candid to a fault -- grovelling in his nation's inadequacies -- and so scrupulously honest that it can be irritating, as when he makes a big deal over having forgotten to return a borrowed pencil.

Do these contradictions stem from ideology and politics? To a degree, certainly. The lying, cheating and stonewalling, even the exaggerated sense of pride, often serve an obvious political or ideological purpose. But that is not the whole story, for these traits have deep roots in Russian culture and society.

Now when we talk about the "psychology" of a nation or ethnic group, we need to bear in mind that we are not talking about the psychology of every individual in that group. By no means every Russian, or every Soviet official, fits a stereotype. They exhibit as much individual variety as any other people. Yet there are certain psychological characteristics which are more common, and more characteristic, in one society than in another. What we are concerned with here are some which differ from those most common to Americans and explain in part frequently observed behavioral differences.

The "Truth": Reality or a Convenient Fiction?

Lying is endemic in every society. But societies differ in how the phenomenon is regarded. All societies I know of excuse it under certain circumstances. Who would reproach a wife who comforted her husband after he had delivered a dull after-dinner speech by telling him, "It was a very thoughtful talk, dear, and I'm sure those idiots who dozed off just had too much to drink before dinner?" We would call it a white lie; not the truth, but meant well.

The Russians have many more categories of the "excusable" lie than we typically do. There is, for example, the lie which is not so much meant to deceive as to salvage the pride of the liar. Most Russians would feel that it is a social faux pas to confront another person with an embarrassing fact, and that it is understandable if the other person denies the fact and concocts an alternate, fictional explanation, since he is only trying to save face, not to deceive. They even have a separate word for this sort of lie, to distinguish it from one made with deliberate intent to deceive.

In 1976, President Ford made a direct appeal to Brezhnev to turn off the microwave signals being directed at the American Embassy in Moscow. We then supplied the Soviets with the technical data we had that proved conclusively the existence of the microwave

radiation and even pinpointed the sources. Subsequently, Gromyko had the gall to state to our Ambassador in a face-to-face meeting that he could assure us, officially and on behalf of the Soviet Government, that no microwaves were being directed at our Embassy.

Gromyko, of course, knew that we knew he was lying, and that there was no way this "assurance" was going to diminish our confidence in the hard facts we had gathered with our own instruments. So why did he do it? I suspect that his reasoning went something like this: "They know very well that we will not admit to this. They are just trying to put us on the spot, and gain an advantage. We'll show them we are not so weak that they can push us around." (In fact, somewhat later the microwave signals were turned off, but without any admission that they ever existed.)

In addition to condoning lying to save face, Russians expect it from governments and official authorities. Lying for reasons of state is not so much excused as simply accepted as a fact of life. They know their own authorities lie to them, and assume that every other government does the same. This is why Russians have never understood why Watergate brought an end to Nixon's presidency. To them, the charges against President Nixon seemed so trivial -- a very mild form of what they assume all government officials do as a matter of course -- that they simply could not accept that these charges could have been the real reason for his resignation. (Given to conspiracy theories, most Russians seem convinced that Nixon was removed by an anti-Soviet cabal because he tried to improve relations with the Soviet Union.)

These typically Russian attitudes toward telling the truth are mingled with a much more purposeful and cynical view of the "truth" which the communist regime introduced. As a calculated instrument for establishing and maintaining control of the population, the communist authorities introduced an elaborate and pervasive system not merely to control information, but to shape the perception of reality by distorting and misrepresenting facts which tended to undermine the political line of the moment. Communist Party professionals were trained on the proposition that the truth is what the Party says it is at a given moment, and many of those who adapted to this requirement seem over time to lose the ability to distinguish between the Party line and reality. Psychologically, the Party line becomes reality for them. Professor Leszek Kolakowski, a former Polish Communist who broke with the regime some 20 years ago and now lives in England, has described this phenomenon as follows:

[The truth of Stalinist totalitarianism] consisted not simply in that virtually everything in the Soviet Union was either falsified or suppressed -- statistics, historical events, current events, names, maps, books (occasionally even Lenin's texts) -- but that the inhabitants of the country were trained to know what was politically "correct." In the functionaries' minds, the borderline between what is

"correct" and what is "true," as we normally understand this, seems really to have become blurred; by repeating the same absurdities time and again they themselves began to believe or half-believe them. The massive corruption of the language eventually produced people who are incapable of perceiving their own mendacity.

To a great extent this form of perception seems to survive, in spite of the fact that the omnipresence of ideology has been somewhat restricted recently. When Soviet leaders maintain that they have "liberated" Afghanistan, or that there are no political prisoners in the Soviet Union, it is quite possible that they mean what they say. To such an extent have they confounded linguistic ability that they are incapable of using any other word for a Soviet invasion than "liberation," and have no sense at all of the grotesque distance between language and reality. It takes a lot of courage, after all, to be entirely cynical; those who lie to themselves appear among us much more frequently than perfect cynics."

Whether it is a case of lying to themselves or of conditioned cynicism, the ability of many Russians (and not only communist officials) to change their version of the truth when so instructed by authority can be breathtaking to an outsider. When the "line" is changed abruptly, many seem to wipe the previous position from their consciousness and blithely assume it never existed. One encounters such habits even in the trivia of everyday life.

Once, while visiting Moscow some years ago, I had dinner in a restaurant with several other Russian speakers. The waitress apparently did not spot us as foreigners, and when we ordered extra bottles of mineral water (it was a sultry summer day) she simply said abruptly. "We're out." This was a little hard to believe, because while most foods are scarce, mineral water rarely is in Soviet restaurants. So we protested and pressed her for an explanation, and she repeated her denial several times and finally terminated the conversation with a curt, "We're out of it, and that's that."

As the waitress walked away from our table, she was intercepted by the maitre d' (who knew we were foreigners), and a few words were exchanged. A couple of minutes later, she appeared with two chilled bottles, which she placed on our table, offering no explanation. I observed naively, "Thanks, I thought you were out."

Her reply was instant and accusatory, "Of course we have mineral water. Why do you think we live worse than you?" It was as if her statement less than five minutes earlier had never been made, and my gentle reference to it was taken as an affront to her national pride. What right did I, a foreigner, have to think that such a simple commodity would be unavailable! And if I had

chosen to remind her of her previous statement, she doubtless would simply have denied ever having said it.

Ends and Means

Some of the attitudes described above are connected with another difference in the typical Russian and the typical American ethical system. By and large, Americans believe that good ends do not justify bad means. Most Russians feel that proper ends justify whatever means necessary.

An emigre Russian professor recently conducted a survey comparing Russian and American attitudes on this subject, placing it in a completely non-political context. He asked the same question to a sample group of persons born in the U.S. and to a group of recent emigres from the Soviet Union. The question was, "If you have a good friend who is having trouble passing a course at school, is it right for you to give him answers during an exam?" The great majority of Americans said it was not right; the Russians, by a comparable majority, said it was.

It is easy to see how this attitude can be exploited by the political authorities. If they can present the objective of a given action as a laudable one, their people are likely to accept whatever means are claimed necessary to achieve it.

The Soviet handling of the KAL shoot-down illustrates many of these factors. A deeply embarrassing incident, first denied, then -- when denial was no longer possible -- a concocted story meant to be exculpatory, particularly in the eyes of the Russian people. The authorities could rely on the Russian propensity to justify means to a "necessary" end if they could be convinced that KAL 007 was a "spy plane" which threatened their security. And the larger tragedy of it all is that most Russians probably believed the concoction, because to disbelieve it would mean that they, as a nation, are aggressive brutes with no respect for human life -- an image the direct opposite of the one the Russians have of themselves and the one the regime, with all its instruments of disinformation, cultivates.

Compromise and Principle

Americans tend to see the willingness to compromise as a value in and of itself. Russians, on the other hand, tend to view it as a fault and a sign of moral weakness. The morally "correct" behavior is to stand firm on your principles and either prevail or go down fighting.

This does not mean that Russians do not understand bargaining. Anyone who has haggled with the peasants in an open-air market or dealt with their grain purchasers can testify to their innate ability to negotiate a price. But if a principle is involved, that is another matter.

Of course, none of us likes to think that we ever compromise on our principles. The real difference between Russians and Americans is that the former impute a "principle" to a much broader category of issues than we would. The communist line is always described as a "principled" line. Counting British and French nuclear systems in any INF agreement is a matter of "principle." For a long time, paying more than 6% on borrowed funds was also one, with the result that the Soviets would knowingly pay a higher price than market on a contract so that the supplier could provide a lower nominal interest rate. In real terms, the lower rate was an illusion, and they knew it, but the "principle" itself was important enough to them to insist upon it.

The underlying Soviet attitude toward compromise explains in part some of their foreign policy blunders. They probably genuinely expected the rest of the world to see their withdrawal from the INF and START negotiations in 1983 as a noble defense of principle, even if it was a principle the outsiders did not agree with. They must have realized very quickly that it was an error but once they had taken the step, they had to readjust their "principles" before they could correct it. Thus the maneuvering in advance of the Geneva meeting last January, and the insistence at that time that the renewed negotiations be characterized as entirely new.

In actual practice, the Soviet attitude toward compromise is related more to its public presentation than to the act itself. Like the peasant woman in the market who wants to move her onions before she takes the train back to her village, Soviet leaders can be quite realistic in judging when it is in their interest to strike a deal and when they may be better off without one. If they are interested in a deal, however, they will wish to position themselves so that they can present it to their own people as a triumph of some principle. This partially explains their habit of seeking general agreements in principle before negotiating details. The agreement in principle, as it were, legitimizes the detailed bargaining which must follow and the result can be portrayed as a successful embodiment of the principle, rather than a craven compromise.

If, however, the Soviet leaders are unable to adjust their "principled" position to accommodate a deal, they may refuse to conclude the deal at all, even if it is in their interest. Immediately after the Trade Act of 1974 was passed with the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson Amendments, the Soviets very privately showed a willingness to reach a deal. They offered an emigration figure of at least 50,000 a year, but on condition that there would be no public acknowledgement that there was a deal. Everything fell apart when there were leaked stories in Washington about this; the Soviets drew back, refused further negotiation and have never since been persuaded to resume bargaining on the issue.

Pride, Face and Status

The Russians have only themselves to blame for the widespread criticism their actions evoke, and the fear and derision they inspire in outsiders. It is doubtless too much to expect them to understand this -- though some of their intellectuals do. Some criticism they can take -- but only in private. They usually do not mind the fear, because it is testimony to their importance and, furthermore, has important political uses. It is really the derision that sends them up the wall. And their skins are so thin on this subject, that they often see insult where none is intended.

Gorbachev's opening monologue to Baldrige in May provided several examples of this. "We recognize that you are a great country and have great achievements," he claimed, "but you ignore what we have achieved. You won't treat us as equals." Subsequently, he complained that even when they pay good hard cash for our grain, which we are anxious to sell, we make statements that they cannot feed their own people, while we never make such statements about Western Europe, which imports more food per capita than the Soviet Union.

Distorted and self-serving as Gorbachev's statements were, they probably represented genuine feelings. Underlying them is a deep inferiority complex bred of many factors: an awareness of their technological backwardness and lower living standards; a basic (though probably subconscious) sense of their political illegitimacy; a recognition that their system has failed to fulfill its promises to provide a better life for their people; and a feeling that they have been systematically denied their rightful recognition and "place in the sun."

Never mind that they have usually stimulated by their own actions and behavior the treatment which they resent. The fact is probably that their skins are thin precisely because they know in their hearts that the criticism, and much of the derision, is well founded. A Russian-speaking American diplomat who served in Moscow in the 1930's tells the following story. Despite the Stalinist atmosphere of the time, he managed to acquire a number of Russian friends, and at their meetings they would speak freely of many of their country's problems. Once, however, the diplomat was called on in a gathering which included foreigners to discuss the current situation, and he alluded gently to some of these problems. Afterwards, some of his Soviet acquaintances came up and told him with indignation, "We thought you were our friend!" He protested that he was, indeed, a friend and pointed out that he had said nothing which was not true. "Of course it's true." the Soviets replied. "But if you were our friend, you wouldn't tell the truth about us."

It is hard to imagine a Chinese or a Frenchman making a statement like that. But then, they have a rock-steady foundation of national and cultural self-confidence to rely on. The Russian psyche, in contrast, teeters on the sand of self-doubt.

The Other Side of the Coin

Having said so much about contrasts in Russian and American attitudes, a word may be in order about some similarities. We are not poles apart in everything.

In private, and away from a politically-charged environment, a Russian is typically gracious and remarkably open -- if he likes you and considers you sincere. Five or ten minutes after a chance meeting -- say in a train compartment or on a park bench -- he is likely to tell you the story of his life and elicit yours, and respond with spontaneity and candor. In this respect Russians are much less reserved than most West Europeans, and are quick to notice that Americans have the same trait.

Nor do they allow the xenophobic strain in much of their thinking -- and much of the propaganda -- to affect personal ties with individuals. West Germans often are amazed by the warmth and hospitality shown them by Russians when they visit the Soviet Union, given Russian memories of World War II. Many Germans have told me that they are treated better in Leningrad than in Paris by the man on the street.

For all their sensitivity to criticism in public, Russians expect it in private, so long as it does not seem gratuitous or damaging to their sense of national dignity. In fact, the foreigner who tries to curry favor by praising everything Soviet earns only their contempt; such praise is considered insincere, and often patronizing and condescending to boot. (Of course, they like praise of those things they are genuinely proud of, such as their heroism in World War II, Shostakovich's music or Voznesensky's poetry, but not of the things they know very well do not merit praise.)

Their deepest contempt, however, is reserved for those foreigners who try to ingratiate themselves by running down their own country. This the Russians simply do not understand -- in their eyes the foreigner should stand up for his country just as a Russian would for his own -- and if he does not do so, he is considered morally defective. This attitude, of course, does not prevent them from using such persons for propaganda purposes, but Russians, official or otherwise, really have no respect for them.

This attitude applies in particular to members of communist parties in Western Europe and the U.S. In 1976 we sponsored a major exhibition on American life in Moscow to mark the Bicentennial of American Independence. It was an election year, and one section of the exhibit had a real voting machine and the Soviet visitors were encouraged to go in and cast a mock ballot. The slate used was taken from New York and the American Communist Party was on the ballot.

Almost nobody voted the CP slate (if memory serves, there were perhaps three of four votes for the communists out of thousands cast). Almost all Soviet visitors voted for either Ford or Carter. Our American guides conducted a bit of exit polling at the exhibit, asking visitors how they had voted. Once in a while they would ask why the visitor had not voted for the communists. Sometimes that question only elicited a discreet shrug, but several Soviet visitors were brutally frank, making statements like, "If I were an American, do you think I'd vote for those clowns?" or "Do you think I want America to have a mess like we have here?" So much for Marxist "proletarian solidarity"!

Unfortunately, these appealing Russian traits of personal openness and candor are all too often submerged under the repressive lid of the police state. But when the regime tries to suppress these traits, it is moving against, rather than with, the Russian cultural tradition. Whenever the lid is slightly raised, the traditional behavior spurts forth, all the more vehemently for having been constrained.

* * * * *

The contradictory pull of the various urges, hang-ups and ideological imperatives at work in Soviet Russian minds and emotions tends to make Soviet behavior not only unpredictable to the outsider, but unpredictable for Russians themselves.

Michael Vozlensky, a former member of the Soviet elite who defected in the early 1970's and has written a classic work on the Soviet ruling class, commented recently that those who think the Soviet leaders operate in accord with a careful plan of action have it all wrong. "Everything is decided ad hoc," he maintained. "They don't know themselves what they are going to do next. But they will always claim that they had it in mind all along."

He may be right.

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock

RUSSIA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD:
THE VIEW FROM MOSCOW

Russia has a long tradition of contradictory self images. For two centuries visions of Moscow as the seat of universal truth have clashed with perceptions of Russia's technical and economic backwardness. But it made a big difference whether Russians were looking west, to Europe and the United States, or south and east, to the Islamic World, China and Japan. The attitude toward the West was deeply ambivalent, with urges to emulate and "catch up" conflicting with those to declare themselves superior and to prevent the penetration of Western influences. Toward the East, however, there was less ambivalence; relations were viewed as fundamentally hostile and Russia was considered an agent of Christian, Western civilization, holding at bay threatening hordes. The injection of communist ideology with the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution brought important changes in policy, and added new contradictions, but the underlying popular attitudes toward the world outside the Soviet Union persisted.

LOOKING WEST

Russian intellectual history in the nineteenth century was in large part a conflict between "Slavophiles" and "Westernizers." The Slavophiles had a romanticized view of the Russian nation as the carrier of religious orthodoxy, profound spirituality and universal morality. The Westernizers decried Russia's backwardness, and saw emulation of western science, technology, economics and political reform as the cure for it.

The revolution which brought Lenin's Bolsheviks to power in 1917 was in a sense the ultimate victory of the most radical heirs of the Westernizers' tradition. It did not, however, put an end to conflicts of self images. The old ones persisted in transmuted forms, and new ones arose.

On the one hand the Bolsheviks saw themselves as the vanguard of the inevitable world proletarian revolution envisioned by Marx as the prelude to a communist society. On the other, they were keenly aware of Russia's backwardness. It was only after a bitter debate that Lenin won agreement to a separate peace with Germany. Many Bolsheviks wanted to turn World War I into a revolutionary campaign. They felt that a revolution in backward Russia would have no meaning if it did not immediately kindle revolution in the advanced countries of Europe.

Stalin later sought to deal with the paradox of Russia's backwardness and pretention to world leadership by arguing that building "socialism" in one country was a necessary step to pave the way for world revolution. Nevertheless, Soviet propagandists

still had to juggle conflicting self images of the USSR: boasting that the Soviet Union was an example for the world in abolishing unemployment while trumpeting Stalin's call to catch up with America.

Impact of World War II: Glory in the Ashes

The Soviet Union came perilously close to defeat when Hitler invaded, suffered heavy human and economic losses in the war, but in the end emerged as a victor. Soviet propaganda strives to keep fresh -- even passionate -- the story of patriotism, sacrifice and ultimate victory. Psychologically, World War II is a much more recent event in the Soviet Union than it is in the United States. It left its own discordant self images.

One legacy is an abiding fear of war. The populace gets jittery in periods of tension. During the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and again during the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 we heard that rural stores ran out of matches, kerosene and soap as peasant women hoarded in fear of war. Soviet leaders play to this popular concern over peace; their habit of repeatedly seeking declaratory statements of peaceful intent is one part of this.

The other legacy was a new pride that the USSR had at last graduated into the ranks of the great powers and had new and far greater influence on world affairs. Communist officials in particular take pride in the fact that the Soviet Union has moved from an outcast power on the fringes of European geopolitics in the 1920's to one of the world's two acknowledged superpowers, and see this as perhaps their most important and lasting achievement.

The Parvenu Superpower

The short leap from the darkest days of World War II to sputnik and strategic parity with the United States must have been a heady experience for Soviet leaders. It created a new self image of the USSR as one of the world's two most powerful countries. But at the same time, it sharpened the contradictions in Soviet views of the U.S.

The idea that the USSR could be the equal of the U.S. took on new meaning. When Khrushchev renewed Stalin's theme of catching up with America economically, the notion had a new plausibility. After all, the Soviet Union had achieved a major first in space. Leninism postulated enmity between "socialist" Russia and the most advanced capitalist country of the world. But it also assumed communism would be built upon the foundation of the best that capitalism had developed. America's productivity and consumer goods were, in effect, the vision of the good life to come. Catching up with the U.S. was thus a powerful theme for

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Khrushchev's Soviet audience, conditioned as it was (despite heavy propaganda to the contrary) to see America as the land of milk and honey and the embodiment of most of its aspirations. But it was again a clear admission of the shortfalls of the Soviet economy, an admission that Gorbachev implicitly reverts to today when he appeals for better economic performance and alludes to a serious lag in adopting new technology.

Eastern Europe: A Special Case

Perhaps because the margin between defeat and victory in World War II was so narrow, the Soviets have long been troubled lest their gains from the war prove transitory. The effort to freeze the postwar status quo on the Soviet side of the dividing line they imposed on Europe has run like a red thread through virtually all of Soviet diplomacy on European issues for forty years. The instrumentalities have varied enormously -- the Berlin crisis of 1961, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the MBFR negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament in Europe have all been vehicles for it. But the purpose has all been the same -- to write a public law of Europe which in the absence of a peace treaty formally ending World War II would make permanent the East-West division of Europe and provide implicit recognition of the Soviet right to take whatever steps it deemed necessary to perpetuate its domination of countries on "its" side of the line.

Entirely aside from the ideological reasons the Soviet political leadership advances to "justify" its interventions in Eastern Europe (the Brezhnev doctrine), Soviet efforts to dominate Eastern Europe find broad support from the man and woman on the street. Their attitude seems to be that Eastern Europe is made up of small nations prone to "make trouble" if given the chance. Since they might be used by a larger power to threaten Russia (as Russians are convinced they have been in the past), they must be kept in line. Furthermore, Russians are keenly aware that the East Europeans have a higher standard of living than they do, and this they resent.

When Solidarity was at its height in Poland in 1981, the aspirations of the Polish workers attracted little support among the Russian working people. One heard relatively mild and self-deprecating comments like, "The problem with the Poles is that they want to work like Russians and live like Americans," but more often the comments were bitter, like "If the Poles think they can refuse to work and then expect us to feed them, they've got another think coming." And many Russians are convinced that East Europeans live better than they do because of Soviet assistance and subsidies. "They all have their hands in our pockets," is not an unusual comment in Moscow. Deep down, Russian workers may also be ashamed of the evidence that Poles, Hungarians and even Czechs at times will rise up and fight for their interests while they Russians rarely have the guts to do so.

The popular Soviet feeling that East Europeans are likely to make trouble if left to their own devices means that, whenever the Soviet leaders decide that various forms of intervention are necessary to maintain their position in Eastern Europe, most Russians can be expected to agree.

LOOKING EAST AND SOUTH

When Russians turn their gaze south to the Islamic World and India, or east to China and Japan, they never experience a desire to emulate or "catch up," which is such a prominent aspect of their attitude toward the West. For Russians, their subjugation by the Mongols in the twelfth century, and the "Tatar yoke" which persisted for more than two centuries and cut them off from Western Europe during one of its most creative periods, is still a relevant historical experience. The experience and its "lessons" are drummed into every schoolchild, and books and films continue to be issued which tell of Russia's erstwhile degradation and subsequent redemption through relentless struggle. Along with subsequent invasions -- by Swedes, Poles, French and Germans -- the Mongol domination is used to explain and excuse Russia's economic and technological backwardness, and to bolster the feeling that everything must be sacrificed to a powerful military establishment.

Whatever disabilities the Mongols inflicted on Russia, the damage has long since been avenged and the tables turned on the Asian peoples bordering the Russian land. Nevertheless, the Asian is still considered a potential threat, and the Russian populace has never totally freed itself from the nightmare image of Asian hordes sweeping across the "motherland."

This residual fear should not be exaggerated. It does not (despite the claims of some apologists) totally explain the Soviet preoccupation with military strength. Russians know very well that the Chinese cannot really threaten them in the immediate future. But they do worry -- and probably rightly so -- about what would happen if they faced a modernized and militarily powerful China, still smarting from the imperial Russian seizure of lands once under its sway.

What is equally relevant to current Russian attitudes is that their fear has also been mingled with loathing. To put it bluntly, most Russians are racists underneath. They consider themselves "Europeans," implicitly measure themselves against European standards, and have never thought that they had anything to learn from the East. To a Russian -- even a relatively sophisticated intellectual -- there is no greater insult than to call Russia an "oriental despotism." "Despotism" they might accept, but "oriental" never.

Communist Ideology and Geopolitical Opportunism

The persistence of racist attitudes, a mingling of fear and contempt, and the absence of cultural affinity did not prevent the communist regime from embarking on a policy of exploiting social and political grievances in the underdeveloped world. If the "imperialist powers" of the developed West were too strong to take on directly, their power could perhaps be sapped by undermining their control of their empires, and their predominant influence in weakened countries like China.

During the 1920's and 1930's, these efforts were carried out primarily through the Communist International, which was totally under Stalin's control. While the effort to foment revolution in undeveloped countries had no basis in Marx's original concept -- which was that the revolution would occur only after an economy had gone through its "capitalist stage" -- it flowed easily from Lenin's theory of imperialism and the Bolshevik attempt to skip the capitalist stage in Russia. The effort, therefore, combined ideological and geopolitical aims.

After World War II, as Soviet power grew, attention was shifted to dealing with rising nationalists, even if they were not communists, and with newly independent governments which might be induced to take an anti-Western stance. If the opportunity to deal with established governments seemed sufficiently promising, the Soviets did not hesitate to abandon the local communists when they were repressed by the regime the Soviets were courting.

Soviet experience since the war must have taught them two important lessons -- neither of which they can admit openly, but both of which are implicit in their actions. The first lesson was that communist ideology in itself was not sufficient to ensure Soviet control -- Tito and Mao broke with the Soviet Union and split the world communist movement. The second was that the most powerful instrument of influence the Soviets possessed in dealing with the Third World was its ability to supply arms to revolutionary movements and the wherewithal and ideology of repression to those leaders whose power was threatened from inside their countries. The ideology thus became a mere handmaiden to force, which was applied in a totally opportunistic fashion.

Despite all their efforts to penetrate countries in the Third World, and all the crocodile tears shed in their propaganda about the lot of the poor and oppressed, one thing both communist officials and ordinary Russians lack is a real interest in the fate of these countries, and real empathy for their problems and cultural values. It is difficult to imagine, for example, the Russian population getting particularly exercised over the famine in Ethiopia, even if it were given all the facts. Life is tough enough at home to worry much about the misfortunes of others, particularly if their skins are dark.

SUPERPOWER DILEMMAS

From the standpoint of the Soviet leaders, the USSR's superpower status is both their most tangible achievement and the source of some of their greatest problems. It is apparent to them that this status rests on one factor alone -- military strength -- since the USSR is not an economic superpower, and its ideological prescriptions for satisfying human needs have been discredited both at home and increasingly throughout the world.

While the people are largely passive in regard to foreign policy formulation and play none of the direct role that publics do in democracies, their views are not unimportant to the leadership. To act contrary to deeply-held popular views risks damaging public morale, which is already quite low, and provides ammunition for potential rival factions in the party.

The Russian people doubtless take satisfaction in their country's superpower status, both because it bolsters their national pride and because they see it as insurance against another war on their own soil. The regime, however, must be careful to avoid leaving the impression that its policies risk war. The leaders are probably acutely aware that there would be little public support for direct military action distant from Soviet borders. Covert supplies of military equipment, training and advisors and also support of surrogate troops is sustainable. These actions carry limited risk of direct confrontation with the U.S. and can be conducted largely without the knowledge of the Soviet population. But it is hard to imagine a Soviet leadership deciding to try to defend Cuba or Nicaragua or Angola with its own forces.

Another persistent trait of Soviet interaction with the outside world has been the absence of experience with and propensity for what we call alliance management. The U.S.S.R. has no real alliances, only countries under its control or those used for discrete temporary goals. Even in World War II, when the alliance with the western powers was a matter of life and death, Stalin never treated it as a true alliance, but only as a very limited marriage of convenience to be terminated as soon as the war was won. (The Russian people, in contrast, looked at it differently, and their experience of and gratitude for the wartime alliance has served to undercut massive anti-western propaganda ever since.)

Soviet unwillingness or inability to understand and respect the interests of smaller and weaker countries and to develop with them mutually beneficial long-term policies limits the potential of Soviet diplomacy. In the short term, the Soviet leaders can reap the benefits of a "divide and conquer" policy, since they put most of their efforts on exploiting bilateral relationships to their own benefit. This enhances their ability to disrupt and undermine international structures and efforts which leave them

on the sidelines. Witness, for example, their ability to derail efforts to achieve a peace settlement in the Middle East by providing support to forces in the area which oppose a settlement.

In the long run, however, the sheer opportunism of Soviet policies tends to stimulate local resistance to Soviet influence, and a turn of the political wheel in a given country can result in the sudden expulsion of Soviet representatives -- as occurred, for example, in Sadat's Egypt. But this long-term vulnerability only reinforces the Soviet proclivity to seek domination of other countries rather than relations based on mutual respect. The Soviets are totally incapable of maintaining with other countries the sort of relationship we have with Canada and Mexico, and their inability to do so creates serious problems both for them and for the entire world. To gain some sense of the Soviet dilemma as most Russians perceive it, we need only imagine the problems we would face if we felt we had to occupy our neighbors and impose puppet regimes on them in order to be secure and to play our destined role in the world.

* * * * *

These Soviet and Russian attitudes toward the outside world pose many problems for American policy. Though the Russian populace tends to see Soviet policies and actions as defensive, its underlying fears and sense of wounded national pride is exploited by the communist regime's cynical manipulation. The fact is that the Soviets define their "security" in terms which amount to absolute insecurity for everyone else. It makes little difference to a Pole or an Afghan that Russians feel they have to dominate them to be secure; for them the end result is the same as it would be if the avowed Soviet rationale were imperial conquest. It is important, therefore, never to accept the Soviet argument that their aggressive actions are justified by legitimate security concerns, and to do all we can to make clear to the Soviet people that such policies undermine their security in the long run rather than bolstering it.

Furthermore, the fact that the Soviet Union is a superpower only in military terms creates its own set of problems. Attempts to extend Soviet influence by military means must be countered, but it would be an illusion to think the Soviet leaders can be persuaded to foreswear such means, since they are the only means at their disposal to demonstrate their status and "rights" as a superpower. The Soviet Union is non-competitive in a peaceful world, and its leaders know it. Therefore, they can be dissuaded from applying or threatening force in given situations only by being convinced either that their efforts are doomed to failure, or that they would run unacceptable risks such as a dangerous military confrontation with the United States or a political defeat damaging to their prestige.

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Fortunately, other elements in the typically Russian view of the world make our problem more manageable. There is little if any public support for Soviet military involvement far from their borders, particularly if justified solely on ideological grounds. And countries which receive large numbers of Soviet "advisors" quickly develop a virulent antipathy, since most Russians simply do not deal with Asians, Africans and East Europeans with the respect they reserve for West Europeans and Americans. Whenever the perceived need for Soviet arms diminishes, the Soviets are usually given the boot, provided they have not managed to establish military control over the country.

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock
with contributions by
Robert Baraz, Department
of State

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT C. MCFARLANE

SUBJECT: Background Reading on the Soviet Union:
Internal Problems

Though Gorbachev has been more active than his predecessors in pushing the Soviet foreign policy line in the media, his pre-occupation is probably with consolidating his own power and in tackling the burgeoning internal problems which afflict Soviet society and the communist system.

Attached are three papers which deal with the more important of these problems: the growing malaise in Soviet society, the significance of dissidence and religion, and the implications of having to rule an empire made up of many nationalities.

In reading the paper on Soviet nationalities, it is important to bear in mind that non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union are quite different from the ethnic groups in our own society. Most live in their ancestral territory and continue to speak languages other than Russian as their first tongue. There has been very little "melting pot" effect, although many speak or understand Russian as a second language. Almost all are proud of their own national language, culture and heritage and are determined to preserve it in the face of persistent pressures to become more Russian.

I believe these papers will give you some insight into some of the problems Gorbachev will have on his mind -- but will avoid mentioning -- when he meets with you in November. Certainly, he must take them into account as he makes foreign policy decisions.

Attachments:

Tab A "USSR: A Society in Trouble"
Tab B "Dissent in the USSR"
Tab C "The Soviet Union's Nationality Problem"

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock
DECLASSIFIED

cc: Vice President

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BY NOI NARA, DATE 12/13/07

USSR: A SOCIETY IN TROUBLE

Western observers have always been struck by the peculiarly Russian combination of extraordinary political stability amidst appalling social conditions. In any other country, such conditions might be expected to breed constant revolution. In Russia, it took a century of political unrest, capped by four years of devastating war, to bring on the 1917 cataclysm. The authorities there have traditionally been able to maintain control, because they were dealing with a generally passive population. Economic development and the rise of mass education may have made the job more difficult in recent years, but the control mechanisms are as effective as ever. The enormous problems of Soviet society--problems now perhaps greater in extent than at any time in Russian history--still present the regime with an administrative challenge rather than a political one.

Among the intractable and potentially destabilizing social problems plaguing the Soviet scene are:

- rising rates of alcoholism among all major population groups;
- rising mortality rates among children and adult males;
- ever greater incidence of crime and corruption countrywide;
- an obvious decline in the availability and quality of basic public services and consumer goods; and
- a generalized sense that the Soviet regime is no longer capable of meeting the expectations it has generated in the population.

Some of these problems reflect particular cultural traditions; others are part and parcel of the Soviet system. Still others represent the unintended consequences of specific Moscow policies. Each one of them feeds on and reinforces every other, however. Together they have produced in the Soviet population a deep malaise, a sense that not only has something gone profoundly wrong in recent years but that there is little chance it will be put right any time soon.

Alcoholism

Drinking to excess is part of the Russian national tradition, but in recent years the rates of alcohol consumption have risen to unprecedented levels. Last year, Soviet statistics show that the

USSR's citizens spent 10 percent of their incomes on alcoholic beverages, and more than one in eight spent at least one night in a sobering-up station. The Soviet Union as a whole does not lead the world in alcoholism, but it is clearly among the leaders, and the domestic impact is worse than the statistics suggest. Alcoholism in the USSR is more concentrated, with the worst drinking confined to the Slavic regions--the Muslim nationalities have much lower, albeit rising, rates. The Slavic groups thus may have the highest rate of alcohol consumption in the world. Furthermore, the Slavic pattern is binge drinking, drinking to get drunk and lose consciousness. As a result, most of the alcohol consumed is high proof vodka rather than beer and wine.

The consequences both immediately and long term are staggering in terms of lowered industrial productivity and increased accidents at the workplace. Death rates among adult males have jumped, and their life expectancy has dropped. And because women are drinking more, alcoholism has also contributed to a substantial rise in infant mortality through premature births and malnutrition of some children. Such rates of alcohol consumption are expected to lead to other forms of social degeneration, if they persist.

The very blatancy of the problem has frequently led Russian governments, both Imperial and Soviet, to counterattack, but none has had any lasting success. Indeed, many of the campaigns against alcoholism have proven counterproductive; Gorbachev's current effort is unlikely to prove any different. Alcohol is after all very much part of the national tradition, and therefore extraordinarily difficult to root out. And Russians have always shown themselves adept at finding alternative sources of alcohol or resorting to home brew should official supplies be cut off. One classic Soviet novel features an apparently typical worker who will drink anything from lighter fluid to antifreeze when regular liquor is not available. Moreover, depriving Russians of alcohol--the chief form of recreation for many--could lead to domestic restlessness and would certainly reduce state income from vodka sales. These last calculations usually have been decisive with Russian officialdom over the years.

Demographic Disasters

Since the revolution, the USSR has suffered a series of well-known demographic disasters--the world wars, revolution, the Civil War, Stalin's collectivization--but by the 1970s their impact was generally smoothing out. Two new trends have appeared recently, however: a sharply higher rate of infant mortality and an increase in deaths among males in their prime working years. Both are unprecedented in size for modern societies during peacetime and call into question the Soviet claim that the USSR is an advanced modern country.

Soviet infant mortality, Western estimates suggest, has risen 30 to 50 percent over the last 15 years. It now stands at three times the rate in the United States and at a level equal to that of the most advanced third world countries. The situation is so embarrassing that the Soviets stopped publishing statistics on this question in 1975. (A recent crack in this ban--in a republic medical journal from Central Asia--states that mortality among children in Tajikistan has risen 38.3 percent since 1970, well within Western estimates.) These high rates reflect the large number of abortions used by Soviet women for birth control (currently six to nine abortions per woman), alcoholism and inadequate diet among pregnant mothers, poor medical services, pollution, and the poor quality of the baby formulas which must be used because most Soviet mothers are forced to return to work soon after giving birth. As a result, both the size and quality of future generations are affected; the next generation faces serious medical and educational problems; and observers have every reason to question Soviet claims that in the USSR "children are the only privileged class." The obvious cures nevertheless seem to be beyond the interests and resources of the Soviet government.

The rising death rates among adult males are equally striking. Over the last 15 years, the life expectancy of Soviet males at birth has apparently dropped to only 56 years, the sharpest decline in any modern society ever, and one that cuts into the working life of most Soviet men, thus reducing the size of the labor pool. The current high levels reflect industrial accidents, chronic diseases, inadequate diet and medical services, pollution, and alcohol consumption. The most recent increases, however, appear traceable to alcoholism alone, a pattern that gives special urgency to Gorbachev's campaign.

Crime and Corruption

Crime of all kinds afflicts the Soviet Union, but corruption is a structural feature of the system, absolutely essential for its operation in its current form, since prices do not reconcile demand and supply for the goods and services that people want. Official prices are set artificially low for political reasons; shortages are endemic, so access to goods and services is determined by other means. Since many Soviet citizens have more money than access to goods, the cash is used to obtain things "on the side," a pattern which has led to the creation of an enormous second economy.

Furthermore, the planning process which encompasses virtually all spheres of activity encourages another form of corruption, both when targets are set and when efforts to meet them are made--be these targets the average grade of a particular school class or the levels of factory output. Every person seeks to make

his plan as easy to meet as possible in order to assure his bonus. As there is no impersonal market mechanism to set these plan targets, they are determined by other means, including corrupt ones. And since the authorities view plan fulfillment as more important than legal niceties, they tend to "overlook" illegalities which produce the results they want.

Finally, all Soviet citizens are conditioned to participate in ideological deception and self-deception, to say and do things they know to be false. Enormous cynicism results, a form of corruption more corrosive and less susceptible to correction than any other.

Every Soviet citizen is thus trapped either as a direct participant in corruption, or as an observer who must report what he sees or choose to remain silent about illegalities. All the alternatives contribute to public demoralization.

Little of this is likely to change. Prices set to clear the market would rise to levels that would make existing shortages even more blatant. Plans set by market forces would erode or destroy the role and power of the party. And if ideological deceptions were eliminated, the Soviet Union would cease to be the Soviet Union: no party leader is likely to want to commit suicide.

Declines in Public Services

The abysmal quality of goods and services available to the public in the USSR is legendary. The Soviet system has always underfulfilled plans for consumer goods; shortages are endemic and appear to have gone from bad to worse recently. Perhaps the clearest picture of the situation is provided by a single Soviet statistic: between 1979 and 1984, the number of hours spent by Soviet citizens to acquire consumer goods rose from 180 billion hours a year to 275 billion, 35 billion hours more than Soviet citizens spend at the workplace. Most of this extra time is spent by women waiting in line for basic foodstuffs. Indeed, Soviet sociologists report that Soviet women now spend 40 hours a week at the job and another 40 hours a week making purchases and doing the housework.

The remedy would require an enormous investment of funds and a willingness to change the system. Neither is in large supply in Moscow.

Unrealized Expectations

Perhaps the greatest problem, and certainly the one which has thrown the others into relief is the currently widening gap between popular expectations and the capacity of the regime to

meet them. From the 1950s to the mid-1970s, the Soviet people experienced a growth in real income averaging more than 3 percent annually. Soviet citizens could reasonably expect some upward mobility both for themselves and their children. And because of the special experience of World War II, they generally shared the values of the ruling elite and accepted the explanation that remaining difficulties were traceable to the war. Recent developments have called all this into question. The Soviet economy is stagnating. Opportunities for upward mobility are fewer, thus freezing existing class distinctions. Demographic developments have placed severe constraints on the regime's ability to push economic development as it has in the past by increasing labor inputs. And both mass and elite groups are acquiring a broader and more divergent set of values. Despite heavy jamming, nearly one Soviet adult in six now listens to foreign radio broadcasts at least once a week, and many are willing to discuss and criticize domestic Soviet policies now that the costs of doing so have declined.

The impact of economic stagnation is particularly great. For many Soviet citizens, it calls into question the implicit social contract established after the death of Stalin which linked popular support for the regime with the regime's ability to deliver the goods. Further, it has reduced the regime's ability to use material incentives to drive the workforce. As a result, the authorities are forced to rely more on ideological ones--typically less effective--and may be compelled to turn again to coercive ones in the future, even though the latter would probably be less productive now than they were in the past. This stagnation has also contributed to the expansion of blackmarketeering and other forms of corruption. Once again, the obvious remedies are either unwelcome or impossible, a fact that both Soviet citizens and their leaders recognize.

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Even taken together, these problems do not now threaten the stability of the Soviet system. Nor have they led to the crystallization of an active opposition. Instead, they have produced an alienated society, something which may prove more difficult for the regime to control than is the relatively small dissident movement. In the near future, the most obvious impact of these problems will be to force the regime to devote greater resources to its control mechanisms in order to insulate both itself and its goals from these popular attitudes. Over the longer haul, their impact may prompt a Soviet leader to seek major reforms, but at every point he will be frustrated by powerful groups which have a stake in the status quo, even though that status quo has locked Soviet society into a dissatisfied, cynical, and aimless present.

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Dissent in the USSR

Dissidents are individuals who publicly protest regime actions or express ideas that the regime finds contrary to its interests. They do not constitute an organized opposition seeking political power. Intellectual dissidents involved in the human rights movement challenge the regime in the realm of ideas but not in the realm of politics, at least not so far. Other forms of dissent--the emigration movement, religion--basically represent attempts to escape authority rather than to change the system.

Intellectual Dissent

Intellectual dissent began in the early 1960s, when Khrushchev's move toward destalinization gave rise to false expectations of a wider internal liberalization. Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 represented the victory of conservative reaction within the Soviet leadership; repression of dissent increased, especially intensifying after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Human rights dissent revived on a smaller scale in the mid-1970s, when detente and the signing of the CSCE Accords once again stimulated hopes that strictures on basic human rights would be relaxed. Instead, the Kremlin moved forcefully against the small groups that were attempting to publicize regime violations of the CSCE human rights provisions. Today the human rights movement is at a low ebb and Sakharov, its most prominent and articulate representative, is isolated in the provincial city of Gorky.

Although these human rights dissidents are well known in the West, they command little support in the USSR itself. Many people see them as a self-interested, unpatriotic lot that serve the purposes of Western intelligence services. The regime has had considerable success in exploiting popular anti-

Semitic feelings as a weapon against the dissidents. [redacted]

[redacted] groups such as the CSCE monitoring group are commonly viewed as little more than devices for Jews wanting to leave the country. Sakharov is something of an exception. In some intellectual circles his confinement in Gorky is referred to as "Lenin in exile" and USIA interviewing of large numbers of Westerners who have had contact with Soviet cultural figures revealed that most Soviet artists admired him as a noble figure.

More influential than the human rights dissidents are a group of intellectual writers who have a strongly nationalist orientation. While taking care to avoid criticizing the regime directly, they call for a moral regeneration of Russia on the basis of traditional values and Russian Orthodoxy--much as Solzhenitsyn does. These nationalist writers reportedly have become cultural heroes who articulate the discontent of large numbers of people with the Soviet system as a whole.

Also influential are the growing number of cultural figures who have emigrated--such as the prominent writer Vladimov, who left in 1983, and the avant garde theater director Liubimov, who departed in 1984. Many intellectuals remaining in the USSR have become "inner emigres" who follow the affairs and writings of the emigre community with great interest through the medium of Western radio broadcasting. This has in effect created an alternative Russian cultural center that many Soviet intellectuals find more vigorous and appealing than the stultifying official Soviet culture. The renewal of jamming of Radio Liberty has reduced the access of Soviet intellectuals to news from the emigre community, but some broadcasting still gets through.

Soviet leaders appear keenly concerned that the ideas of the small group of active dissidents could have resonance within the intelligentsia as a

whole. Their public statements suggest they are worried about the political reliability of the intelligentsia, and reporting indicates apprehension that the popularity of the nationalist writers could turn Russian national feeling into anti-regime channels. Above all, the leadership probably fears that conservative Russian nationalism appeals even to many elites—perhaps especially within the military—who are concerned that the party has become too effete and corrupt to rule the country effectively.

Reporting also suggests some leaders fear that popular grievances over living conditions could converge with the protests of intellectual dissidents about human rights abuses. As early as 1977, for example, during a period of tight food supplies, Gromyko [] said that Soviet leaders were "acutely aware" of countrywide criticism of food shortages, and that the leadership feared easing restrictions on dissidents could abet a trend of criticism in the country and create an "explosive" climate. Since the late Brezhnev years, [] concern within the elite that unrest could become widespread. Events in Poland probably increased leadership sensitivities about the possibility of coordination between Soviet intellectual dissidents and worker dissidents—who since the late 1970s have made several attempts to organize unofficial trade unions. There has in fact been little such cooperation to date.

Religion

By far the most dramatic development in Soviet dissent in recent years has been the extraordinary burgeoning of religion. The most important reason for this phenomenon seems to be simply that many citizens are seeking spiritual refuge from what they see as the drabness and moral emptiness of contemporary Soviet life. The growth of religion is of concern to Soviet authorities for several reasons:

- 3
- In many areas religion reinforces anti-Russian nationalism. In Lithuania and the western part of Ukraine, where probably a majority of the population is Catholic, the church has historically been associated with strivings for independence from Russia. Similarly, in Soviet Central Asia the Islamic religion has provided a rallying point for those resisting Russian domination--as, for example, during the Basmachi revolt of the 1920s, which took many years for the regime to suppress.

 - Unlike intellectual dissent, religion has a mass base even in Russian areas. Protestant fundamentalism is growing in newly industrialized areas of the Russian republic, and Russian Orthodoxy is attracting adherents in the older cities of the Russian heartland.

 - Increasingly, religion cuts across class and generational lines. Religion is growing among blue collar workers as well as among the educated classes. And, for the first time since 1917, religion is attracting large numbers of Russian youth. Andropov complained in 1982 that many Soviet young people were turning to religion as a way of expressing dissent.

 - Religion opens the door to external influences. The election of a Slavic Pope served as a stimulus to religious activity in the Western borderlands of the USSR, where the Catholic clergy has long maintained clandestine ties with the church hierarchy in Poland. The resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Middle East, and the war in

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Afghanistan, have raised Muslim consciousness in Soviet Central Asia, leading to several incidents of unrest there.

Most religious believers in the USSR are members of "registered" or "official" churches who abide by the regime's strictures on religious activity--such as the ban on proselytizing and on religious instruction for children--in exchange for being allowed to worship in peace. Clergy for these churches must be approved by the regime and some of them serve as propagandists for regime policy--using their sermons to preach the party line regarding foreign policy, for example. The regime attempts to use these official churches to keep the activities of religious believers under close surveillance and supervision. It especially uses the official Russian Orthodox Church as an instrument of imperialism, by giving it special privileges (more Bibles, more church buildings) to enable it to lure believers away from churches associated with anti-Russian nationalism.

Similarly, the regime exploits the visits of well-intentioned foreign religious leaders such as Billy Graham. Such visits assist the regime in publicizing the existence of "religious freedom" in the USSR. And, by allowing visiting ministers to preach at official churches but not to outlawed congregations, the regime enlists their tacit sanction for the official churches as the "legitimate" ones. Despite the fact that the regime attempts to use the official churches for its own purposes, however, the growing numbers worshipping in these churches testifies to the failure of Marxist ideology in competing with old-fashioned religion for the "hearts and minds" of the Soviet population.

More significantly, the number of unofficial congregations of all faiths appears to be increasing. Many of these groups have developed clandestine

communications networks that enable them to collect thousands of signatures on a country-wide basis for petitions, and regularly to publish illegal literature (samizdat).

-- In Ukraine a semi-secret Catholic church organization reportedly has as many as 350 priests conducting services illegally. Since the summer of 1984, ten issues of a new samizdat "Chronicle of the Ukrainian Catholic Church" have appeared.

-- In Lithuania, a Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights has been active in petitioning for an end to repressive legislation against religion. The "Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church," which first appeared in 1972, remains one of the most vigorous samizdat journals in the country.

-- The unregistered Protestant sects--especially the Baptists and Pentecostals--are attracting large numbers of rural, factory and white collar workers throughout the country. Many of these groups are zealous to the point of being fanatic in protesting such regime measures as "accidental" burnings of churches and forcible removals of children from parents' homes to prevent their receiving a religious upbringing. They respond to repression by engaging in mass civil disobedience --such as burning internal passports and resisting induction into the military. One isolated Far Eastern village is virtually at war with the regime. It has engaged in continuing protests for several years, including four community hunger strikes. Thousands of Pentecostals continue to apply for emigration visas

despite the regime's absolute refusal to grant them. With the assistance of some registered Baptist congregations, the unofficial Baptists publish three samizdat journals, one of which is printed in a thousand copies monthly.

-- [redacted] in Muslim areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus a fully developed underground religious structure exists. [redacted] illegal seminaries are educating mullahs who teach Islam to children in unofficial mosques. KGB officials have reportedly expressed concern that Soviet Central Asians are demanding more power for the Muslim clergy at the expense of the party.

Regime Repression

During the 1980s the regime has resorted to harsher repression of dissent than it has employed since Stalin's day. 1979 was a watershed year. With the invasion of Afghanistan, Soviet leaders became less concerned to avoid antagonizing Western leaders and public opinion. With the outbreak of unrest in Poland, they became more concerned to crack down on dissent inside the USSR itself.

In 1982 the regime tightened the screws even more. The intensification of repression coincided with the political ascendancy of Andropov, and there has been no let-up under Gorbachev. The crackdown on dissent is consistent with his overall effort to shore up discipline, reassert party control in various areas of life, increase ideological purity, and heighten vigilance against "alien" ideas. The current head of the KGB, Chebrikov, who is reportedly an ally of Gorbachev, has been in the forefront of those taking a hard line against dissent. Chebrikov was previously head of the KGB

directorates responsible for internal security and has been actively involved in supervising repression of dissent. For example, he was responsible for handling the Solzhenitsyn case.

Since 1979 several new tactics have been employed: the arrest of dissidents on various false criminal rather than political charges; planting drugs and other incriminating evidence in the residences of dissidents to provide the basis for such charges; the resentencing on trumped-up charges of dissidents already serving terms to prevent their release on schedule; increased confinement in psychiatric hospitals; increased harassment of foreign contacts of dissidents and other actions designed to curtail dissident communication with foreigners, such as changing the legal code to broaden the definition of what constitutes a "state secret," which would make it easier to bring treason charges against dissidents who talk to foreigners; inducting dissidents into the military; increased use of violence both against political prisoners and against dissidents still "at large."

Regime brutality has intimidated many dissidents into a complete cessation of activity, but others have merely been driven underground. Some of these--seeing no prospect for change within the system, having no dreams for the future, and disillusioned about the effectiveness of Western support--are advocating more radical tactics of protest, such as the formation of opposition groups with political action programs. Last year several dissidents were arrested for setting up a Social Democratic Party that called for a multi-party democracy. Other dissidents report a "kamikaze" attitude among some embittered youth, a tendency to glorify personal sacrifices made for the sake of the cause. A spirit of despair and a readiness to become martyrs is even more pronounced in some Christian communities--especially the persecuted Pentecostals, Baptists and Ukrainian Catholics, who seem to take

the view that they have "nothing to lose but their chains." At the same time, with the door to emigration all but closed for Soviet Jews, many of them have also become bolder and more active in pressing for cultural freedoms for Jews inside the USSR.

Over the past several years there have been a few reports of terrorist incidents in the USSR. There have also been a few reports that guns are now available on the black market in Tula, a center for the manufacture of small arms, and that this has been a source of concern within the KGB. In an environment of harsh repression, the possibility cannot be discounted that opposition to the regime might assume more violent forms—especially in areas such as Ukraine that have traditions of armed resistance to Russian rule.

Thus, the Gorbachev leadership confronts a dissident community that is small (except for the religious believers) and demoralized. But a new breed of dissident may be developing that is more hardened, more inclined to engage in extreme forms of protest, and in this sense perhaps more of a problem for the regime.

At the Summit

Soviet leaders probably really do believe that what they do inside their own country is none of our business. They certainly believe that the adversary's internal problems are fair game for propagandists, but probably take the view that injecting criticism of internal policy into high diplomacy is nothing more than a cheap political maneuver.

It is true that for a time in the 1970s, the Soviets were responsive to US overtures on behalf of dissidents, especially with regard to Jewish emigration. But the internal repercussions of detente policies have given many Soviet leaders second thoughts, creating a political climate that is not conducive to internal liberalization. Jewish emigration stirred up other

disaffected minorities who wanted to leave. The departure of prominent intellectuals to the West served as a magnet for those left behind. More generally, in the view of many Soviet officials, the increase in contacts between Soviet citizens and foreigners in the 1970s had a negative effect on the attitudes and behavior of the population. [redacted] in 1982, for example, that middle and senior level party officials believed that the economic benefits of detente had been bought at a dangerous political price and that the USSR must now protect itself from being "swamped" by Western ideas by cutting back on social, cultural and political contact with the West.

The US sanctions following the invasion of Afghanistan and the declaration of martial law in Poland also had an effect on the psychology of Soviet officials. Gorbachev himself has seemed especially concerned to avoid becoming vulnerable to US pressure of any sort.

With these practical and psychological factors at work, Gorbachev will probably be extremely unreceptive to appeals on behalf of dissidents. The incentives would have to be powerful for him to consider "concessions" in this area. In any event, any major decision--such as a decision to allow Sakharov to return to Moscow--would probably require consultation with other Politburo members. The Politburo has been involved in past decisions about prominent dissidents and emigres--such as Rostropovich--and sometimes there has been disagreement within the leadership over how to handle particular cases.

THE SOVIET UNION'S NATIONALITY PROBLEM

The Soviet Union is the most ethnically diverse country in the world. It has more than 130 national groups each with its own language, culture and attitudes. Often these affect Moscow's ability to implement its domestic policies and at a minimum require the Soviet authorities to maintain a tighter control on the population than would otherwise be the case. These problems are compounded by the fact that the Soviet Union is the only major country in which the dominant nationality--in this case, the Russians--forms only a bare majority of the population and may soon become a minority. Up to now, Moscow has been able to cope with this situation through a combination of ideological and organizational measures and an often displayed willingness to use force against any opposition.

The Ethnic Mosaic

The USSR is a veritable ethnic museum housing more than 130 different, often exotic groups. They range from small reindeer-herding tribes in Siberia with no written language or independent political tradition to ancient Islamic civilizations in Central Asia to large, modern industrial societies in the Baltic region which were independent countries until World War II. While each is, of course, important to its members, most are politically irrelevant: The smallest 100 nationalities make up less than 2% of the total population. Indeed, their current prominence in the Soviet federal system reflects Moscow's long-term policy of divide-and-rule, of preventing the formation of large communities by sponsoring small ones. The larger nationalities that do matter can be divided into five major ethnographic groups:

(1). The Russians. Now forming 52% of the population, the Russians are the traditional core of the state. They dominate its central apparatus and military and determine both the political culture and official language of the country. They have paid a heavy economic price to maintain their dominance, enjoyed few benefits from their possessions, and are now in demographic decline. Indeed, sometime within the next decade, their low birthrates and high death rates when combined with the high birthrates among Central Asian Muslims will make them a minority in their own country. In an authoritarian political system, this shift will not have any immediate political consequences; but it has already had the psychological effect of giving many Russians a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about the future.

- 2 -

(2). Other Slavs. The Ukrainians (16% of the population) and Belorussians (4%) are culturally similar to the slavic Russians. When these three nationalities stand together--and it is an arrangement Moscow has long sought to promote--they form 72% of the total, a healthy majority unlikely to be challenged for several hundred years. But on many issues--including russification and economic development--these groups find themselves in conflict, a pattern that suggests any Slavic brotherhood may contain as much hostility as agreement.

(3). The Muslim Nationalities. Now forming 18% of the total population, the historically Islamic peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus are culturally, linguistically, and racially distinct from the slavic majority. In addition, they represent the fastest growing segment of the Soviet populace: In Turkmenistan, for example, one woman in six has at least 10 children. Because of their rapid growth, they form an increasing share of military draftees--now more than 30%--and of new entrants to the workforce--up to 50% by the mid-1990s.

(4). The Christian Caucasus. The ancient Christian nations of Georgia and Armenia together form 3% of the population. While each is culturally distinct and has enjoyed independence in the past, both are more than usually loyal to the Soviet system and enjoy special privileges. The Armenians see Moscow as their protector against Turkey, and both enjoy access to the large official and black markets of the USSR. Because of their churches and emigre communities abroad, both play a role in Soviet foreign policy. Perhaps for this reason, they both have been able to retain their distinctive alphabets--the only other nations who have are the Baltic states who were incorporated into the Soviet Union only at the end of World War II--and to defend many of their specific national traditions.

(5). The Baltic Republics. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the most passionately anti-Soviet and anti-Russian regions of the Soviet Union; but forming only 3% of the population, they have seldom been in a position to act on their feelings. As one Moscow official is reputed to have told a Baltic communist in the late 1940s, Soviet nationality policy in that region consists in having enough boxcars ready--a reference to the brutal mass deportations which followed the Soviet annexation in 1945. These three republics are the most European in the USSR and enjoy a standard of living far higher than the Russians do. At the same time, they feel profoundly threatened by the influx of slavs into their homelands and by the ongoing russification of their local institutions.

These nationalities, like most others, have their own Soviet-created national territories in which they have at least some cultural and political institutions in their native

languages. Indeed, that is the essence of Soviet federalism. But nearly one Soviet in five--some 55 million people--lives outside his national home. The Russians have no real problem because there are Russian-language institutions virtually everywhere. For the other, however, native-language institutions do not exist outside their national territories; and many of them find themselves victims of discrimination and are being forcibly assimilated.

The Major Problems

There are a number of major issues in which the multinational aspect of the population plays an especially important role.

Regional Development. Any movement of labor and capital in a large multinational state tends to become invested with ethnic meaning or to be limited by ethnic considerations. The Soviet Union is no exception. Central Asians in the Soviet "sunbelt," for example, are very reluctant to move to the industrial heartland which is located in the less hospitable north; and Russians are reluctant to send capital away from their own "rustbelt" to build factories in Central Asia--where most of the new labor is to be found. Consequently, Moscow is forced to choose between economically rational development strategies which would exacerbate ethnic feelings (be it by changing investment patterns or forcing movement of workers) and an ethnically responsive ones which result in slower economic growth.

Military Staffing. An increasing fraction of new draftees for the Soviet Army come from Central Asia, and many of them do not know Russian well. As a result, the Soviet military has been forced to spend an increasing amount of time teaching such recruits Russian, the language of command; and the Central Asian soldiers have their national sensitivities heightened by the experience. To date, the army has been able to cope; but Soviet generals often complain about the poor quality of soldiers they get from non-Russian areas. As the percentage of such soldiers rises, this problem too may become worse.

Russification. Every country needs a lingua franca, a language in which everyone can do business. In the Soviet Union, that language is for historical and political reasons Russian. For many nationalities, learning Russian poses no threat to national identity; indeed, it may even heighten it by bringing individuals into contact with other groups. In other cases, however, language is central to identity; and any suggestion that another language should be acquired is seen as a threat to national existence. In Georgia, for instance, people rioted at the mere suggestion that Russian should be

legally equal to Georgian in that republic. Clearly, some Soviet officials believe that learning Russian is the first step toward the assimilation of non-Russians into the Russian nation; but more and more they are recognizing that a knowledge of that language may have exactly the opposite effect.

Combatting Foreign Influence. The Soviet government has always tried to seal off its population from any foreign influence. For both geographic and political reasons, this effort has been least successful in the non-Russian periphery of the country. Central Asian Muslims are very much aware of what is going on elsewhere in the Muslim world; and the Baltic peoples look to Poland and the West more often than to Moscow. As a result, many Russian officials in Moscow view these groups as virtual Trojan horses for foreign influences, an attitude that reinforces what for many are natural prejudices.

Dissent in the Non-Russian Areas. Dissent there is very different from that at the center. It is generally hidden from foreign view. It has the potential for violent massive protest because it has deeper roots in the local population. And, under certain conditions, it may even enjoy a certain sympathy with and hence protection from local officials who may also oppose Moscow's line. As a result, Moscow's ability to suppress dissent is somewhat limited--especially in regions such as Georgia and Estonia where the local language is virtually inaccessible to Russians on the scene.

Prospects for the Future

The Soviet Union is likely to face increasing national problems in the future. Economic progress has meant that more Russians and non-Russians are coming into direct competition, often for the first time, while the recent slowing of economic growth means that there is a smaller pie to be divided among groups that are growing at very different rates. And the federal structures originally created to be symbolic of national rights are acquiring defenders and becoming ever more real. In the past, Moscow has been able to manage through a combination of guile and force. In the near term, that is likely to be enough. But over the longer haul, these nationality-based tensions may weaken the Soviet system or prompt its leaders to return to a more harshly coercive policy.

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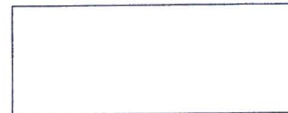
NOTE TO: VADM John M. Poindexter, USN
Deputy Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

The Honorable Michael H. Armacost
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

The Honorable Fred C. Ikle
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

John -

Attached is an assessment of the Soviet gameplan leading up to and following the summit. It also includes some thoughts on Soviet perceptions of their "America problem." It was prepared by [redacted] the Assistant National Intelligence Officer for the USSR. Both Bill Casey and I think it is an excellent piece of work and commend it to you.



Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director for Intelligence

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E.O. 12958
~~As Amended~~
Sec. 3.5(c)

Attachment:
As stated

Very interesting

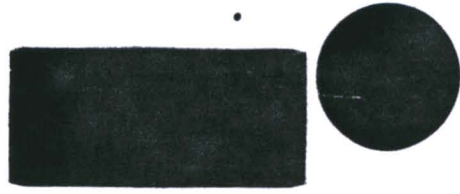
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9 September 1985

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GORBACHEV'S PROSPECTIVE COURSE

What Moscow Wants

The Soviets failed badly in their external goals during the past half decade because of Western, and particularly US, policy changes--higher defense budgets, tighter trade controls, tougher negotiating positions, support for insurgencies against Soviet clients, etc.--that newly challenged the USSR at a time when the Soviet Union was befallen by enfeebled leadership and economic stagnation. The Soviets responded to these difficulties essentially by putting their heads in the ground: following up Andropov's prolonged illness and death by naming Chernenko before they could bring themselves to give the mantle to Gorbachev; stooping to increasingly demoralizing exhortations and promises lacking any prospects of turning the economy around; responding to the Administration's toughening stance by becoming more belligerent, threatening, and going so far as to assert that the "risk of war" was growing. Moscow's decision to deepen its conflict with the West rather than show flexibility, culminating in its walkout from the INF and START talks and war scare talk in 1983-84, was highly counterproductive.

The Soviets have recently adopted a range of revised approaches to their problems. Gorbachev and many of the people he is promoting represent a new generation of leadership; a series of significant, if not dramatic, changes are being inaugurated aimed at economic revitalization; and a new tack has been taken toward the West. Since last Fall, beginning with the leadup to the Shultz-Gromyko meeting at Geneva in January, followed by the reopening of arms talks in Geneva, and now the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, the Soviets have backed off their conflictive diplomatic course in favor of recreating a more cooperative atmosphere which ideally, as they relate in their own rhetoric, would see a return to the "detente" atmosphere of the 1970s. The Soviets believe that if they can nudge the US back to a posture of pursuing a cooperative, problem-solving relationship with the USSR as a first order of business rather than first demanding Soviet concessions that would reduce major asymmetric threats to Western security--for example, the Soviet hard target capability--they can then better reduce the US's long-term threat to the Soviet military posture, SDI, and gain Western support for the Kremlin's other major priority, economic rejuvenation.

The Soviets know how badly they have failed in their bellicose diplomacy toward stopping first INF and now SDI in that INF deployment was begun notwithstanding Moscow's pulling out all the stops and SDI has not been halted or slowed by Soviet threats and recriminations. Rather the lesson appears to be that these programs have prospered if only because of Soviet behavior. Meanwhile SDI threatens at a minimum to upset the pace of the strategic competition, one which Moscow is comfortable with, and add much uncertainty to where the "correlation of forces" will lie for many years ahead; if things work out the way the Administration would like, it could render much of Soviet doctrine and

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investment in strategic forces to the ashcan. Moscow's nightmare, far into the future as it may be, is that US strategic defense technology might ultimately provide the US a one-sided first strike capability that would restore to the US broad global supremacy over the USSR.

Related to this, Gorbachev and the new Soviet leadership are deeply concerned that the USSR's current economic problems will make it difficult to aggressively compete with the US for at least the next several years. Moreover, they want Western economic support to help overcome these economic problems. The Soviets fear SDI and other strategic weapons programs favored by the Administration not only because of the new military dangers and uncertainties they pose, but also because these programs threaten to force the diversion of significant incremental resources--financial, technological, and manpower--that the Soviet Union can ill afford. Nor is Moscow now likely to feel so able to afford the procurement in the 1990s of aircraft carrier task forces for global power projection as was probably anticipated a few years ago. The Soviet economy also can no longer afford to undertake new largescale economic programs to the Third World.

More than this, though, Soviet leaders appear to believe they need Western economic support to regain higher growth rates and install the modernity that the Soviet economy needs to again become vibrant and satisfy domestic consumer demands. To obtain the technologies and production capabilities that the USSR needs in key areas, Soviet leaders want the West--to which the US is the key--to relax COCOM controls, again become receptive to the construction of turnkey facilities and jointly undertaken major infrastructure projects in the USSR, and otherwise transfer capital and skills to the USSR for Soviet exploitation. Moscow needs a much more cooperative atmosphere in East-West relations to bring this about; it can see that such an environment is important both by how they have suffered in recent years and how things have loosened up a bit during the past year since US-Soviet relations have become more businesslike if not friendly.

The Solution

Gorbachev's strategy is to induce and cajole the Administration in the leadup to the summit to accept a framework for further NST talks at Geneva that would have the US agree to restrain the pace of its SDI effort (hopefully to restrict it to the laboratory) in return for which the USSR would agree to consider non-trivial mutual reductions in strategic offensive forces. The Soviets want first-off to gain US agreement to the principle that SDI is negotiable; gaining this, they might even countenance significant offensive force cuts insofar as they minimally detracted from their overall strategic posture, most critically their hard target kill capability. Moscow would hope that US agreement to such a framework would lead to increased domestic and allied pressures on the Administration to reach an agreement as soon as possible, that

pressure causing the Administration to accept a minimal price rather than stick to a demand that the USSR give up its first strike advantages. Prior to such an agreement, the Soviets want to suggest that they will pay a price, even a big one; once they have the agreement, they probably calculate, the resulting changed atmospherics will end the need for them to deliver very much. At worst, they might see themselves accepting force reductions to levels that would not alter Soviet strategic advantages.

The Soviets see such an agreement in principle at the summit as a major goal in their strategy to reimpose a detente atmosphere on East-West relations and pick its fruits. Through that substantive and environmental achievement, from Moscow's perspective, lies the solution to the current strategic and economic dangers to the USSR, and also more favorable prospects for other Soviet global goals:

- Improving the likelihood of reduced US defense spending.
- Improving the prospects of socialist gains in major West European elections and weakening the Nakasone wing of the LDP in Japan.
- Reducing China's resistance to and preconditions for closer relations with the USSR.
- Curtailing US support for the insurgencies in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Angola.
- Restoring the vitality of the Western European peace movement.
- Gaining Soviet entry into Middle East peace efforts.
- Reducing Western resistance to Vietnamese domination of Indochina.

To build pressure on the Administration to accept this course, the Soviets have hinted at various levels of offensive force reductions they might accept and conducted a diplomacy aimed at portraying new reasonability and earnestness. Their approach, though, is aimed at gaining leverage on the Administration through the US domestic scene and the allies more that it is aimed at persuading the President and his advisors. The Soviets will seek to add to this pressure in the weeks ahead through Shevardnadze's efforts at the UN and Gorbachev's summit with Mitterand. Shevardnadze also will press Moscow's proposals in his meetings with US leaders and seek to measure Soviet prospects while he is here. In Paris, Gorbachev might unfold an INF proposal meant to appeal to NATO that is linked to Soviet satisfaction on SDI as well as to the Dutch INF decision due 1 November. Moscow probably would also like to score other regional gains if it could to further cajole the US, but there are no signs yet that the Soviets are willing to make tactical concessions that might achieve this in their relations with China, in the Middle East, or elsewhere.

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Gorbachev probably intends to play his current hand out before he considers other options. He wants to see if he can get something for free in real strategic terms before doing anything else; if he becomes convinced he can't before the summit, he might possibly make a tactical concession in a regional arena to pressure the Administration as noted above. But he is not likely to commit himself to any broad alternative approach until after the summit. He might then consider a number of different courses, more roundabout, dangerous, accommodating, or delaying along the following lines:

Roundabout: The Soviets make a series of diplomatic gestures and even concessions to a few US friends and allies such as China, West Germany, Japan, and Israel aimed at altering regional realities in ways adverse to the US, regaining the initiative in international affairs, and undermining allied support and domestic confidence in the Administration's course. In doing so, Moscow would be making, in its view, tactical concessions in the hope of reaping broader strategic advantage. Such a course might appear to have some promise for the possible regional gains in themselves; it might look even better as a means of weakening US steadfastness as the Administration's time in office begins to expire.

Dangerous: Gorbachev could conclude following a no-gain summit that the USSR, and he in terms of his own political position, could not afford to look unsuccessful or weak in dealing with the US and had to make the Administration pay a price. At a minimum, he might believe the US had to realize it was dangerous to so refuse Moscow. The objective would be to shatter US confidence in its ability to diplomatically control events and lead Congress and the allies to believe the Soviet Union had to be accommodated to some degree. Accordingly, for example, the Soviets could in this mode send jet combat aircraft to Nicaragua, take a stronger stance toward Pakistan, walk out from the NST talks, attempt to impose its will on Iran, and so forth.

Accommodating: The Kremlin might regard all other near-term paths as promising no net gains in the end result; it might also regard its economic needs as being so great that it might accept the necessity to concede a substantial portion of its strategic doctrine and first strike capability to obtain US restraint on SDI and the political atmosphere it wants. Moscow would regard such a concession as the ultimate it was prepared to go. Even in this sullen, defeatist mood the Soviets would not be prepared to trade the MBFR concessions the West wants that would curtail the Soviet military threat to Western Europe. This theater advantage would remain unabated by a US-Soviet return to the doctrine of mutual assured destruction and would gain new life insofar as SDI threatens it.

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Delaying: The Soviets could alternatively decide to try to tough it out, making no major concessions to anyone and avoiding major risks of confrontation themselves. Rather their gaze would be fixed on the 1986 US Congressional elections and 1988 Presidential election in which they would calculate the Republican Party would lose seats and the President position in the first, while the second would likely see the succession to office of a President no worse and probably less hostile to the USSR than is President Reagan. The Soviets could believe that high interest rates, the budget deficit, and trade deficit, will gradually force President Reagan or his successor to accept lower defense budgets while their own efforts at economic revitalization--personnel changes, management reforms, greater emphasis on science and technology, and other actions--will provide a great enough growth increment to address their most urgent requirements. Further encouraging Gorbachev in this direction would be his new team's more appealing diplomatic style in the West.

So far Gorbachev has shown no inclination to make any serious tactical concessions that might gain net regional advantages, despite numerous hints that Soviet policies are now more fluid and flexible. If he concluded that such gains were to be had, he would make such moves for their own sake; he would certainly do so if he thought they also would lead to net gains vis-a-vis the US. It, of course, would be risky for Moscow to make regional concessions that it anticipated would not gain local advantage but might gain worthwhile advantage with the US; that is there dilemma.

Pursuit of a more confrontational course in the early 1980s led the Soviets to where they are now including the major failures and problems they currently confront. Tactically, they gave up on this course a year ago; to go back to it promises no greater likelihood of success. If this were a good option in the broad sense, it may be asked, why have the Soviets not already taken this road? The answer likely lies in their calculation that the net gains regionally are dubious and perhaps even more dangerous to the USSR than to the US. Pursuit of this course is not out of the question, but would represent the bankruptcy of Soviet policy and Moscow's determination to pursue a policy of frustration rather than make substantive policy adjustments or even sit tight.

It is possible but unlikely that the Soviets will feel enough pressure in the near-term to make strategic concessions. (They almost certainly would not concede their theater advantages.) Giving up their hard target capability would mean repudiation of one of the Brezhnev era's two most important strategic gains--the other being broad parity--and be an enormous gain to the US while representing a loss of credibility for the USSR. Politically, any accommodation would be exceedingly risky to Gorbachev. The Soviets will never speak publicly and would find it hard to speak privately of the utility of this course.

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The final course, waiting the Reagan Administration out, is likely to be most appealing to the Kremlin for the reasons already mentioned. Rather than accept the need for the third course, the Soviets also could graft moderate elements of the first two courses on to this fourth one. Soviet rhetoric and media statements are likely to increasingly forecast a combination of the first two policy alternatives as most likely if the Administration appears unlikely to deliver what Moscow wants as the summit approaches. In the aftermath of a failed summit, from the Soviet perspective, Moscow probably will start saying it intends to wait the Administration out.

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9 September 1985

Moscow's View of the Reagan Administration

The Soviets believe President Reagan and his long-time, closest advisors share a conscious, deep-seated hostility to the Soviet Union and would like to turn back the clock of history if they could. They see the President as much more of an ideological warrior than his predecessors; they believe that while the latter also would have liked the USSR to be different, they thought this impossible to bring about, accepted the Soviet Union as a second superpower, accorded it a grudging respect, and pursued policy lines that acknowledged a Soviet role in all aspects of international affairs. President Reagan, the Soviets believe, accords the USSR no such acceptance and, given the opportunity, he more so than his predecessors would act to roll back Soviet gains in recent decades.

The Soviets find ideological confirmation of this view in the President's muscular support of individualism, private enterprise, less government, and what they term "capitalism" at home and "imperialism" abroad.

They regard references to the USSR as the "evil empire" and jokes about declaring the USSR "illegal" and "start the bombing in five minutes" as indicative of deeply held feelings.

They regard US support for insurgents in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, and elsewhere as rejection of the status quo and attempt to reverse Soviet gains in the Third World.

They believe the Administration's commitment to SDI and the other strategic programs it would like to pursue are aimed at outmoding Soviet strategic forces and regaining US strategic superiority for the purpose of dictating political terms to the USSR.

They think the Administration wishes to create political and military pressures that will undermine the Soviet economy enough to make it unable to compete militarily and force internal changes in the Soviet system that would threaten its very nature.

To be sure, the Soviets do not consider the Administration to be threatening war or even seriously raising the risk of it in the foreseeable future, notwithstanding their frequent rhetoric about the "risk of war." They see the Administration as hostile and tough, but not crazy or violent; their vociferous rhetoric results from their having to face rather unexpectedly, in light of their experience in the 1970s, an adversary that rejected assumptions that implicitly accorded the USSR a global role which Moscow had come to take for granted. Nor does Moscow believe the US has the capability to accomplish any of these goals in the foreseeable future. Beyond this, moreover, the Soviets are encouraged by what they consider Administration vulnerabilities:

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They believe the US has its own economic problems and that the prevailing high interest rates, budget deficit, and trade deficit could ruin the US economy; and if they do not, it will be at the cost of a lower defense budget and worsened relations with US allies and the Third World.

They believe the American public, pluralist US political system, and the Congress impose severe constraints on the Administration's preferred policies and provide major avenues for Soviet manipulation.

Similarly, Moscow sees the NATO allies and Japan as having concerns and agendas that offer major opportunities to constrain Washington or cause the allies to diverge from Washington to Soviet gain.

The Soviets also may believe the Administration, in its second term, is somewhat more pragmatic and less ideological than it was previously insofar as they perceive US economic problems and domestic and allied pressures for positive developments in US-Soviet relations growing. It is in this light that they understand US willingness to accept last Winter the current framework of the NST discussions at Geneva and the President's interest in a Summit this Fall. Moscow also may believe that National Security Advisor McFarlane's replacement of Judge Clark in practice means a shift toward a more pragmatic policy perspective, and that Secretary Shultz, whom the Soviets view more favorably than Secretary Weinberger, has gained greater influence. They certainly have been pleased by Ambassador Kirkpatrick's departure from office.

The Soviet leadership nevertheless still fears the steadfastness of the Administration in its positions and the control over US security policy that it does have. Even more important, the Soviets believe the Administration calculates that broadly speaking it has nothing to gain in an atmosphere of greater US-Soviet cooperation and everything to lose. From Moscow's perspective, the Administration prefers an atmosphere charged with hostility, conflict, and tension because this provides an environment more conducive to higher US defense spending, tough anti-Soviet trade policies and greater allied support for them, US political-military diplomacy aimed at curbing Soviet global influence, and tough positions on arms control. To the extent the Administration engages in cooperative diplomacy with the USSR, the Soviets believe, it is the result of domestic and allied pressures. Manipulating and adding to those pressures is, in Moscow's view, the key to managing its America problem.

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If the Soviets can more satisfactorily manage the US during the next several years, they probably believe that the succeeding Administration will not be worse from their point of view, with a fair chance it will be better. The basis for such hope lies in a probable calculation that no likely successor will be more ideological in orientation than President Reagan.

Nevertheless, we have at this point no evidence beyond occasional odd comments that the Soviets are thinking seriously about attempting to wait out the Reagan Administration instead of dealing with it as best they can. Rather the Soviets appear to be feeling considerable pressure from the Administration and seeking relief from it, although they have not yet shown any willingness to make serious accommodations. They still hope to get something for free; if they become convinced they cannot, at that point they will decide whether to offer serious concessions, adopt another cause, or simply try to wait out the Administration and seek to gain unilateral concessions from its successor. The Soviets will regard improved prospects of 1988 Presidential hopefuls less ideologically hostile to the USSR than the President and of Republican losses in the 1986 elections as added pressure on the Administration to compromise its positions before it leaves office.

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