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Trends in Foreign Policy

I. Although we believe foreign policy was not a principal cause of Khrushchev's downfall, the end of his highly personal rule does have important implications for the conduct of future Soviet foreign relations.

A. A collective leadership tends to be more conservative and less venturesome, though this does not mean inactivity or an inability to make decisions.

1. During the coming months, and perhaps for a few years, internal Soviet politics are likely to influence foreign policy more than during Khrushchev's last years.

2. The present collective leadership appears to have no clearly dominant figure.

3. This process of group rule probably reduces the chances of aggressive Soviet action, but it also sets a limit on movement in the opposite direction -- movement toward concessions and agreements on major East-West issues.

B. Thus, the short-term outlook is for a continuation of the main lines of Soviet foreign policy since the Cuban missile crisis.

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C. Soviet economic problems will also put some check on an aggressive foreign policy, particularly in Europe.

D. The on-going conflict with Communist China will continue to have contradictory consequences for Soviet policy.

1. On the one hand, it is clear that the Soviets are not going to compete with the Chinese by adopting their extreme revolutionary militancy.

2. On the other hand, Chinese activity in Africa and Asia calls forth competitive Soviet efforts which clash with U. S. interests.

3. Soviets will stretch the concept of peaceful coexistence so as to permit them to pursue vehement anti-Western policies in the underdeveloped areas without paying a price in their direct relations with the West.

E. The competition with the Chinese continues to influence the Soviet public posture on Cuba and "revolutionary movements" in Latin America.

1. Although the new Soviet leaders have reaffirmed Khrushchev's pledge to support Castro,

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2. However, Cuban control of the SAM system and the continuation of U-2 flights form the ingredients of potential crises which Castro could provoke at any time.

3. But Castro himself has indicated that he will not use the SAM's against U.S. overflights until other means of terminating them are exhausted.

4. Castro was reported to have been shaken by Khrushchev's downfall, possibly because he has even less confidence in the new Soviet leaders.

5. This probably will reinforce Castro's caution toward bringing on a direct clash with the U.S.

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The Chinese challenge is likely to spur the Soviets to make more strenuous efforts to exploit anti-U.S. movements and political developments in Latin America.

1. USSR apparently has endorsed decisions by a recent conference of Latin American Communists in Havana calling for more organized and coordinated propaganda and tactics.
2. Main objective is to break Cuba's isolation within the Western Hemisphere and to combat continuing U.S. pressures against the Castro regime.
3. The Communists promised more active support for the Venezuelan revolutionary movement.
4. They also singled out "freedom fighters" in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Haiti as deserving Communist support.

B. However, this prospect of stronger Soviet verbal support for anti-U.S. movements in Latin America probably does not foreshadow important new Soviet political and economic commitments or acceptance of new risks of a clash with U. S. power.

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