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U.S. Soviet Relations-A Return to Reality

President Reagan's January 16 foreign policy address, followed one week later by a presidential report to the Congress that the Soviet Union has violated arms control agreements, marked a turning point in Soviet-American relations. The President's address was in response both to the complaints of the Soviet leadership and to the prophets of gloom and doom on both sides of the Atlantic. Leading the chorus of gloom, with expressions of bitterness and distress at the failure of their four year effort to halt the deployment of new Western missiles, the Soviet leadership broke off the Intermediate Nuclear Force talks at Geneva and refused to set a resumption date for the START talks on strategic nuclear weapons.

This interruption of the major arms control negotiations between East and West, following on the Soviet destruction of KAL Flight 007, was the final nail in the coffin of the policy of détente that began collapsing after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

Following the downing of the Korean airliner last September 1, relations between the superpowers perceptibly deteriorated. The Western response to the airliner incident was relatively restrained; for example, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko was refused permission to land at New York and subsequently chose not to attend the U.N. General Assembly session. But this and the President's strong denunciation of the Soviet action apparently was felt keenly in the Kremlin, which issued a counter-statement by Andropov attacking the United States. Soviet belligerence reached a new high as the Soviet press charged the U.S. with cynicism,

falsehoods and shameless deception. With the Soviets threatening to shoot down other planes that might stray over their territory, and continuing to encourage European opposition to the deployment of Western missiles, relations deteriorated further.

To these events must be added the novel appearance of senior Soviet military commanders as press conference briefers, the announcement of Soviet counter-deployments of missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and the disappearance for six months of Yuri Andropov, generating speculation about a power struggle in the Kremlin.

All this has combined to cause a considerable increase in anxiety in some sectors of the public and the media, both here and in Europe. The Soviets have tried to take full advantage of this anxiety with a massive public relations campaign portraying the Reagan Administration as leading the world toward war. After the action in Grenada and the deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe, the Soviet press raved about imperialist aggression, a new stage in the arms race, U.S. militaristic

policies upsetting the balance of power, and even the threat of war. The resulting uneasiness has led a number of Europeans to call for a return to détente, which is an article of faith for many on the continent.

These Europeans have found echoes in America from those who consider any arms control talks, no matter how unsuccessful, as mandatory rituals that somehow ensure peace between East and West. Critics of the administration have talked of a return to the Cold War and warned darkly of a

CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

The death of Soviet President Yuri Andropov underscores the main points made in this issue—that U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union requires national unity and constancy of purpose. The leadership of the Soviet Union does not change rapidly; those aging leaders who have been determining policy for the past year very likely will continue to do so. But both the U.S. and the Soviet Union now have a new opportunity.

It is an opportunity to offer the Soviet leadership a new beginning, a chance to improve relations regardless of past statements or actions by either side. The President has made clear his desire to find a formula to reduce armaments and to establish a better relationship. Just a month ago he offered to begin a new era in U.S.-Soviet relations based on peaceful competition and constructive cooperation. He has now repeated that offer to the Soviet leadership. This could be their opportunity to break with the past and begin to move away from the policies that produced an unprecedented military buildup and global adventurism. They could begin by returning to the START negotiations, by saying publicly that they will not attack civilian airliners in the future and by initiating the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan. Such moves would be in the mutual interest of both countries and world peace. More than ever, the U.S. must present an image of bipartisan resolve to the Soviet Union. If we do so and they seize the moment, it could be the beginning of a new and better relationship.

slide toward nuclear war. For example, Averell Harriman has written that we may be facing "the reality of nuclear war." Columnist Joseph Kraft blamed "Pentagon hawks" (rather than the Russians) for casting "a dark shadow" over the future. *The Washington Post* and others have predicted "a cold winter," while *Time* magazine in making Reagan and Andropov co-Men of the Year implied equal culpability for the deterioration in relations. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reflected the new mood by moving the hands of its doomsday clock (surely the most discontinuous timepiece in history), from four to three minutes before midnight.

The administration's critics have suggested that its commitment to rebuilding our military strength, together with its firm position both in the arms control talks and in deploying new missiles to Europe, are the causes of the Soviets' antagonistic attitude. In other words, it's all the U.S.'s fault. Their solution is for the President to make concessions to "restore the dialogue," and then begin moving back toward a policy of détente.

THE FAILURE OF DÉTENTE

Yet the evidence is clear that détente was a failure, at least for the West. It is interesting what the Soviets say about détente. The official Russian history entitled *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1980*, edited by no less than Andrei Gromyko, explains that "The policy of détente being pursued by the Soviet Union impedes the maneuvers of the aggressive forces of imperialism...". It is no wonder the men in the Kremlin like détente.

More important, détente harmed U.S. interests. Initiated early in the Nixon Administration to enlist Soviet cooperation in ending the Vietnam War, détente was the hope that a web of economic and social relationships could be developed between the West and the USSR that would provide more consumer goods for the Soviet people, create openings to a closed society and gradually modify the aggressive expansionism of the Soviet state. The key element of the policy was an improvement in economic ties between East and West. It was believed that these economic ties would become so important to Russian development that the Soviets would moderate their international behavior rather than risk losing them. Thus, it was a carrot and stick approach to dealing with the Soviets.

Economic incentives were the carrot and their withdrawal was to be the stick. But it failed to work that way from the beginning. The Soviets did not link their economic interests with their international military or political behavior. While the West held down military expenditures, the Soviets increased theirs. They saw détente as a means of neutralizing the West while they continued to stir up trouble to suit their own purposes in the third world. They supported foreign adventures in Angola, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and Central America, finally conducting a blatant invasion of Afghanistan, apparently without giving a second thought to jeopardizing their economic ties to the West. Nor did their economic relations deter them from suppressing the free trade union movement in Poland.

As it turned out, the ties that were supposed to constrain the Soviets instead deterred the West from taking firm action against Soviet aggression. When martial law was imposed in Poland, President Reagan's advisers convinced him to do nothing more meaningful than order the lighting of candles, sadly reminiscent of Jimmy Carter's refusal to light the national Christmas tree during the Iranian hostage crisis.

Yet the most significant failure of détente was in the military balance. Through the years of détente the Soviets methodically and systematically invested huge resources in

their military buildup, taking advantage of trade with the West and the transfer of advanced Western technology to develop strategic superiority and maintain it through an aggressive program of military modernization and growth. Part of that drive for strategic superiority was the development and deployment of 360 modern mobile SS-20 missiles, 248 of which presented a new and serious threat to Western Europe. It also included a dramatic increase in the number of Soviet warheads on their intercontinental missiles, together with improvements in accuracy. Soviet conventional forces, and particularly the Soviet navy, grew in strength far in excess of Soviet defense needs.

Growing Soviet military strength, combined with the ambivalent attitude of the Carter Administration toward U.S. allies and Soviet adventurism, enabled the Soviets to support military activities through surrogates around the globe. The fruits of détente, during which U.S. military power fell sharply vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, left the United States a helpless giant during the last years of the Carter Administration, unable or unwilling to defend U.S. global interests.

President Reagan promised to set all this right, offering the politics of optimism after four years of pessimism. He has accomplished much of what he set out to do and now proposes a new relationship with the Soviets based on the reality of restored American power, with a renewed economy and credible military strength, and a clear conception of the Soviet Union as a predatory imperialist power.

Based on realism, strength and dialogue, the new policy toward the USSR projects a credible deterrent, offers peaceful competition and proposes constructive cooperation. This new posture of firmness and commitment, combined with an offer of peaceful collaboration, must have come as a shock to the Soviet leadership. After investing immense resources in their quest for permanent military superiority, they now confront the reality that their goal cannot be attained. Their efforts to use arms control talks and international peace movements to prevent the deployment of modern missiles in Europe have failed. It is not surprising that they have suspended the START and INF talks and are searching for a new way to confront this unusual American president.

THERE IS A DIALOGUE

One of the most frequently heard criticisms is the need to "restore the dialogue" with the Soviet Union. This implies that there is no dialogue. On the contrary, we are dealing with the Soviet Union both bilaterally and multilaterally in a number of forums and on a number of issues, including arms control. Examples are:

- The hot line.* Despite the harsh rhetoric of recent months, Soviet and U.S. experts have been meeting quietly to discuss ways of further improving the hot line and other communications channels between the U.S. and the USSR.
- Nuclear proliferation.* The Soviets have continued a regular pace of discussions with the United States on ways to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, an issue that is clearly in the mutual interest of both nations.
- The CDE.* The 35-nation Conference on Disarmament in Europe now is meeting for a nine-week session in Stockholm to discuss European security issues. Despite the anti-American tone of his opening address, Gromyko said the Soviets would consider the Western proposals for improved confidence building measures in Europe.
- MFBR.* After refusing in December to set a date for the



Insiders Report

Tracking the Policy Process in Washington



A Time for Bipartisanship

With the full House and one-third of the Senate up for re-election in 1984 the temptation will be great to play politics with foreign policy issues. No one would suggest that the administration should have a free hand just because it is an election year, but an overly contentious debate on the basic elements of U.S.-Soviet policy, or a major effort to make sharp cuts in the defense modernization program, could only encourage the Soviets to continue their uncooperative attitude.

Just as the Soviets seek to exploit disagreements between the United States and its NATO allies, the appearance of policy differences between the administration and the Congress encourages them to try the same thing here. Addressing the need for unity in the Western alliance, Henry Kissinger stated recently in Brussels that "The West need not panic at a period of deadlock. Its economy for all its shortcomings is more vital; its governmental structure stabler and its overall power greater. The alliance can thus face a period of holding firm with confidence — provided it preserves its unity." Another former national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, calling the present state of U.S.-Soviet relations "quite normal" in view of the natural antagonisms of our differing political systems, added that the Soviets were making some headway at "pumping up artificially an atmosphere of crisis."

There is a need for Western unity in avoiding, as Brzezinski puts it "public hysteria," or to use Kissinger's phrase, a "desperate longing for a negotiating gimmick." Evidence of desperate longings in the Congress will only further encourage Soviet intransigence.

On occasion the Congress has pulled together to demonstrate a united front on issues relating to the Soviet Union. Recent examples were the 93-0 Senate vote asking the President to report on Soviet non-compliance with arms control agreements, the unanimous Senate resolution of last November calling for a ban on imports of Soviet products made by forced labor, the unanimous House resolution condemning the Soviet Union for shooting down KAL Flight 007, and the Senate resolution calling for aid to the Afghan freedom fighters that passed with 99 co-sponsors in late 1982. These are examples of congressional actions that send a clear and unambiguous signal to Moscow.

Unlike the Supreme Soviet, which approves the policies of the Soviet leadership without dissent, the Congress rarely achieves unanimity, thereby demonstrating its reflection of the diverse views of a democratic society. But a greater degree of support by the Congress for the basic elements of U.S. policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union would help move the Soviets toward a more cooperative attitude. The President's January 16 foreign policy address, setting forth the guiding principles of our approach to the Soviet Union as realism, strength and dialogue cannot be very contentious among Americans. It should be possible for Democrats and Republicans alike to reach general agreement on these basic principles of the U.S.-Soviet relationship, and to support the President's call for peaceful competition with the USSR.

THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR

Overhanging everything else is the uncertainty concerning the Soviet leadership following the death of Yuri Andropov. While Konstantin Chernenko has emerged as leader of a geriatric troika, it is difficult to predict how long this interim leadership will last.

The Soviets always have given great emphasis to collective leadership and the lengthy Brezhnev illness followed by the long Andropov disappearance has given them an opportunity to demonstrate how they can collectively keep their system operating. Despite speculation that the military or the KGB may be in the ascendancy, informed observers claim there is little hard evidence that either is the case. It is believed that the Communist Party continues to be the dominant political force in the USSR, operating through the Politburo and the party Secretariat. The four newest Politburo members all have economic or industrial backgrounds (two are electrical engineers), supporting the view that the leadership has been devoting primary attention to the country's chronic economic problems.

Considering the Soviet obsession with seniority, it is generally assumed that the Soviet Union has been operating for the past six months under a troika consisting of Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Konstantin Chernenko, who was widely considered a likely successor to Brezhnev. As the three most senior members of the Politburo (each has at least 53 years membership in the Communist Party), they are among the most powerful and well-entrenched members of the leadership. Until a new leader appears, this collective leadership of old party apparatchiks probably will continue to run things.

This does not mean that the U.S. should not try to improve relations. On the contrary, the Soviet leadership now has a rare opportunity to break with the past, to begin to establish a new relationship based on a recognition of the new reality of a stronger and more resolute America. The Soviets have tried mightily to establish strategic superiority at great cost to their economy and the well-being of their people. One estimate is that they spent half a trillion dollars on their strategic buildup, and their development of a nationwide anti-ballistic missile defense means many more billions in the years ahead.

Given the intransigence of the Soviet leadership, the likelihood of an improvement in relations is a long shot. Still, it is worth a try. Their emphasis on improving their economy, if combined with a recognition that the U.S. will not permit them to achieve strategic superiority, could encourage a move toward a new relationship. This may be the first chance in nearly 30 years for the Soviets to initiate basic changes. They have the opportunity to bury the Brezhnev/Andropov policies along with Andropov. President Reagan has offered dialogue and cooperation. If the Soviets perceive that his offer is backed by strength, unity and constancy of purpose, it could mark a new beginning.

résumption of the Vienna talks between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on the reduction of military forces in central Europe, the Soviets agreed in January to return to those talks on March 16.

- The CD.* The 40-nation Committee on Disarmament, which meets in Geneva under UN auspices, is now in session with U.S. and Soviet representatives actively participating in the discussions of both the chemical and radiological weapons working groups.
- Boundary talks.* The Soviet Union agreed in January to resume discussions with the U.S. to define the precise location of the 1867 boundary between Alaska and Siberia, to avoid possible friction over oil, mineral and fishing rights in the Bering Straits.
- The grain agreement.* The five-year U.S.-Soviet grain agreement signed last August shortly before the downing of KAL Flight 007 has survived the angry rhetoric and remains in effect.

Thus, there is a continuing dialogue with the Soviets on a number of issues. There is no shortage of channels for communication, either bilateral or multilateral, nor is there any lack of willingness on the part of the United States to engage in discussions.

SOVIET POSITION DETERIORATING

To the men in the Kremlin, the world posture of the Soviet Union must appear to be deteriorating. While the U.S. defense budget has not grown as rapidly as the Reagan Administration originally intended, there have been major improvements since the Carter years, when American power and influence reached its postwar nadir. Despite congressional reductions in the rate of increase in defense spending, the Administration is proceeding with the production and development of new weapons systems. After years of uncertainty and on-again, off-again appropriations, the B-1 bomber, the 10-warhead MX missile and the Trident II submarine missile are or soon will be in production, while research and development is proceeding on more advanced systems such as the stealth bomber and a new ballistic missile defense. The president has issued a report of Soviet violations of arms control treaties, which is likely to lead to an acceleration of our program to develop a strategic defense.

Even more disruptive to Soviet adventurism is the rapid buildup of the U.S. Navy. With the 600 ship navy moving toward reality, more than 100 ships are now under construction; the battleship *New Jersey* is operating in a combat environment off the Lebanese coast, three more battleships are being modernized and three nuclear carriers are under construction. As the number of deployable carrier battle groups increases from 12 to 15, together with four surface action groups centered around battleships, the Navy will be able to extend major complements of U.S. striking power around the globe.

The Soviets face this prospect of a significant U.S. military buildup as they review the shambles of their massive propaganda campaign to prevent the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles to Europe. For months the Soviets had warned the world of dire consequences if the deployment was not canceled. But as the missiles enter operational units, the main result seems to be apprehension on the part of the Russians' Eastern European allies. The persistent Soviet warnings^{5 3} followed by the installation of additional missiles of their own

in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, have caused considerable distress in Eastern Europe, posing new problems for the Soviets in their restive sphere of control.

These are only the most recent in a series of events that have put the Soviets on the defensive. Caught in a quagmire of their own making in Afghanistan, they have failed to achieve their goals in Africa, the Middle East or Latin America. Their proxies have been evicted from Jamaica by free elections, from Grenada by U.S. power and from Surinam and Ethiopia by the local governments. The European political parties most amenable to Soviet pressure were defeated overwhelmingly by the voters of Britain, Germany and Italy. A strongly pro-Western government in Japan is increasing its defense spending.

Faced with American resolve, growing U.S. military and economic strength, and the continued unity of the Western alliance, the Soviets have realized no foreign policy or military successes, unless the continued uneasy subjugation of the Polish people can be called a success, since the Reagan Administration came to office.

CONCLUSION

It is ironic that American success and growing Soviet failure are seen by some as a problem and a danger. We have become so inured to Soviet advances that it requires an adjustment in our thinking to realize that America is now leading the tide of events and the Soviet Union is reacting to them. Yet a hallmark of the Soviet system has been its constancy of purpose, while we have all too often wavered in our resolve. The challenge for the year ahead is for America to remain steady, to continue the military renewal that has been started, to reject Soviet threats and efforts at intimidation, and to devote the necessary resources to the rapid development of modern weapons systems such as a strategic defense for North America, that will assure our security and that of the free world in the coming decades.

The Soviets are determined to divide the Western alliance. Their state-controlled propaganda machine has now been turned from its effort to stop the NATO missile deployments to a new focus on a greater challenge—to divide Europe from America. Every statement by the Soviet leadership, and the outpourings of *TASS* and *Pravda*, appear designed for this purpose. Gromyko's harsh attacks on the U.S. are warnings to the Europeans. And when Soviet belligerence brings forth calls for appeasement, either from Europe or from within America, our adversaries are encouraged to redouble their efforts. While no one is attracted to the Soviet system for its democratic ideals, many fear Soviet power and are tempted to make concessions to it.

The U.S. stands ready to return at any time to the START and INF talks, but it must be from a position of tough-minded reality. The protection of U.S. security interests requires simpler and less ambiguous agreements, with ironclad verification provisions and a pre-determined U.S. compliance policy that is understood and agreed upon within the government, as a prerequisite of any new treaty with the Soviets.

Despite the potential divisiveness of the presidential and congressional election campaigns, we must not permit our relations with the Soviets, or our basic national security policies, to become partisan political issues this election year. Most Americans can agree on that, even though they may disagree on the details of those policies. Only if we demonstrate unity and constancy of purpose, both here at home and within the Western alliance, will the Soviets accept the new reality of relations with a strong and resolute America.



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