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USSR WEEKLY REVIEW

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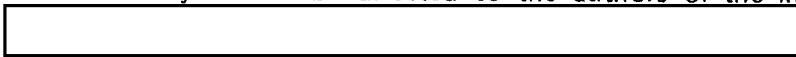
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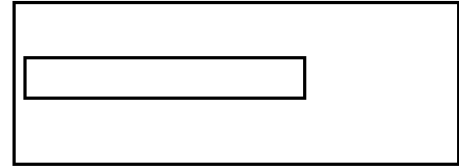


This publication is prepared by the USSR Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. The views presented are the personal judgments of analysts on significant events or trends in Soviet foreign and domestic affairs. Although the analysis centers on political matters, it discusses politically relevant economic or strategic trends when appropriate. Differences of opinion are sometimes aired to present consumers with a range of analytical views. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to

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Soviet Foreign Policy Since Sinai II--An Overview

(NOTE: The following article is the text of a paper presented on 20 October at a conference on the Middle East sponsored by the Office of Regional and Political Analysis. Comments on the personal judgments expressed are solicited.)

Over the next half hour, I will set the stage for our discussions of the next two days by placing Soviet interests in the Middle East into the total evolving world context as I think the Soviets see it. And to this end, I suggest that we try to reconstruct an overview of the most notable trends of the last two years--since Sinai II--as a well-positioned, well-informed, and relatively coolheaded Soviet specialist might see them.

Let us suppose that Kapitsa of the Foreign Ministry, or Zagladin of the International Department of the Central Committee, or best of all Aleksandrov-Agentov of Brezhnev's personal staff was asked to compose for the Politburo a memorandum listing and weighing--as objectively as possible--the favorable and unfavorable aspects of what has happened to Soviet interests in the world since the fall of 1975. If such a person could afford to be brutally frank (which is of course certainly open to question), what would he say?

Looking first at the positive side of the ledger, I suggest he might find that there have been five main developments broadly favorable to Soviet interests in the last two years.

First--and this is basic--would be the deep Soviet satisfaction over their continued progress in the strategic arms matchup with the United States. This has involved the deployment of new ballistic missile-firing submarines and the scheduled replacement of third generation ICBMs by fourth generation ones with greater site hardness, greater accuracy, and a MIRV payload. The net effect has

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been to maintain the Soviet lead over the United States in certain quantitative measures of strategic power while reducing the US lead on the qualitative side. The ultimate scope of the political rewards anticipated by the USSR from this buildup is still ambiguous. But the Soviets almost certainly expect, at a minimum, to reduce US leverage and improve their own in any future confrontations such as the one which occurred late in the October 1973 war.

Secondly, a Soviet official reviewing key events since 1975 would recall that the war in Indochina had ended only five months before Sinai II, and did so in a manner that was surprisingly abrupt and imposed a humiliation upon the United States which the Soviets found most gratifying. As a result, the US was forced to take a step back in Asia. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, not only could claim credit for the help it had given the winning side, but has since been able to consolidate its position as the outside power with the greatest degree of influence in Vietnam and Laos. This does not mean, of course, that the USSR can expect to dominate the Vietnamese--no one can do that--but rather that the end of the war has allowed both the Vietnamese and Chinese to remove some of the veils from their profound mutual antagonism. With the Americans gone, this has left the Soviet Union with a considerable local advantage, since it is the only large power which has at least fair ideological relations with Hanoi, which is sufficiently distant to be nonthreatening, and which also has the capability and inclination to render economic aid.

Beyond this, the Soviets have had reason to hope that the highly undignified American departure from Saigon would be seen all over the world as symbolic and symptomatic of a generally receding tide of US presence and influence, while the Soviet Union would be seen all the more as the advancing tide.

A Soviet memorandum-writer might at this juncture cite a third recent trend which could be portrayed as further evidence for this notion of the advancing and the receding tide. After 15 years of frustration and fluctuating fortunes, the Soviet Union since 1975 has at last made a breakthrough in Africa sufficient to

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establish the USSR permanently as a major influence there. The Soviet presence had been gradually improving in a smaller way for some time previously, of course--notably in dealings with the Marxist regime in Somalia, which had granted the USSR use of an Indian Ocean base at Berbera. But the major advances have come rather dramatically as a consequence of the liquidation of the Portuguese colonial empire in East and West Africa--and particularly, of course, as a result of the events in Angola. The circumstances surrounding the triumph of the Soviet-supported faction in Angola in late 1975 and early 1976 have indeed appeared to make the event a historical landmark. Never before had the Soviet Union sought to assert so long a reach--to bring significant military power to bear for a specific political end over such long distances, so far from areas of vital Soviet interest. While the forces thus deployed were, to be sure, largely proxies--Cubans--the weapons and much of the transport used were Soviet. Indeed, the Angolan intervention symbolized, as much as anything, the coming of age of the Soviet air transport capability previously used abroad mainly in periodically resupplying freshly defeated Arab armies over relatively short distances. Thus this episode demonstrated the most striking Soviet departure to date from Stalin's conservative reluctance to become committed to military adventures beyond the range of contiguous land-based artillery. At the same time, coming as they did within a year after the American debacle in Vietnam, the Angolan events were widely interpreted as another defeat for US policy by the Soviet Union, and one which was somehow a continuation and confirmation of a trend seen as implicit in the fall of Vietnam. A Soviet writer could well profess to see both a historical link and a gratifying contrast--on the one hand, the spectacular use of American helicopters to extricate defeated personnel from Saigon out of the battle, and on the other hand the equally spectacular use of Soviet air transport to bring equipment and men to Luanda into the battle.

By picking his facts carefully and selectively, a Soviet official could also cite many grounds for optimism in the trends in Africa since the apparent final triumph of the Angolan MPLA. These would include the Soviet friendship treaties signed with Angola and Mozambique, the aircraft reconnaissance base rights which the USSR

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may anticipate in Angola, the development of a legitimized Soviet role, however circumscribed, in support of the black nationalist campaign against Rhodesia, the rise of the Namibia issue, the growing presence of small groups of Cuban military experts in various parts of Africa, and the long-term implications of the rise to power of a radical military group in Ethiopia--the largest East African state, which is ideologically predisposed to favor the USSR and to be hostile to the US.

Leaving Africa for the time being, a Soviet official seeking to isolate phenomena favorable to Soviet interests could of course refer to the various ongoing difficulties of Western Europe and the Western alliance. This would include, in the first place, the continued political volatility and precariousness of NATO's whole southern flank along the Mediterranean--because of the conflicting interests of Greece and Turkey, because of the growing role of the Communist Party of Italy and the implications this has had for the future security of NATO planning, and because of the continued fragility of the two new regimes on the Iberian Peninsula. Beyond this, a Soviet writer could refer to the ongoing economic problems of much of Western Europe, involving unemployment, inflation, continued vulnerability to high energy costs, and the prospect of continued reduction of growth rates. All this has sponsored a general malaise conducive to the growth of leftist sentiment and ultimately--so the Soviet Union might hope--suggesting the likelihood of increased West European economic and political friction with the United States and reduced responsiveness to American influence. While the Soviet Union has had only marginal ability to affect any of these trends, a Soviet writer might cite them as phenomena favorable to Soviet net interests and worthy of applause. I shall return in a few minutes to the question of whether this is really the case and whether most Soviets now think so.

Finally, of course, a Soviet memorandum-writer casting about for favorable events of the last couple of years would probably feel obliged to cite the 1975 convening of the European Security Conference and the signing of the Helsinki Declaration. This event did, after all, mean the successful culmination of years of Soviet campaigning for a conference which would put a final, authoritative seal upon the postwar borders of Europe and

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legitimize Soviet World War II territorial gains. In this sense, the Helsinki conference is probably still regarded as a solid achievement of Soviet policy.

Nevertheless, if the hypothetical memorandum stopped there, it would be likely to cause some raised eyebrows and head-scratching among its Politburo readers. Despite the important elements of truth in each of the points made so far, it is symptomatic of the gravity of Soviet problems that none of the Soviet leaders is likely to consider the foregoing optimistic discussion an adequate picture of the main trends facing the Soviet Union. We can therefore imagine the memorandum-writer taking a deep breath and beginning again with the word "odnako"-- "however." In all Soviet reports, the heart of the matter generally follows the "odnako."

In the first place, he would be obliged to note flatly that the Soviet Union's relative position in the overarching Sino-Soviet-US world triangle unfortunately continues to be unfavorable, and has in fact deteriorated slightly further in the last couple of years. On the Chinese side of the equation, it has turned out that the death of Mao Tse-tung a year ago has not had the moderating affect upon Peking's attitude toward the USSR for which the Soviets had so long been hoping. On the contrary, the supposedly moderate, pragmatic figures now in control in Peking continue to display toward the Soviet Union an implacable hostility which is far more intense than that toward the United States and which now appears to be firmly rooted in a nonideological view of Chinese national interest. The Chinese therefore continue to wage vehement geopolitical warfare against the USSR on every front around the world and, in particular, do their utmost to persuade the major capitalist countries to abandon all dealings with the Soviet Union. Although Chinese capabilities in this regard, fortunately for Moscow, are still limited, the Soviet Union continues to be concerned over the potential effect of Chinese exhortations about the Soviet danger, particularly upon conservative forces in the West. The Soviet Union has also become increasingly exercised this year over what is seen as a growing possibility that the United States and other Western states may soon expand the sale of military technology to the Chinese. It is in this particular key

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respect that the already bad situation in the triangle is growing worse for the USSR rather than better--and this despite the fact that Sino-US relations are themselves stalemated over Taiwan.

Because of the Soviet desire to minimize these problems--and even more, to minimize the potential leverage upon Moscow which Washington may hope to obtain from this situation--the USSR would very much like to improve its relations with Peking. But the Soviets are willing to do this only if it can be done without sacrificing what are regarded as essential national interests. Unfortunately for the USSR, the Chinese are obviously determined for their own reasons to keep the relationship frozen. To this end they rigidly adhere to certain Maoist negotiating demands in the Sino-Soviet border dispute which, as they well realize, no Soviet Government can or will ever consider. The upshot is that while Soviet experts continue to hope for some eventual modification of the Chinese position, they cannot encourage the Soviet leadership to expect this in the next few years. They cannot encourage any aged Politburo member in questionable health--such as Brezhnev--to believe he will live long enough to shake hands with a Chinese leader, and they cannot nominate a time when it will become safe to stop pouring concrete for pillboxes around Khabarovsk.

Secondly, it is against this background that we note that the Soviet relationship with the other member of the triangle--the United States--has been continuously eroding from the end of 1974 until a few weeks ago. It is now evident that a turning point in the detente relationship occurred late in 1974, when the Vladivostok understandings were reached and the Stevenson Amendment was passed to the Export-Import Bank bill. Consolidation of the Vladivostok understanding in a new draft treaty was to prove impossible for nearly three years, partly because of growing concern in the United States over Soviet strategic intentions, and partly for a number of other reasons, including discontent in the US over the way in which detente was being defined as well as anger over Soviet behavior in Angola. At the same time, the declining state of the relationship has also been reflected in the Soviet inability to secure revision of the obnoxious US trade legislation of December 1974 whose passage precipitated Soviet rejection of the Trade Agreement the following month.

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Meanwhile, the internal processes of the United States have evolved in a fashion which has given the Soviet Union new cause for concern. Soviet satisfaction with the rate of Soviet strategic deployment has been tempered by a healthy respect for US technological capability, and by gradually increasing anxiety over the advent of new US weapon systems not yet matched in the Soviet Union. Similarly, Soviet self-satisfaction because of the US discomfiture over Vietnam has this year been replaced by anxiety over the emergence of a new US leadership which has taken the political offensive on several fronts against the USSR.

Thirdly, the advance of Soviet fortunes in Africa has proved a much more complex and difficult task in 1977 than it had appeared in 1975 or 1976. In Angola, for example, the MPLA has found itself unable to assert its authority over a considerable portion of the national territory in the face of a prolonged insurgency, at the same time that Neto's personal attitude toward the Soviet Union has cooled considerably. Meanwhile, the Soviet effort to court the radical Mengistu government of Ethiopia has involved the USSR in a dilemma because of the Somali attempt to conquer Ethiopia's Ogaden region. The Soviet decision to supply arms to Ethiopia and to put pressure on the USSR's older client, Somalia, to desist has thus far not rescued the Ethiopians--much to Mengistu's chagrin. On the other hand, the Soviet tilt toward Ethiopia has placed in jeopardy the Soviet position in Somalia and the continued Soviet use of their base at Berbera. There is some fragmentary and inconclusive evidence to raise the possibility that this painful dilemma could eventually lead the USSR to rediscover the virtue of seeking limited local cooperation with the United States with a view to finding a way to end the conflict.

Fourthly, in Europe, the Soviets have once again discovered the two-edged, equivocal nature of several trends that might at first glance have seemed favorable to Soviet interests.

One such problem has, as we know, accompanied the rise in Communist influence in parts of Western Europe. While hoping for a decrease in US influence and a loosening of NATO ties as the end-product of this trend, many

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Soviet officials seem by no means sure that this goal will be worth the cost they are already paying in diminished Soviet influence over the key Communist parties. In combating the rise of Eurocommunism, the Soviets are struggling against the apparently very strong temptation for Eurocommunist leaders to strengthen their position in their own societies by distancing themselves from the Soviet Union and attacking Soviet practices. Moreover, the Soviets view the heresies and challenges to CPSU legitimacy voiced by West European Communists as particularly dangerous because of their potential subversive effect upon Eastern Europe. There is considerable evidence to suggest that in the last few years the weighing of the plusses and minuses of these trends has evoked as much uncertainty and controversy in Moscow as in the West.

An associated, particularly unpleasant dilemma for the Soviets has arisen in Europe in 1976 and 1977 in connection with the unforeseen aftermath of the European Security Conference. Even before the new US administration publicly espoused the human rights issue, the effect of the adoption of Basket III at Helsinki was to stimulate challenges to Communist authority and practice in East Europe and the Soviet Union. While these could be easily contained in the USSR, they are viewed as much more serious in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, where the situation is uniquely fragile because of the endemic weakness of the Polish economy and the proven readiness of the Polish proletariat to rebel. Beyond this security issue, the Soviet leaders have seen the human rights movement spawned by Helsinki as placing them on the political defensive throughout the world, and they believe that the issue has been deliberately used this year for that purpose by the new US administration. At the same time the Soviets have also come to fear discussion of the human rights question as feeding the Eurocommunist impetus toward autonomy.

Yet another set of dilemmas arises from the Soviet economic relationship with the West. The Soviets have learned that inflation and other factors that distress the economies of Western Europe and thus cheer the hearts of ideologues in Moscow also raise the price of the foreign technology the USSR wishes to purchase. At the same

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time, any such difficulties in the large capitalist states render even more improbable the huge capital investments in the exploitation of Soviet raw materials which the USSR has been seeking from the capitalist world, with minimal success, since detente began. Meanwhile, some Soviets may have begun to wonder whether the windfall benefits in hard currency earnings they have obtained in the West from the leap in the world price of oil will outweigh, over the long run, the growing economic burdens that high oil prices are bringing to Eastern Europe. These are burdens which the Soviet Union in the last analysis will have to share rather than accept the political consequences. This issue is likely to come to a head within the next few years if, as anticipated, Soviet oil available for export both to succor Eastern Europe and to earn hard currency in the West begins to diminish rapidly and the Soviets are forced to choose. Recently aired Western predictions of such a reduction of Soviet oil exports may well have multiplied Soviet anxieties about the future of their technology imports from the West, if their hard currency earnings to finance such imports do plummet as forecast.

This brings us, finally, to the Middle East, where the political losses the Soviets have suffered in recent years are also closely intertwined with Soviet economic weaknesses. In the last two years the already poor Soviet position in the area has endured further major setbacks, the two most significant being Sadat's abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian friendship treaty and expulsion of the Soviet fleet from Alexandria, together with Asad's humiliating demonstration of Soviet impotence to prevent him from breaking the power of the PLO in Lebanon. In the face of this steady erosion of Soviet influence, Soviet hopes to begin a comeback have remained centered on the possibility of reconvening a Geneva Conference at which the USSR would be seen in a coequal role with the United States.

More fundamentally, the Soviet overall position in the Middle East continues to be squeezed between three converging pressures: first, the enormous influence of the conservative oil-producing states working against Soviet interests; secondly, the enticement of the Arabs by the United States with hopes that the US could deliver significant Israeli concessions; and thirdly, the increasing orientation of the economies of even radical Arab

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states toward the capitalist industrial states because of the fundamental inferiority of most Soviet and East European civilian technology to that of the West. The last factor has already increased the East European burden on the USSR by defeating East European attempts to secure significant quantities of oil from the Middle East without the expenditure of hard currency. It is true that Soviet weapons are competitive in quality with those of the West, that the USSR can earn hard currency or the oil equivalent through weapon sales to states possessing oil, and that the Soviet Union has earned sizable amounts in this way through sales to Libya and Iraq. It therefore seems likely, as a recent OER paper notes, that if the anticipated Soviet hard currency difficulties materialize in the next few years, the economic motive for seeking such arms sales will increasingly supplant the political motive in Soviet eyes. Nevertheless, it does not seem probable that customers will be found to make such purchases on a scale commensurate with Soviet problems.

Finally, what can we conclude from this survey of recent Soviet adventures and misadventures?

First, that the Soviets continue to take for granted that their relationship with the US must necessarily be a mixture of cooperative and competitive elements. But more than this, they have made it apparent that in many, although not all places, they regard their interests as inherently incompatible with those of the US. Their policy in Angola and in much of the rest of Africa has appeared to be grounded on this assumption. At the same time, they also appear to take for granted that the US has often acted under the same assumption, particularly in view of the successful US efforts to constrict Soviet influence in the Middle East since 1973. As a consequence, it is clear that the Soviets have never taken seriously nor expected the US to take seriously the 1972 joint Soviet-US pledge to avoid transgressing on each other's interests.

Secondly, it also seems likely that the Soviet view of how far to allow cooperation to dilute their competitive instincts has varied over time. One key factor has been their changing perception of what they have to lose-- that is, what they are obtaining from their bilateral relationship with the United States at each point in time. It is also obvious that other matters being equal, the

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Soviets have been less inclined toward cooperation at moments and places where they regard themselves as having the upper hand over the United States (as in the Middle East prior to 1967 and Angola in early 1976) and relatively more inclined to do so when and where they see themselves in difficulties (as in the Middle East in recent years and perhaps the Horn of Africa today).

Thirdly, in this competition the Soviets have made certain undeniably solid gains in recent years. This is particularly so in the strategic relationship, as well as in Africa, where despite the recent problems to which I have alluded the Soviets have achieved a political base from which they are unlikely to be totally dislodged, and which they will use for many years in an ongoing struggle against US influence.

Fourth and lastly, despite these gains, it is my judgment that the overall foreign political balance sheet for the Soviet Union has been negative over the last couple of years and will probably become more so. Of all the issues I have mentioned, two towering problems--that of China and that of Soviet economic vulnerabilities--appear to me to overshadow all else, and both are likely to prove intractable.

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Foreign Policy Implications of Soviet Economic Problems:
Some Further Speculations*

The continuing decline in economic growth is sharpening the dilemmas of Soviet foreign policy. If, in addition, the Soviets are forced to reduce, and perhaps eliminate, oil exports to the West--exports which now account for over half of their hard currency export earnings--a major Soviet reexamination of economic relations with the West will become necessary. Moreover, Eastern Europe's economic ties to the West and perhaps Soviet economic relations with Eastern Europe will also have to be reexamined. The expansion of the entire bloc's economic relationship with the West has been an integral part of the Soviet concept of detente, and Eastern Europe's need for an increased share of the USSR's exportable oil surplus has restrained and now threatens Soviet oil exports to the West.

Contradictions Emerge

The concept of detente, as ratified at the 24th Party "Peace" Congress in 1971, appears to have been premised on a growing recognition of the USSR as a superpower and on a continuing favorable shift in the "correlation of forces." The USSR was becoming the military, if not the economic, equal of the US and was capable of simultaneously taking steps to address the unsettled postwar issues in central Europe, integrate Eastern Europe into an inviolable "socialist commonwealth," and face comparison, engagement, and negotiations with the West on a broad range of issues. Until recently, events tended to bear out these Soviet assumptions. The growing recognition of Soviet military parity with the US and the impact of the international energy crisis on the West appeared to affirm that in the crucial arenas of military and economic competition the balance was continuing to shift toward the USSR.

**For another discussion of the implications of Soviet economic problems, particularly for domestic issues, see "Political Implications of the USSR's Economic Future: Some Speculations," USSR Regional and Political Analysis, RP ASU 77-028, 6 October 1977.*

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The assumptions about future East-West economic and military trends, however, have become questionable. As relations with the US have deteriorated, the threat has increased of a new, qualitatively oriented spurt in the arms race, during which the Soviets could have difficulty maintaining the pace. At the same time, the West has partially recovered from the energy crisis, and future bloc gains from expanding East-West economic relations have been jeopardized by the serious problems of debt, credit, exports, and cooperation. If Soviet economic performance deteriorates further and particularly if economic relations with the West decline abruptly because of a lack of exportable oil, improvements in the East-West "correlation of forces" will become increasingly difficult to sustain.

If the Soviets perceive the political, social, and ideological consequences of bloc economic problems as serious threats, retrenchment in relations with the West, rather than significant change at home, appears to be the more likely course for the present leadership, at least initially. There are already signs that imports from the West are being cut back, albeit reluctantly, and that East European economic needs, including oil, will receive priority, even though the USSR is incapable of meeting them fully. Although such policies will have a long-range cumulative effect on Soviet domestic resource allocations, this emerging situation threatens to have a more immediate impact on a fundamental premise of detente--the assumption that internal bloc economic ties with the West would be complements, rather than alternatives. (CEMA integration was, on the one hand, to be fostered by imports of advanced Western technology and equipment and, on the other hand, to generate improved products capable of export to the West.) Declining Soviet economic prospects thus undercut the economic pillar of detente and pose growing difficulties for Soviet foreign policy.

The Dialectic at Work

As always, however, the primary question for Soviet leaders is not what provides the basis for improved ties with the West, but what provides the basis for improved competition with the West. Military detente, which has largely superseded economic detente as the driving force

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behind the Soviet "peace offensive" in the past few years, may be valued in part for fostering economic and political benefits. But the primary virtue of continuing to strive to reduce tensions with the West must lie in the impact on the overall East-West balance--on the trend in the "correlation of forces"--of which such benefits are but a part and in which the military element looms large. The dilemma for the Soviets lies in mitigating the burden of the arms race, yet continuing to find grounds for claiming--and projecting--further gains vis-a-vis the West in the overall balance.

As long-term economic prospects dim, these two goals will become increasingly difficult to reconcile. Since the beginning of the detente era, the continuing Soviet military buildup has posed a latent danger--the prospect that the West might react by embarking upon major new military programs that would place greater strains on the faltering Soviet economy as it is called upon to respond with greater military production. Now, while the economic and technological benefits available from East-West ties may be declining, the potential gains from any slowing of the arms race are increasing as the reduced increment to Soviet economic growth becomes more difficult to allocate among competing claimants.

Nevertheless, there are reasons why the Soviets may believe the risks inherent in heightened military competition are well worth taking. First, such competition may be viewed as compensation for the increased frustration experienced in trying to overtake the West economically, frustration that may bring with it an erosion of Soviet political and ideological authority at home and abroad. Secondly, Soviet military power represents a major commitment of resources, and there may be increased temptation to try to draw foreign policy dividends from these past investments. As the economy slows, the relative attractiveness for Soviet leaders of arms sales and military support for client regimes or insurgent forces in the Third World is likely to grow as export earnings and the resources available for economic aid become more difficult to generate. Moreover, should economic dislocation and Social unrest within the bloc become serious threats because of oil shortages, such policies could increasingly be directed toward the securing of foreign oil supplies.

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A Hopeful Synthesis?

Yet resorting to a more assertive use of military power for immediate economic or political objectives would jeopardize the Soviets' remaining economic ties with the West and the Third World, thereby forcing an even more rapid retreat towards autarky. It would also probably trigger a costly boost in the arms race. Clearly a more far-sighted policy for Soviet leaders, in the face of the prospect of the USSR or the bloc becoming a net oil importer, would be to seek stability in the Middle East and a concerted East-West effort to assure fulfillment of the oil requirements of both sides. The feasibility of such a policy may be enhanced by the expectation that the West will also become increasingly dependent upon Arab oil by the 1980s and by a declining Soviet interest in higher oil prices as exports to the West fall.

But the cooperative route would also pose difficult problems for Soviet leaders. Having only recently been widely recognized as a military equal of the US, and still clearly feeling economically and technologically inferior in any great power or East-West comparison, the Soviets naturally see themselves as disadvantaged in the economic arena. Although Brezhnev clearly senses--as Khrushchev did--that expanded international economic ties and a gradual institutional involvement offer the basic long-term answer, a myriad of inhibitions arise in the short term. As economic performance slows, and particularly if the prospect of serious oil shortage looms, the feeling of economic inferiority will become more difficult to overcome.

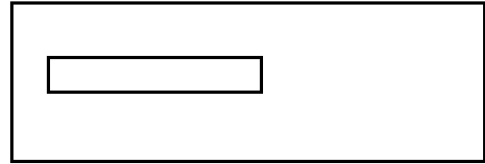
If compounded by a more limited prospect for economic benefits from East-West ties because of increasing Western resistance to the expansion of credit and cooperation, the autarkic pressures already enhanced in the bloc by the energy crisis could then spread more rapidly beyond the fuel and raw material sphere to that of more technology-intensive industries. This would further reduce the Soviet economic incentive for detente and hence whatever incentive now exists for responding favorably to Western political pressures. This could, in turn, facilitate a return to greater orthodoxy at home and perhaps to a more belligerent posture abroad.

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Whether the Soviets see greater competition or greater cooperation with the West as the primary answer to their mounting economic problems will depend not only on the nature and severity of these problems--and of course on leadership inclinations--but also on how the West is believed likely to respond. Western reactions to Soviet military involvement in Africa over the past couple of years may have provided them with some indication of how a competitive/aggressive policy would fare. On the other hand, two recent trends serve to test the prospects for a more cooperative approach; Soviet efforts to diversify their oil supplies by reaching beyond the radical clients favored in the past to include Iran, and Brezhnev's repeated calls for an East-West energy conference. For this second, cooperative approach to win final Soviet acceptance, however, the Soviet leaders would have to be willing to accept the likelihood of a relatively long stand-down in their drive to overtake the West until economic cooperation, perhaps accompanied by more effective arms control, has laid the groundwork for the future triumphs of "socialism."

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USSR: Changes in Education Policy Reflect Soviet Concern
for Labor Quality

The specter of a sharp slowdown in labor force growth in the 1980s has prompted Soviet leaders to revamp the vocational-technical education system in an effort to increase the quality of training for new entrants. Training workers on the job has proved to be unsatisfactory, and an effort is being made to formalize and extend vocational training and, at the same time, provide a greater proportion of new entrants into the labor force with a complete secondary education.

A resolution was adopted by the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers in September calling for further improvement and expansion of vocational and technical school training, particularly at the secondary level. The resolution stipulates that vocational-technical schools will be the major vehicle for training future workers. Compared with a current course of one to two years, the legislation provides for a three-year course of study for eighth-grade graduates in which students would be trained for an occupation and receive a secondary education as well. Also, one- to two-year vocational training courses for graduates of secondary schools (tenth grade) who will enter the labor force are to be established. Apparently, the regime is gambling that additional technical training will raise the productivity of new workers sufficiently to offset the decline in production the delay in their entering the labor force might cause.

During the current five-year-plan period, the Soviets are planning to train 11 million young workers in vocational-technical schools. In 1980, more than 80 percent of the future workers (compared to 28 percent in 1976) will be trained at secondary vocational-technical schools, according to A. Bulgakov, Chairman of the State Committee for Vocational and Technical Education. The new legislation also calls for the construction of schools, revision of curricula, training of more qualified teachers, and overhauling the certification procedures.

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Vocational-technical schools have long been the poor relative of the Soviet school system. These schools were attached to particular enterprises and ministries to train workers in occupations specifically for their parent enterprise. The Soviet press has reported regularly on the poor utilization of funds for vocational-technical school construction, outdated training equipment, inadequate educational and technical background of the teachers, lack of interest on the part of the sponsoring organizations, and low prestige in the eyes of the students. A further flaw in the vocational network has been the lack of participation by females. In 1966 women composed 50 percent of workers and employees in the economy and 18 percent of students in vocational schools. By 1977 the proportions had increased to 51 percent of workers and employees and 30 percent of enrollment. Currently, females are trained for only 580 of 1,200 professions in the vocational-technical system and 280 of 530 at the secondary-vocational level.

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