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*noted by W. OPS  
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ADDRESS  
BY  
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TO  
THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE  
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AREAS OF VULNERABILITY OF THE SOVIET BLOC

Any report dealing solely with the Soviet bloc weaknesses  
is one-sided and therefore must be taken with reserve.

True picture of the country's strength is a net balance  
between assets and liabilities.

If today I speak of Soviet liabilities, we must not forget  
that the Soviet is a very powerful nation, second greatest  
military and industrial power in the world, striving over the  
next decades to reach the first place, and possibly now first  
in certain areas of military power.

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Yet the Soviet Union like any other country has weaknesses.

Some of them are inherent and cannot be corrected. Some of them are short-term difficulties which are likely to be overcome.

Others are important only because they relate directly to the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States.

In this review I shall not attempt to distinguish among these types.

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I shall rather deal with weaknesses which arise from

(a) geography; (b) the political and social system of the Soviet

Union; (c) the international position of the Soviet Union;

(d) the industrial, agricultural, and general economic situation

in the Soviet Union; (e) its military situation; and (f) its ideology.

Finally, I shall mention a few other weaknesses that fall in no

particular category.

(A) Geographical

When it comes to defense, or for selected offense

against neighboring European or Asiatic targets the Soviet Union

is in a position of great strength. Furthermore, its great land

mass permits wide dispersion of vulnerable assets and secrecy

and security for those assets and for its striking force.

On the other hand, dealing with targets more distant from the USSR, such as the United States, Africa, and Latin America, the Soviet is at a certain disadvantage, though modern technology, missile and air transport somewhat mitigate this.

The Soviet has no military bases outside the Bloc. It does not even have thoroughly dependable centers of political strength, in which it can find a secure base for extending its influence in the neighborhood.

Our alliances and treaty relationships should give us such bases of action nearer to the USSR.

Also, for the time being at least, the great superiority in commercial shipping of the United States and its friends gives us advantages in overseas trade; but air transport is cutting down this advantage.

**(B) Social and Political**

**(1) Their internal political system.**

**Past history has taught us that dictatorships do not last indefinitely. Eventually they almost always degenerate, sometimes falling to a revolt of the people against them. Or they mellow and reform, and lose some of their initial aggressiveness.**

**It is true that modern weapons make the French Revolution type of popular upheaval somewhat outmoded. Dictatorships have endured for a long time if supported by the army. But there is in the long run likely to be a limitation on the willingness of troops to permit themselves to be used against the people.**

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We may well be in the evolutionary stage of the Soviet dictatorship. This may give it a new kind of strength over the long run, but it might lead to a loss of dynamic aggressiveness.

Today the Soviet system is becoming more vulnerable to popular pressures and the expectation of better things to come, which the Soviet people begin to feel they might have had earlier.

Even Khrushchev cannot totally disregard popular feelings and pressure of the evolution brought with education and with more and more foreign contacts.

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(2) We may ask whether the form of government of the Soviet is an inherent weakness.

The locus of power is of course in the Presidium and in the Party Secretariat.

In recent conversations some Soviet spokesmen have suggested that ultimate power really lay in the Central Committee rather than in the Presidium. They point to July 1957, when Khrushchev, though his opponents had a majority of 7 to 4 in the Presidium, purged Molotov, Malenkov, Kagonovich, etc., after a successful appeal to the Central Committee.

At the moment both the Presidium and the Central Committee are well packed with Khrushchev supporters.

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**But packed organizations sometimes change.**

**If Khrushchev should have a serious defeat in his foreign policy, in industry, or in agriculture, there might be trouble.**

**However, there is no clearly defined or institutionalized way of dealing with basic disagreement between the dictator and any disagreeing associates.**

**As long as the dictator can get away with it, the dissenters conform or disappear.**

**This may not be a weakness as long as it works -- but come the day the dictator does not get away with it, there is trouble and no clear way of settling it peacefully.**



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(3) The problem of dealing with the succession -- while technically in the hands of the presidium and Central Committee -- is a major inherent weakness.

Will Khrushchev's successor be determined, as after Stalin, by a period of so-called collective leadership and the emergence of the dictator? Will the Army come to play a role?

These are two question marks. Tradition is too short for established procedure.

However, Communist Party and its organs have strict discipline. Its relative restricted numbers -- some eight million out of over 140 million potential voters on a basis comparable to U.S.A. make it well-knit. The Party leaders realize importance of cohesive action to protect their control.

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One cannot reasonably predict that the Party will fall to pieces, organisationally or otherwise, if Khrushchev disappears.

(4) But what would happen if Khrushchev decided that the soft line was counterproductive; tried to reverse the present trend and returned to Stalinist type dictatorship?

Hard-boiled leaders in the Satellites -- Ulbricht, and Novotny, for example, would like this as they find the co-existence line dangerous for their own positions. The same is true of Mao and company in China. They have no use for the co-existence line.

The decision to return would face Khrushchev with serious dilemma and no evidence at the moment that he has any intention of doing it. It would probably not, however, result in a blowup in the USSR if done gradually. It would weaken Khrushchev's international position.

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(5) The dilemma of education. To compete with the U.S.A. and the Free World, they have stressed the development of their technology, industry and the sciences. This has led to a broad educational program throughout the Soviet Union.

While the emphasis has been in science and technology rather than on the liberal arts, and hence less dangerous from the ideological viewpoint, nevertheless education makes men and women think and makes them seek for more, even in broader fields than their particular areas of specialization. It makes them more interested in developments in the outside world. Over the years the Soviet has taught their people so much nonsense about the outside world that the coming of the truth to them may be a shock, and Khrushchev probably realizes this.

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Many years ago during the war when Wendell Wilkie visited Russia, he suggested that Stalin by educating his people, might be educating himself out of a job. Stalin laughed. Khrushchev may be pondering.

(6) With the loss of the old revolutionary dialecticians of Communist theory, the question arises whether some of the vim and vigor may be lost to the Communist movement. Ideological revolutions such as Communism purports to be, tend to lose their vigorous drive after they reach their initial objectives, and adherents become more interested in vested interests and in keeping an acquired position -- political, social, military, or material, rather than engaging in adventures.

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While Khrushchev makes a vast number of speeches, and his regime claims credit for a high degree of doctrinal creativeness, he is not personally distinguished as a dialectician. He is eminently a practical man. His most remarkable innovations have been in the organization of industry and agriculture. He proclaims that history will take care of the United States. As capitalism took care of feudalism so communism will take care of capitalism, and our grandchildren will all live in a communist society.

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To accomplish this he seems to rely not so much on the power of ideology as on military and industrial power, on demonstrations of the increasing strength of the Soviet Union, and on the old weapons of subversion. These latter in particular are being sharpened up a bit, in this hemisphere and in the untried areas of Central Africa.

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We may ask whether this is enough to keep alive  
a dialectic Communist drive on a world-wide basis.

Now to turn from the domestic to the Soviet international  
problems.

1. The Warsaw Pact countries.

Communist control in these countries is an asset in that  
it moves the real frontiers of the Soviet Union into the heart of Europe,  
thus protecting the Soviet homeland. The Kremlin knows, however,  
that these allies are unreliable.

They have had the setback of Hungary and another situation  
of this kind would be a serious setback for the USSR. Poland today is  
still a powder keg.

They haven't yet won over the people in the Satellites  
though they have made most progress in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia.

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They are not likely to really win them over to full and wholehearted cooperation in any time in the near future.

As I have said, many of the Satellite leaders fear the co-existence policy. The refugee flood from Eastern Germany to the West which reached 17,000 or more during the month of April, points up their weakness in this area.

## 2. Communist China.

(Expand orally, touching on fact that China still follows the hard line -- still in the days of Stalinism. Further USSR faced with the choice of helping China become strong, and this they fear, or of dragging their feet as regards military, nuclear and industrial aid, and thus incurring the displeasure of the Chinese.).

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The USSR must inherently fear a greatly strengthened state on the Mainland of China. Mao is irritated at his exclusion from Summit Meetings and is muddying the Soviet copybook of co-existence by his actions in Tibet, on the Indian frontier, and in Indonesia and elsewhere.

And Mao by his program of creating communes has irritated the Soviet leaders who propose to sell both domestically and abroad a much more restrained pattern of the ideal Communist state.

Mao has set himself up as a fountainhead of real Communist ideology. Khrushchev doesn't like it. In the last week or two the doctrinal controversy between Moscow and Peiping, as evidenced by Chinese writings and Soviet speeches, reached an unprecedented height. I believe there is some basic trouble here, though we must be careful not to overestimate its implications for the near future.



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3. Yugoslavia.

One of the most irritating areas to the Communist rulers is the demonstration that a country under Communist leadership can follow an independent line and still survive. Yugoslavia is creating a dangerous heresy. It is more dangerous to Moscow than is a state that has always been an outright enemy of the USSR.

4. By and large, Soviet policy over the last ten years has won few new allies. This is in contrast to the previous decade. It may represent a slowing down, and any slow down may be dangerous to a revolutionary state.

On balance, the only new territory gained by Communism since the takeover of Mainland China, has been North Vietnam. As against that, eastern Austria has become a part of the Free World.

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The latter has had bad effects on the satellite areas as evidenced by the Hungarian revolt, in part due to its contiguity with free East Austria.

In general, territorially the Soviet Bloc is no stronger than it was ten years ago.

The open threat in Greece and Azerbaijan and Korea was thwarted; the Berlin Blockade was ended. The Communist threat in Italy though still great is far less dramatic than it was twelve years ago.

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Obviously still many weak points but no immediate threat of territorial takeover. In the foreign policy area, Khrushchev's visit to India and Southeast Asia was basically a failure, indicating some recession of Soviet influence in these areas.

The future will tell how the Communist subversive program, spearheaded by the Soviets, of which we see evidences in Cuba and other parts of Latin America and in Central Africa, particularly in Guinea, Ethiopia and elsewhere, will work out.

5. MILITARY WEAKNESSES.

I have suggested at the outset that the Soviet geographic position, strong though it be for resisting attack for aggression against periphery states, and long-range missile attack, still has inherent in it a measure of weakness as regards launching limited attack against distant targets overseas. "Volunteers" were easily useable in Korea, Northern Vietnam and even if the necessity arose, in Greece, Iran and Turkey.

Despite the debate about our readiness for so-called "limited wars" it is unlikely that today the Soviet could do what we did in countries as distant as Lebanon, Korea, or Taiwan.

Hence, in many parts of the world, the Soviet has to choose between open war on the one hand; or political subversion on the other, as an instrument for changing controls in foreign countries.

For example, when the revolt took place in Iraq and the Soviet initially responded with economic and military aid, many expected to see the Soviet follow-up with certain aggressive military moves in support of a takeover.

The facts of the matter are that they have been extremely reserved and cautious in this area so near to their frontiers, but not contiguous, limiting themselves to economic and the military aid on a somewhat restricted and ineffective scale.

## 6. SOVIET ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY.

We see no immediately critical problems in the Soviet economy or industrial fields. In general, there is no immediate and serious shortage of basic raw materials.

But like all of us they have certain problems. At the moment due to the war losses and the great inefficiency of their use of agricultural manpower, there is a shortage of manpower for industry.

Today they have on their farms about six times as many workers as we do. Despite its far smaller agricultural labor force, the United States produces about one third more food than does the Soviet Union.

The manpower shortage is probably one of the reasons for their cutback in their military forces and for the fact that a large proportion of students reaching the age of 15 are now being sent to the assembly lines and will continue their education on a part-time basis in the evening.

The availability of essential raw materials will probably not impede the successful execution of the Soviet Seven-Year Plan, 1959 - 1965. There are, however, some raw materials problems.

To support the planned expansion of the steel and aluminum industries for example, the USSR must exploit leaner and more costly ores. In the case of the steel industry, it must process very expensive coal for the necessary metallurgical coke.

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Their cost of securing essential supplies of nickel and cobalt from indigenous sources would be considered prohibitive in the West. These costs, however, are offset by reduction in energy costs from the rapid expansion of oil and gas, improved efficiency in electric power production, and improved technology in the processing of ores to metals.

Only in the case of natural rubber and possibly copper is the USSR likely to be dependent on non-Bloc sources for the supply of an essential industrial raw material.

In this connection it is well to note that today they are using their raw materials sparingly insofar as consumer production and consumer goods are concerned and diverting them very largely to the national power segment of their economy. For example, they use a very modest amount of gasoline for the small number of passenger automobiles they produce.



The task of extracting riches from the frozen Tundra of the Far North is not appealing.

It is true that the Soviets are now paying serious attention to housing for the first time in their history. But the Soviets much-publicized civilian construction plans will not be completed until well after 1965. Even then the available living space, on a per capita basis, will still be only a small fraction of that now being enjoyed in the U. S., and for that matter, in Western Europe. Furthermore, the quality of construction is inadequate by our standards and even in the newest apartment house, the chances are that the plumbing will not work.

## 7. INDUSTRY

In industry, problems remain but they are centered around the need to increase efficiency and productivity rather than output alone. Khrushchev is still tinkering with his economic reorganization which went into effect in 1957 substituting a form of territorial control for vertical ministerial control of industry from the center in Moscow. The lack of a competitive market has resulted in lags in the introduction of new technology, in the continued use of high cost production facilities in many industries, and in a price structure for producers' goods which is virtually meaningless.

Khrushchev is aware of the need for reform. He has recently declared that plant managers in the Soviet Union will no longer receive substantial bonuses merely for the completion of the physical output called for in the various annual plans. Now these managers must show substantial improvement in the cost of production if they are to be rewarded by incentive bonuses.

We can expect to read about a good deal of new experiments in organization and management over the next few years as the Kremlin leaders grope for solutions to these problems.

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## 8. AGRICULTURE

Agriculture has been a perennial problem in the Soviet Union.

The resistance of the peasants to collectivization and the resultant liquidation of millions of peoples by Stalin is well known. While the Soviet concentrated on the development of industry in the years following WW II, agriculture was neglected; the inevitable result was that in the early 1950s that country ceased to be self-sufficient in food supply for the first time in history.

Khrushchev met this challenge by expansion of crop acreage into the so-called new lands area of Siberia and Kazakhstan. The growing of grain on the new lands is subject to great uncertainty. Frequently there is insufficient moisture to yield a satisfactory harvest, as happened in 1959.

The other major agricultural program was the introduction of corn. But remember that 80% of the Soviet Union lies north of the 50th parallel or Winnipeg, Manitoba. This means that much of the corn does not mature and must be cut in the green stage.

There is no counterpart in the Soviet Union to our own highly productive corn belt. The uncertainty of agricultural production even in the traditional growing areas of European USSR is showing up again this year. Winterkill and dust storms have caused severe damage to a crop in the North Caucasus and the Southern Ukraine.

A considerable part of the winter grain acreage in these areas must be re-seeded, and output on the remaining acreage is likely to be adversely affected. A continuation of this unfavorable spring weather could seriously delay planting and possibly could even result in an acreage reduction from the 1959 level in the affected areas.

**Factors of geography and climate will always make agricultural production in the Soviet Union much more risky and uncertain than either in the U. S. or Western Europe.**

**MISCELLANEOUS WEAKNESSES.**

- 1. No convertible currency. This restricts their trade dealings to barter type of operations. (But speed in affecting barter deals with underdeveloped nations, as contrasted with our redtape type deals, has created impact, though at times some of the goods delivered in barter have proved second rate.)**
  
- 2. Limited currency of Russian as a language of general communication as contrasted to English; the great lingua franca of the world.**

3. Shortage of adequately trained operatives for  
Kaznacheyev

many parts of world - (The testimony of ~~Kaznacheyev~~ as contrasted  
with the book, "Ugly American".) Many Soviet experts do not  
know foreign languages.

4. Soviet rulers lack of trust in their people.

This slowly changing but still exists.

5. Paucity of production in the field of the arts with

the exception of music. Lack in literature and poetry, painting,  
sculpture. Their ballet is great but it is still old fashioned and  
probably not as good as in the time of the old regime.

6. Existence of boredom and inadequate means of using their leisure.

See article by James Morris, distinguished British correspondent; writer for "Times" and "Manchester Guardian".

Washington Post - April 27:

"I hope it all comes true. I hope there is evolving a newly benevolent Russia, a mighty force for good in the world, freed of its old complexes and inhibitions. I hope the pundits are right, and with all my heart I wish the Russians well.

"But to be honest with you, I have my doubts. I felt all too strongly the haze of uncertainty that hangs above the Russian scene, the sense of hidden movements and unsuspected motives, the fog and queerness of it all. I went to Russia an ignorant, ill-read stranger, and ignorant, bewildered, half-convinced, irrevocably alien I remain."



7. Russia is an atheistic country and history has shown

that no country without a deep moral and religious purpose has  
ever survived long as great.

### CONCLUSION

Russia is a country of great contradictions; great technical  
skills; massive scientific achievements combined with great areas  
of backwardness; housing shortages and road shortages, transportation  
problems except for air transport. With great cities like Moscow  
and Leningrad and yet thousands of small villages which show little  
change over the past decade; great in industry, backward in  
agriculture; outstanding in music, sterile in the other arts; Russia  
is great in many things and shriveled in many others.

**In the contest for survival which is joined between the  
Free World and the world of International Communism -- the U. S.  
and the Soviet Union -- we must prepare to meet their elements  
of strength with equal or superior strength on our part -- and  
at the same time understand and know how to exploit peacefully  
but effectively the very great vulnerabilities of the Soviet Bloc.**