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"Great Debate": Soviet Views on Nuclear Strat. & Arms Cont. SR IR 75-11

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# Intelligence Report

*The 'Great Debate': Soviet Views on  
Nuclear Strategy and Arms Control*

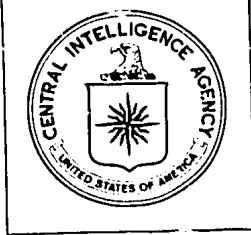
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## The 'Great Debate': Soviet Views on Nuclear Strategy and Arms Control

### Key Findings

From mid-1973 to late 1974 a debate was conducted in the Soviet press concerning the nature of nuclear war and the significance of strategic military power—a debate that appeared to mask more practical concerns about defense and arms control policy. The rhetoric was similar to disputes in the fifties between Malenkov and his opponents, and to those of the mid-sixties at the outset of the Soviet ICBM buildup. During the 1973-74 debate:

- One group, political commentators associated mainly with the USA Institute in Moscow, stressed the futility of strategic arms competition, the economic benefits of arms control, the declining political value of military power, and the emptiness of any concept of "victory" in nuclear war.
- The second group, military writers affiliated with the Main Political Directorate of the Armed Forces, stressed the need for vigilance despite detente, the continuing political utility of military power, and the belief that "victory" in nuclear war remains possible.

The controversy over strategic doctrine in an era of political detente suggests uncertainty, possibly disagreement, in higher councils over Soviet strategic force objectives for the future.

- The assertions of military spokesmen imply an anxiety that detente and arms control negotiations may adversely affect Soviet defense policy, particularly strategic force posture.
- The arguments of the political analysts suggest a greater willingness among some segments of the Soviet elite to accept negotiated arms control agreements, and imply some movement toward the concept of mutual assured destruction as the key to strategic sufficiency.
- Although Soviet leaders have avoided clear identification with either group, General Secretary Brezhnev has made statements that reflect the arguments of the political commentators, whereas Marshal Grechko's remarks closely resemble the positions of the military writers. It is unlikely, however, that the civilian-versus-military lineup of the public dispute accurately reflects debates among the leadership over defense policy and related doctrinal matters. Brezhnev and Grechko, in fact, are closely tied politically and probably share common views on defense policy.
- Rather, the debate suggests the existence of doubts or reservations behind the working consensus of the Soviet political and military leadership on questions of defense and arms control policy.
- The subsidence of the public debate prior to the Vladivostok Summit and the military's approval of that meeting suggest that the practical defense policy questions underlying the doctrinal issues have been compromised, probably to the satisfaction of the military.

The debate may indicate that some Soviet decisionmakers are concerned about the effects current Soviet force modernization programs could have on SALT and hence on the future of detente. As long as the Soviets seek to pursue both detente with the West and steadily improving strategic force capabilities, it is likely that the Soviet doctrinal dispute over the nature of nuclear war will persist and reappear in public.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
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INTELLIGENCE REPORT

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Introduction

The Soviet press, from mid-1973 to late 1974, carried a series of disputatious articles on how the USSR should view the possibility of nuclear war and on the significance of strategic military power. The debate was generally articulated below the highest levels and was often cloaked in ideological terms. It implied not only awareness of the challenge of detente to Communist orthodoxy, but also disagreement within the Soviet elite over the correct military policy to be pursued as an adjunct of detente diplomacy.

The two groupings most prominently involved in the exchange were commentators associated with the USA Institute of the Academy of Sciences and military writers affiliated with the Main Political Directorate (MPD) of the Armed Forces. The military ideologues used Marxist-Leninist formulations to take a skeptical line on arms control and SALT-related issues, which the other group tended to view more favorably. The debate thus assumed a civilian-versus-military complexion despite the lack of any evidence that such

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a clear-cut division of views exists within the Soviet leadership.

The same ideological issues--probably masking very practical concerns about defense and arms-control policy--had been the subject of a similar dispute in the period 1965-67 at the outset of the Soviet ICBM buildup. The recent debate is also reminiscent of the disputes between Malenkov and his opponents in the fifties, although in the recent debate the arguments of the moderates--the political commentators--were more intensely and more frequently presented in the open press.

These parallels, along with the timing of the recent debate, suggest that the issues reflect higher level policy disputes on defense posture. The USA Institute commentators, some with high-level Party connections, stressed the futility of arms competition, the economic benefits of arms control, the declining political value of military power to both sides, and the emptiness of any concept of "victory" in nuclear war. The military writers stressed the need for vigilance despite detente, the political value of military power, and the belief that "victory" in nuclear war remains possible. On at least one occasion, the military ideologues openly polemicized with the first group, accusing them of dangerous and heretical views.

Soviet Politburo members have, by and large, avoided clear identification with either side of the debate. Party General Secretary Brezhnev has made statements that resonate with the "softer" side of the argument, but he nevertheless continues to speak of the need for a strong defense. Defense Minister Grechko's arguments have at times resembled the for-

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mulations used by the military writers, but he has counterbalanced the heavy emphasis he places on the need for a strong defense with his personal endorsement of Brezhnev's detente policies.

There is no reliable way of measuring the degree to which the recent polemic represented high-level differences over strategic policy. Soviet commentary on strategic questions is often intended for the benefit of foreign audiences, and writers for the USA Institute are particularly attentive to what elite audiences in the West would like to hear. The debate recently observed in the Soviet press may have been encouraged to create a false image of "soft-liners" embattled by "hard-liners" in the Soviet leadership, an image that may have tactical utility for Moscow in negotiations but rarely describes the true complexities of Soviet decisionmaking. The debate probably was not a pure contrivance, however, because the issue of how to deal with strategic nuclear power is a real and pressing one for the Soviet regime--one on which believing Marxist-Leninists can reasonably differ.

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The Khrushchev Years

After Stalin's death, the realities of the strategic environment--its new nuclear dimension--impressed upon the Soviet leadership the need to update traditional Leninist-Stalinist doctrine on the nature and consequences of modern war. Malenkov, Stalin's successor for a time as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, observed in a speech on 12 March 1954 that, "with the existence of modern means of destruction," a new world war would mean the "destruction of world civilization."

Malenkov's statement, even though repudiated by the leadership following his ouster, reflected the reasoning that eventually led to a sweeping shift in Soviet doctrine on the inevitability of war with the so-called imperialist camp. Khrushchev, once firmly in power, deemed it safe to assert that because of the developing favorable shift in the correlation of forces a major war was no longer "fatalistically inevitable." This change in view was partly prompted, he claimed, by his realization that nuclear war would entail unprecedented suffering for all mankind.\*

Khrushchev's explicit revision of Leninist-Stalinist dogma on the inevitability of war with the West became a focal point of Sino-Soviet polemics in the early sixties. The Chinese attacked the Soviets for their failure

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\* Malenkov apparently believed that a "minimum deterrence" strategy could assure peace and thus free the scarce resources needed to improve the Soviet standard of living. Malenkov's rivals, allied with Khrushchev, had at first contended that a new world war would lead to a Soviet victory, a position rationalizing a more elaborate and more expensive military establishment because it implied the development of war-fighting and war-winning capabilities. After Malenkov's removal in 1955, Khrushchev decided that the USSR's interests could best be advanced by deemphasizing its general-purpose forces in favor of strategic nuclear missiles, while increasing resource allocations to consumer-oriented programs.

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to develop a more aggressive international policy and for having revised the accepted Marxist norms on the relationship between war and politics. They were especially provoked at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in the fall of 1962 by the decision of the Soviets, in acquiescence to US demands, to dismantle their missiles on the island. The Soviets, in turn accused the Chinese of opting for world war while the USSR was allegedly committed to a policy which would avoid Armageddon but would ensure the victory of the Communist side. In the aftermath of the Cuban crisis Khrushchev himself asked rhetorically:

Who would be left...after a nuclear war?...do the authors of these assertions know that if all available nuclear charges were detonated, this would produce such a contamination of the Earth's atmosphere that no one knows what plight the survivors would find themselves in--whether they would not envy the dead?\*

The Chinese retorted by eschewing revisionism, claiming:

In the opinion of Soviet leaders the emergence of nuclear weapons has changed everything....[They mean] that after the emergence of nuclear weapons war is no longer a continuation of politics, there is no longer any difference between just and unjust wars....This is the philosophy of willing slaves.\*\*

The Chinese accusation that Soviet doctrine no longer distinguished between just and unjust wars would appear to be simple hyperbole. There was, however, more substance to the charge that the Soviets had abandoned Lenin's teaching on war as a continuation of politics, which Lenin had adopted from the 19th century Prussian military philosopher Karl von Clausewitz.

\* *Pravda*, 20 July 1963.

\*\* Official Chinese statement, Peking Radio in English, 31 August 1963.

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War is the continuation of politics by other (especially forcible) means.

This celebrated dictum belongs to one of the deepest writers on military affairs, Clausewitz. Marxists have always justly considered this position as the theoretical basis of their views on the meaning of any given war.

V. I. Lenin, *Socialism and War*, 1915

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Soviet commentators, in their eagerness to buttress Khrushchev's doctrinal shifts, produced some extreme formulations. One commentator, Boris Dmitriyev, for instance, reconstructed Lenin's dictum to read: "War can only be a continuation of madness." He warned that:

...in the fire of thermonuclear war, if it is not prevented, whole countries and whole continents will be consumed. If such a war should break out, nuclear bombs and deadly radiation will spare no one--neither in major cities, nor in the jungles, nor in the mountains. Under such conditions war cannot be a continuation of politics....\*

While all Soviet writers embraced Khrushchev's revision of the "inevitability of war" thesis, some like Dmitriyev went further. Dmitriyev's views seemed to bridge the gap from the noninevitability of world war to the conclusion that nuclear war would mean the destruction of civilization and hence would be devoid of any political utility.

Dmitriyev's arguments conflicted with the traditional views of the armed forces on the political utility of war. Nevertheless, the military's support appears to have been successfully enlisted in the

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\* "Brass Hats: Peking and Clausewitz," *Izvestiya*, 25 September 1963.

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Political aims are the end and war is the means, and the means can never be conceived without the end.

Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

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common ideological campaign to refute Chinese attacks. The military's contribution consisted of a series of resolute restatements of the continuing Soviet commitment to Marxist-Leninist theory and the rejoinder that the "aggressive forces of imperialism" remain extraordinarily powerful, even though Soviet forces are strong enough to deter an attack. The military's rebuttal of the Chinese position revealed the philosophic distance still separating its own formulations from those advanced by propagandists for Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence tactic. The Soviet-Chinese dialogue gave the military a framework with which to attempt a restructuring of official public doctrine on nuclear war. Military writers came to grips with such questions as (1) the extent to which nuclear war can be regarded as a rational continuation of politics, (2) whether this type of war has any political utility, and (3) who if anyone would be victorious in this ultimate encounter.

A *Red Star* article by military philosopher Col. P. Trifonenkov challenged the Chinese assertion that the traditional Leninist dictum on war had been exorcised from Soviet doctrine.\* He wrote: "The principle that war is a continuation of policy by forceful means has never been disputed by any Marxist-Leninist and cannot be disputed." Trifonenkov then reiterated Khrushchev's "revisionist" hypothesis that the shift in the correlation of forces had made it possible to avert a new world war.

In December 1963 Marshal Sergey Biryuzov, chief of the General Staff, joined the growing Sino-Soviet dialogue on war and politics.\*\* Refuting Chinese accusations of doctrinal infidelity, Biryuzov stated that the Leninist definition must not be "interpreted dogmatically." Biryuzov advanced the principle that nuclear war would be a continuation of policy but of

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\* "War and Policy," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 October 1963.

\*\* "Politics and Nuclear Weapons," *Izvestiya*, 11 December 1963.

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War is not only a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political transactions, an accomplishment of these by different means. That which then remains peculiar to war relates only to the peculiar nature of its means.

Clausewitz, *On War*

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a policy which would be "rash and senseless"---a characterization which could not by definition apply to Soviet policy. "Mankind faces a dilemma," Biryuzov warned, "either to avoid a new world war or to find itself in a position whose consequences are difficult to foresee in full."

Biryuzov seemed to lean more toward a Pyrrhic interpretation of the outcome of nuclear war. Trifonenkov, in attacking the Chinese position, had adopted an even less sanguine position than that taken by Biryuzov. In reexamining the Cuban missile crisis he postulated a nonnegotiated ending in which the result would have been "a world in ruins to the advantage of no one."

Both Biryuzov and Trifonenkov stressed the need to prevent a world war. "The more powerful our armed forces are and the better they are equipped," Biryuzov emphasized, "the more reliable they will be as guarantors of lasting world peace." Thus, he cast the *raison d'etre* of the military in terms of deterrence and the prevention of war.

Maj. Gen. N. Sushko and Maj. T. Kondratkov, writing in *Communist of the Armed Forces*, theoretical journal of the Main Political Directorate, distinguished between war as a *continuation* of politics and war as an *instrument* (purposely selected) of policy.\* The validity of the former was reaffirmed, while the latter formulation was called into question with the warning that nuclear weapons had "made war an exceptionally dangerous and risky tool of policy."

Khrushchev's revision of a number of Marxist-Leninist tenets forced the Soviet military establish-

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\* "War and Politics in the 'Nuclear Age'," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 2, January 1964.

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ment to update those ideological canons that provided the theoretical underpinnings for many of its traditional positions. It seems likely that, in rallying to the defense of Lenin's dictum, the military understood the stakes were higher than pure doctrine. The military appears to have knowingly engaged the Chinese in debate while trying to restructure its own positions to the demands of the nuclear age--this in a manner which would support its institutional preferences on defense posture.

The resulting military pronouncements had all the outward appearances of sustaining Khrushchev in his position on the future of East-West relations. The military adhered to the position that a new world war was not inevitable. It continued to interpret nuclear war as a continuation of politics, with the qualifying caveat that war was now severely limited as an instrument of policy. And there was a tentative movement by several military writers to describe surviving a nuclear war as a Pyrrhic victory. By coming up with a doctrinal position supportive of Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence policy, the military, in fact, produced a series of arguments which ultimately were used to justify its own preferences on the Soviet military effort.

The debates of the fifties and early sixties clearly had overriding political motives--first in Khrushchev's struggles against Malenkov, and later in his polemics with Peking. But at the core of both debates remained the enduring problem: how to reconcile the demand--imposed by traditional strategy and communist ideology--for the ability to win an all-out war with the great cost and probable futility of attempting to acquire that ability.

#### The 1965-1967 Dispute

One of the influential military theoreticians while Khrushchev was in power was Nikolay Talenskiy, a retired major general who had become associated with

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the Institute of Marxist-Leninist History. He was a highly visible spokesman for Khrushchev's views on deterrence and peaceful coexistence and played a significant role in shaking off the restraints imposed by Stalin upon Soviet strategic thinking. He became a regular participant in the Pugwash conferences on science and world affairs and authored several articles which supported Khrushchev's thesis on the total unacceptability of nuclear war. Clearly, Talenskiy articulated policy views on these matters which clashed directly with the positions commonly voiced by spokesmen for the Ministry of Defense.

Early in the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime, when it was still unclear how vigorously Khrushchev's successors intended to improve the Soviet Union's strategic posture, Talenskiy reasserted his Khrushchevian position on the political futility of modern war:

In our days there is no more dangerous illusion than the idea that thermonuclear war can still serve as an instrument of politics, that it is possible to achieve political aims by using nuclear weapons and at the same time survive, that it is possible to find acceptable forms of nuclear war.\*

Within a year Talenskiy was explicitly criticized on the pages of *Communist of the Armed Forces* and *Red Star* for his assertion that nuclear war would mean suicide.

The first to attack him was Lt. Col. Ye. I. Rybkin, a faculty member of the Lenin Military Political Academy who specialized in Marxist-Leninist interpretations of the nature of war. Writing in *Communist of the Armed Forces*, Rybkin criticized Talenskiy by name and warned that "to maintain that victory in nuclear war is in general impossible would be not only untrue theoretically but dangerous from a political point of view.\*\*"

\* "The Late War: Some Reflections," *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'*, No. 5, May 1965.

\*\* "On the Nature of Nuclear Rocket War," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 17, September 1965.

Victory, according to Rybkin and the other military philosophers who have discussed the problem, presupposes "vigilance," a term with clear ideological and morale implications that can also serve to justify demands for military expenditures.

Despite the esoteric nature of the arguments presented, concrete policy appeared to have been at issue. The same month that Rybkin's article was published, *Red Star* came out with an article by Col. I. Sidelnikov, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, that strongly suggested the linkage between the criticisms of Talenskiy raised by Rybkin and the more practical policy considerations which concerned the military writers.\* Sidelnikov warned that some people were ignoring "the serious danger of a world war," created by "imperialist military adventures," and consequently were asking the misguided question: "Is it necessary to maintain large armies and spend large amounts on the maintenance of armed forces?"

Sidelnikov warned that peace could not be preserved unless the Soviet state continued to "spend large amounts on the equipment and maintenance of the army and navy," so as to "firmly preserve military superiority over the imperialist countries." If war should become a reality, such resolute peacetime planning would then "become one of the decisive factors for the utter defeat of the imperialist aggressors." By emphasizing the "imperialist" threat and alluding to the possibility of victory in a "world war" the

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\* "V. I. Lenin on the Class Approach in Determining the Nature of Wars," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 September 1965. Sidelnikov buttressed his attack on "minimum deterrence" and troop reduction with appropriate citations from Lenin:

The very best army, one most loyal to the cause of the revolution, will be immediately routed by the enemy unless it is satisfactorily armed, supplied with provisions, and trained. (*Polnoye Sobraniye*, Vol. 35, p. 408)

He who has greater reserves, more sources of power, more staying power in the thick of the fray will win in a war. (Vol. 39, p. 327)



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War must be conducted realistically or it should not be conducted at all. There is no middle ground.

V. I. Lenin, March 1918

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military philosophers implicitly voiced their disapproval of any concept of a minimal or deterrence-only posture and signaled their preferences for war-fighting military capabilities.

Ten months later Talenskiy was attacked by still another military officer specializing in ideological matters. In a *Red Star* article, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Col. I. A. Grudinin repeated Rybkin's challenge to Talenskiy, noting:

...such an assertion [Talenskiy's point that nuclear war would be suicidal] is not only in error, but it is harmful because it can shake one's assurance in our victory over the aggressor and the consciousness of the necessity to be ready at any moment for armed struggle with the use of nuclear rocket weapons.\*

Along with the essential question of the possibility of victory in nuclear war, both Rybkin and Grudinin affirmed the continuing validity of an updated version of the Clausewitzian dictum that war is a continuation of politics--i.e. that nuclear war could arise from political causes and can be successfully waged for political ends.

In January 1967 an authoritative *Red Star* editorial upheld the views of Rybkin, Grudinin, and Sidelnikov on the Communist world's inevitable victory in a nuclear war. The victory formulation was presented in an abstract fashion that has since been adopted on a number of occasions:

Should the imperialists dare to unleash a world nuclear war, the peoples will no longer tolerate

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\* "On the Question of the Essence of War," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 12 July 1966.

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a regime which pushed them into devastating wars.  
The peoples will crush and bury imperialism.\*

Also confirmed were Rybkin and Grudin's view that nuclear war, like conventional war, would still be a continuation of politics even though its usefulness as an *instrument* for the implementation of policy had become severely limited.

The publication of the January 1967 *Red Star* editorial seemed to bring to an end, at least for a time, the debate on the "nature of nuclear war." The logic of the official line appeared to be:

-- Nuclear war, like all previous wars, would be the "continuation of politics by violent means"; that is, it would arise out of political causes--foremost among them the immutably aggressive nature of imperialism--and it has to be thought about and planned for with a view toward a politically useful outcome, not the mutual destruction of the opponents.

-- The politically meaningful outcome that Soviet military planning should strive for is the victory of the USSR and its allies no matter how extensive the damage suffered.

-- It is therefore necessary, whatever the impediments, to strive for a military posture--based especially on strategic nuclear capabilities, both offensive and defensive--that has the greatest prospect of achieving some form of victory in nuclear war, and to assert, as an article of faith, that military deficiencies on the Communist side would be offset by the political collapse of the Western world in a nuclear conflict.

These military authorities were clearly arguing for overall expansion of Soviet strategic and other

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\* "Theory, Politics, Ideology on the Essence of War," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 January 1967. Khrushchev on occasion used this same formulation, which falls short of an explicit claim that the USSR would defeat the US in a nuclear war. In the recent debate, Rear Adm. Shelyag again evoked the "people's" initiative. (See "Two World Outlooks--Two Views on War," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 February 1974.)

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military capabilities, and rejecting any notion that Soviet strategic efforts could be limited to acquiring a minimum deterrent that would only punish an aggressor but not defeat him.

How Soviet political leaders viewed this doctrinal matter is not altogether clear. They obviously approved the Soviet buildup of strategic arms that began about 1965. No doubt some of them endorsed the doctrinal views promulgated in Soviet military organs. Others may not have, but took the view that a massive strategic buildup was necessary to provide a reliable well-over-minimum deterrent within an overall strategic posture that was quantitatively competitive with that of US forces and politically sufficient to the needs of a great power. The humiliation of the Cuban crisis and the buildup of US strategic forces in the early sixties lent urgency to this requirement, quite independent of doctrinal rationalizations.

In any case, the debate over the "essence of nuclear war" did not entirely disappear. In March 1968 the journal *Problems of Philosophy* carried an article by A. I. Krylov, claiming that mankind was being confronted by the choice between survival or extinction.\* Krylov cited such luminaries as Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Alexey Kosygin, Soviet philosopher P. N. Fedoseyev, Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti, and American scientist Linus Pauling, on the suicidal nature of nuclear war. The leading powers, Krylov warned, had already accumulated enough nuclear weapons to "annihilate the population of the Earth." Military strategy, Krylov emphasized, would have to be subordinated to a "political strategy of preventing a world thermonuclear catastrophe."

The only known response to Krylov's assertions appeared in the restricted version of *Military Thought*.\*\*

\* "October and the Strategy of Peace," *Voprosy Filosofii*, No. 3, March 1968.

\*\* The Question of the Sociological Aspect of the Struggle Against the Forces of Aggression and War," *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No. 9, September 1968. This publication is a limited-circulation journal for commissioned officers of the Soviet armed forces.

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Maj. Gen. K. Bochkarev attacked Krylov's "death of civilization" thesis point by point. Bochkarev argued that Krylov's position was riddled with inconsistencies and that official adoption of his interpretation of nuclear war as a mutual suicide pact would make it impossible to prepare a meaningful strategy for victory. This "no victor" thesis would, it was claimed, undermine efforts to raise the military's combat readiness and its morale. Although Bochkarev posited a future nuclear war as mankind's "greatest tragedy" he firmly denied that it would be an "absolute catastrophe."

Bochkarev proffered the opinion that the outcome of a nuclear war would depend on the ability of the combatants to utilize the findings of their respective scientific and technical communities during peacetime to "improve the means of mass destruction as well as to work out procedures, methods, and means for protection against them, and to paralyze the destructive effects of these means on the human organism." Imperialism and not socialism would disappear in the abyss of nuclear war. Despite such optimism, Bochkarev assured his readers that this Soviet position in no way represented a preference for war over peace. On the contrary, the possibility that the Soviets could completely and decisively defeat "the military machine of the imperialist states" served to bolster Soviet efforts to avoid a nuclear war.

Krylov and Bochkarev produced two of the more obvious arguments over the pros and cons of a deterrence-only doctrine. Krylov seemed to be arguing in favor of some variant of minimal deterrence and was perhaps making an early case for detente and arms negotiations with the West, while Bochkarev opted for the development of a war-winning capability. The appearance of Krylov's article more than three years after Khrushchev's removal testifies to the tenacity of the issues in dispute. It probably is related in some way to the doctrinal sorting-out that had to take place as Soviet leaders deliberated on the prospect of SALT negotiations with the US. Those sharing Krylov's view surely welcomed the coming negotiations. Those of Maj. Gen. Bochkarev's persuasion may or may not have resisted them, but they were clearly concerned that Soviet doctrine on nuclear war remain intact during the pursuit of detente with the US.

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Soviet public commentary over the next seven years was free of similar debate over defense policy, although occasional sniping did occur. Not until 1973 did Soviet doctrine on nuclear war again become a contentious topic in the press.

### The Debate Since 1973

A May 1973 *Red Star* article by Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Maj. Gen. A. Milovidov contained a hint that the ideological issues addressed in the earlier debate were again becoming contentious. This article was followed by a series of exchanges between military and civilian authors on the nature and consequences of nuclear war. Espousing the military's more hawkish stance once again were the doctors of philosophical sciences of the Main Political Directorate, including three of the participants in the previous debate.\* Opposing them in place of the deceased Talenskiy was a group of political analysts, who for the most part had some connection with the USA Institute in Moscow--some reportedly enjoying ties to the top Soviet political leadership.

In the recent controversy, the political analysts have argued that nuclear war is not winnable since it would mean virtual suicide for all participants. They have also alluded to the spiraling costs of maintaining and improving a nuclear arsenal that is no longer a viable means of implementing policy. The military philosophers have refuted such arguments on the suicidal nature of nuclear war and the possible destruction of civilization, insisting that they are based upon oversimplified mathematical analyses. In their view, war--whether nuclear or conventional--remains the continuation of politics and the Soviet state must maintain its vigilance if it is to be suc-

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\* An important motivational factor for the MPD writers is their traditional concern with troop morale and combat readiness. This concern alone, however, cannot fully explain their participation in a debate in which they appear to be acting as spokesmen for the military establishment.

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cessful in waging a thermonuclear war, which the "aggressive imperialists" may yet unleash. The rhetoric of the recent debate is similar to that of earlier disputes, but the positions of the political analysts were argued more intensely and appeared more frequently in the open press than in the past.

### The "Quantifiers" Under Attack

In the recent debate, as in 1965, signs began to appear in the Soviet press that the military philosophers' concept of victory in nuclear war was again under attack. Maj. Gen. A. Milovidov, a long-time faculty member of the Lenin Military-Political Academy, citadel of the army's political control cadres, warned in *Red Star* that certain Soviet authors had failed to adopt a correct approach to "the question of the essence and consequences of a nuclear war."\*

Singled out for criticism were the "quantifiers" who had "absolutized the quantitative analysis and arithmetical calculation of the destructive power of nuclear weapons." Milovidov maintained that the "quantifiers" had failed to adopt a dialectical approach to the study of war. He suggested that this deficiency made them unable to see the continuing possibilities for victory in a nuclear war.

In February 1974, Rear Adm. V. V. Shelyag, a member of the editorial board of *Communist of the*

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\* "A Philosophical Analysis of Military Thought," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 May 1973. Milovidov participated in the last debate in 1965, although he did not appear to be as heavily involved in the public discourse as were some of the other participants. See "The Class Character of the Ideological Struggle and Its Aggravation," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 December 1965, in which Milovidov stated:

...victory in nuclear rocket war can be won by people who are strong as never before not only in weaponry and combat equipment, but also in moral spirit and communist consciousness.

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*Armed Forces* and deputy chief of the Lenin Military Political Academy, also dismissed the arithmetical approach of the "quantifiers." Shelyag, like Milovidov, holds a Doctor of Philosophical Sciences degree, the hallmark of the military ideologues. According to Shelyag, the arguments of the "quantifiers" were based solely upon mathematical calculations which had led them to the "oversimplified" conclusion that there would be "no victors in a nuclear war."\*

G. A. Arbatov, director of the USA Institute, has espoused arguments similar to those of the "quantifiers" opposed by Milovidov and Shelyag. In an article which appeared in *Problems of Peace and Socialism* in early 1974, he noted that the nuclear stockpiles had so expanded that there were now "several thousand tons of explosives in TNT equivalent for every person living on Earth."\*\* It was increasingly obvious, according to Arbatov, that nuclear might was "becoming progressively less usable as a political weapon."

#### Nuclear War as Suicide

The military philosophers have charged that the simplistic approach of the "quantifiers" not only fails to recognize the possibilities of victory, but has also led to other faulty conclusions. Rear Adm. Shelyag complained that only because of the quantifiers' simplistic mathematical approach to the study of the consequences of nuclear war was it made to appear "that all mankind really could be destroyed."

Openly associating himself with the conclusion that nuclear war would result in the destruction of civilization was Aleksandr Bovin, an *Izvestiya* political

\* "Two World Outlooks--Two Views on War," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 February 1974.

\*\* "The Impasse of the Policy of Force," *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*, No. 2, February 1974 (signed to press 9 January 1974). Arbatov, who has sought whenever possible to convey the impression that he is Brezhnev's personal confidant, has on a number of occasions been called upon to analyze events in the US for the Central Committee.

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observer and also a member of the editorial board of the USA Institute journal, *USA Economics, Politics, and Ideology*. Bovin reportedly has had ties to the Central Committee as an adviser to General Secretary Brezhnev. In the summer of 1973 Bovin wrote:

...in this clash of two world views...lies the heart of the great historical argument, the historical contest which in the 20th century pervades everything--economics, politics, and ideology. To try to settle that argument in the cataclysm of a world thermonuclear war would be suicidal....\*

A month later Arbatov, during an interview on Hungarian television, reiterated this theme, noting that the "prevention of nuclear war equally serves the interests of the United States and the USSR, since nuclear war would be suicide to both."\*\*

The next month, *Izvestiya* carried an article by Bovin in which he again attacked the proposition that victory in nuclear war was possible. Bovin claimed that "any attempt to accelerate the solution of the dispute between capitalism and socialism by military means would bring inestimable misfortunes to mankind. The aggressor would be crushed. But at what cost?""\*\*

Echoing Arbatov's and Bovin's comments on the futility of nuclear war, V. G. Dolgin, an official of the Party Central Committee apparatus, argued in a January 1974 article, that victory was unlikely in nuclear war.\*\*\*\* Dolgin warned that the massive stockpiling of nuclear weapons had made "the solution of conflicts through military means unpromising." The unimpeded growth of weapon systems had exceeded all

\* "Internationalism and Coexistence," *New Times*, No. 30, July 1973.

\*\* Budapest Domestic Television Service in Hungarian, 5 August 1973, 1830 GMT.

\*\*\* "Peace and Social Progress," *Izvestiya*, 11 September 1973.

\*\*\*\* "Peaceful Coexistence and the Factors Contributing to Its Intensification and Development," *Voprosy Filosofii*, No. 1, January 1974.

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rational limits, since "in the final account" it would not really make any difference if "one, several, or a number of nuclear systems" would "undermine the conditions for the existence of mankind." Dolgin's statements clearly implied a threat to the military priorities in resource allocations.

The "Quantifiers" Attack Military Expenditures

Opponents of the "victory is possible" thesis have often alluded to the economic benefits that would accrue from cutbacks in military expenditures. Although the implications are veiled, it appears that their remarks are intended as much for Soviet as for American audiences. Arbatov in the October 1973 edition of the USA Institute's journal claimed that vast expenditures on defense in the US have created economic problems that are reflected on the domestic scene.\* Arbatov claimed that enormous expenditures in the military sphere have resulted in:

...the diversion of effort and resources from growing domestic problems and this when the same scientific and technical revolution had led to their exacerbation and also generated many new problems such as atmospheric pollution, growing urbanization, and others. The example of the United States is highly indicative in this respect....[Emphasis added.]

Following Arbatov's lead, G. A. Trofimenko, a civilian analyst of military affairs with the USA Institute, noted that limitation and reduction of strategic armaments would enable both the USSR and the United States "to dispose of bigger resources more freely in solving their own domestic problems."\*\*

\* "US Foreign Policy and the Scientific and Technical Revolution," *SSha Ekonomika, Politika, i Ideologiya*, No. 10, October 1973 (signed to press 12 September 1973).

\*\* "The USSR and the United States: Peaceful Coexistence as the Norm of Mutual Relations," *SSha Ekonomika, Politika, i Ideologiya*, No. 2, February 1974 (signed to press 11 January 1974).

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From a Marxist point of view, it is necessary in each separate case, for each war especially, to define its political content.

But how is the political content of war defined? Any war is only the continuation of politics....

V. I. Lenin, Letter to Boris Souvarine, 1916

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### Nuclear War as a Continuation of Politics

A central issue in the recent debate (as in the 1965-1967 dispute) appears to be the continuing validity of a contemporized version of the Clausewitzian dictum that nuclear war, like conventional war, is a continuation of politics. The political writers have been careful not to mount a direct assault on this tenet, because Lenin's endorsement had made the Clausewitzian formula sacrosanct. Arbatov, however, went farther than any other contributor to the recent exchange in questioning the tenet's validity under thermonuclear conditions. Arbatov stated:

...in the words of the well-known military theorist Clausewitz, it can be said that with the emergence of nuclear missiles "any correspondence between the political ends of war" and the means was lost since no policy can have the objective of destroying the enemy at the cost of complete self-annihilation....\*

G. A. Trofimenko demonstrated that selected quotations from Clausewitz's works, like those from Marx and Engels, can be marshaled to support several contradictory theses.\*\* Trofimenko noted that Clause-

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\* "The Impasse of the Policy of Force," *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*, No. 2, February 1974 (signed to press 9 January 1974).

\*\* "The USSR and the United States: Peaceful Coexistence as the Norm of Mutual Relations," *SShA Ekonomika, Politika, i Ideologiya*, No. 2, February 1974 (signed to press 11 January 1974).

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witz had warned that "when politics becomes more ambitious and powerful, then war, too, will also become such and this growth could run to such lengths that war acquires its own absolute aspect (*On War*, Vol. 2)."

Sidelnikov and Rybkin, two of the participants from the last debate, in 1965, came forward once again to articulate the military's traditional position on this question. Col. Sidelnikov, a deputy chief editor of *Red Star*, noted that "military theorists and publicists" were "now returning" to an examination of the implications that nuclear weapons have for the Leninist formula of war as a continuation of politics.\* "Many of them," he observed, "connect their interpretation of this problem with the relaxation of tension and the Soviet-US agreement on preventing nuclear war." Sidelnikov warned:

...the appearance of any weapon, including nuclear weapons, exerts tremendous influence on the methods and forms of warfare. But no weapon can change the political essence of war. It has been and remains a continuation of the policy of the state and classes by violent means.... [Emphasis added.]

Rybkin, who since the previous debate had become a full colonel and had received the Doctor of Philosophical Sciences degree, criticized certain "bourgeois ideologists" who adhered to the "pacifist formula" that nuclear war had "ceased to be an extension of politics."\*\* Erroneous conclusions, Rybkin asserted, were not limited to bourgeois writers but were also appearing in the Soviet press. In a significant move, Rybkin cited A. Bovin by name as one whose views reflected such faulty judgment.

...A. Bovin at the same time makes a notable methodological mistake. Criticizing the well-known

\* "Peaceful Coexistence and the People's Security," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 14 August 1973.

\*\* "The Leninist Conception of Contemporary War," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 20, October 1973 (signed to press 4 October 1973).

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War is nothing else than a continuation of political transactions intermingled with different means. We say intermingled with different means in order to state at the same time that these political transactions are not stopped by the war itself, are not changed into something totally different, but substantially continue whatever the means applied may be.

Clausewitz, *On War*

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Clausewitz formula, the author in a number of his publications for some reason does not mention a single word about the Marxist-Leninist definition of war as an extension of politics and makes no attempt at a scientific analysis of the essence of war.

Rybkin implied that Bovin's unscientific analyses would increase the likelihood of war. Nuclear weapons have not, according to Rybkin, invalidated the axiom that "nuclear war, if the imperialists were to unleash one, would be an extension of politics." Such assertions are "unscientific and can lead to a weakening of class and defensive vigilance and to a reduction in activity in the struggle for peace against the policy of war."

Both Rybkin and Sidelnikov emphasized the necessity of being prepared to wage nuclear war despite the realization that it could mean "the death of hundreds of millions of people." Sidelnikov warned that "as long as the aggressive forces of imperialism ...continue to exist, the need for readiness to wage war with the use of any means of armed struggle will remain."\* Rybkin claimed that it was still too early to "announce the limitation of the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons in case the aggressor unleashed a war."\*\*

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\* "Peaceful Coexistence and the People's Security," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 14 August 1973.

\*\* "The Leninist Conception of Contemporary War," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 20, October 1973 (signed to press 4 October 1973).

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### Bovin Responds

Bovin's latest public response to the military ideologues appeared in the journal of the Soviet Young Communist League.\* Far more than any commentator to date, Bovin spoke to the substantive issues which probably have threatened the policy preferences of the military. He reaffirmed his stand on the suicidal nature of nuclear missile war but noted that "the political figures of the capitalist states" are "acting realistically" on the problems of "how to preserve life." Bovin noted that if peaceful coexistence is to be more than just an empty phrase "each side understands (or should understand) that in order to receive something, it must give up something."

References to the suicidal nature of nuclear war and the need "to give up something" are telltale formulations. Coupled with previous statements made by the USA Institute figures on the growing political impotence of military power and Bovin's own reference to "stockpiles of nuclear weapons," it would appear that these publicists were trying to suggest the need for restraint in the arms programs of the USSR as well as the US.

### The Leadership Speaks

Since Khrushchev's ouster, the Soviet political leadership has adopted an evasive public line on the nature and consequences of nuclear war. This apparently reflects a realization that the demands of Soviet strategic doctrine during the fifties and early sixties far outdistanced the USSR's capabilities for the conduct of nuclear war. The top leaders have appeared to stop short of direct comment on the utility of war in the modern era as if they were waiting for their country's capabilities to catch up with its doctrine.

Brezhnev through the years has acknowledged that nuclear weapons "might bring destruction to hundreds

\* "Politics: Class and Socialists," *Molodoy Kommunist*, No. 4, April 1974 (signed to press 4 April 1974).

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of millions of people and entire countries and might contaminate the Earth's surface and atmosphere." He has nevertheless reassured his Soviet listeners that any aggressor who initiates "a rocket nuclear attack" on the Soviet Union will receive "an annihilating retaliatory blow."

Kosygin over the past decade has been more emphatic about the catastrophic effects of a new world war and, as noted earlier, was cited for this view in 1968 by A. I. Krylov. Kosygin has warned that a nuclear war would represent "a considerable setback for all mankind," that "the fates of nations are inseparable one from the other," that "Europe would not survive this catastrophe," and that nuclear war would "threaten all of humanity."

For the most part, however, Politburo members have avoided clear identification with either side of the current polemic on nuclear war. Brezhnev has made statements that resonate with the "softer" side of the argument, but he still speaks consistently on the need for a strong defense. At one point in his speech on 21 July 1974 to the Polish Sejm (legislature), he appeared to take direct issue with those debaters who propose to ensure Soviet security by continuing the arms competition. He adopted a formulation that clearly was intended to appeal to those who have warned that military might alone will no longer ensure political results. In doing so, he coupled a strong defense of the previous June's Moscow Summit with a candid justification of Soviet arms control diplomacy. Brezhnev did, however, note that "the threat of war" is not an illusion and that the USSR and its allies would draw "the appropriate conclusions from this."

The General Secretary attacked the time-worn notion that security is best guaranteed by the precept, "if you want peace, be ready for war." In warning against the consequences of this approach, Brezhnev used arguments akin to those recently advanced by debaters urging restraint in military programs:

In our nuclear age this formula conceals particular danger. Man dies only once. However, in recent

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years such a mass of weapons has already been stockpiled to make it possible to destroy every living thing on Earth several times. If you want peace, conduct a policy of peace and fight for that policy.

On previous occasions, when similar arguments have appeared, the military writers have dismissed the authors of such statements as simplistic "quantifiers."

References in the Soviet press to the more controversial arms control themes of Brezhnev's Warsaw address (published in *Pravda* and *Red Star*) have been infrequent. Military writers have virtually ignored Brezhnev's assertion that mankind's security can no longer be guaranteed by unlimited stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Instead, they have focused on an earlier passage in which he emphasized the continuing possibility that war might still erupt, detente notwithstanding.\* Brezhnev's report to the Polish Sejm is the closest he has come to adopting publicly the rhetoric of debaters pressing doctrinal arguments for arms control.

Minister of Defense Marshal A. A. Grechko, whose interests are implicitly at stake in this debate, noted in an article in *Kommunist*, the authoritative Party journal, that "Lenin's tenet on the essence of war as the continuation of politics by violent means is to this very day the key to the correct understanding of the sociopolitical content of past and present wars."\*\* On such issues as the possibility for victory in nuclear war and the continuing danger of being "underarmed," Grechko's position has resembled the more esoteric formulations of the military ideologues.

\* For this approach see "In the Interests of People's Security" (editorial), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 31 July 1974; Colonel I. Rostunov, "Lessons of History," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 31 July 1974; Col. P. Derevyanko, "The Bloody Crime of Imperialism," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 1 September 1974; Lt. Gen. G. Popov, "Vigilance Is Our Weapon," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 18, September 1974 (signed to press 3 September 1974).

\*\* "V. I. Lenin and the Soviet State's Armed Forces," *Kommunist*, No. 3, March 1974 (signed to press 18 February 1974). The article marked Soviet Armed Forces Day.

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In the *Kommunist* article, he repeated the standard military treatment of the possibility of victory.

Irrespective of the sophistication of the combat hardware or the destructive properties of the weapons, in the final analysis victory in war utilizing these weapons can only be won by people with high morale and great military skill...

He also quoted Lenin on the dangers of being "under-armed, under-supplied with food, or under-trained."\*

Five days later, in a Red Army Day article in *Pravda*, Grechko abridged this warning with an old caveat which had not appeared in the *Kommunist* article; namely that "Our Army and Navy now have everything necessary to rout any aggressor."\*\*

Grechko's reference to the need for being "adequately armed," was repeated a month later in an extensive article whose dominant theme was the central role of the Party in building the armed forces and thereby defending the Soviet State.\*\*\*

### The Election Speeches

In speeches preceding the 1974 Supreme Soviet election, Soviet leaders again alluded to the issues involved in the debate over nuclear war doctrine.

Brezhnev stressed the need for further progress in the negotiations on arms limitation. He assured his audience that Soviet leaders are firmly in favor

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\* This is precisely the same quotation from Lenin, noted above, that was used by Sidelnikov back in 1965. See *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 September 1965.

\*\* "On Guard of Peace and Socialism", *Pravda*, 23 February 1974.

\*\*\* The Leading Role of the CPSU in Building the Army of a Developed Socialist Society," *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, No. 5, May 1974 (signed to press 24 April 1974). Grechko again cites Lenin on the dangers of not being "adequately armed, supplied with food, and trained."

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of supplementing political detente with military detente. He explained that Moscow has not yet succeeded because of the opposition of certain circles in the US, but added that the Soviet-US agreements of 1972 and 1973 have set the two powers on the right path. Brezhnev appeared to address both his own critics as well as certain Westerners when he referred to "the supporters of the arms race" who believe that reducing arms means taking a risk. He argued that there is immeasurably more risk in continuing the unrestrained accumulation of arms.

Kosygin voiced his agreement. He may well have had Soviet opponents of arms control in mind when he spoke of some in the West who "believe that increased military expenditures can be accommodated amid a policy of detente." "Such a policy," Kosygin stated, will "increase the danger of war and result in unending waste of mankind's strength and resources." The Soviet Premier said that "the USSR resolutely rejects such an approach" and noted that the Soviet Union "is reliably protected by our armed forces."

Podgorny, however, advanced a perceptibly different assessment of Soviet defense needs--one which clearly favored the military side of the ongoing debate. Since Western "militarists" are pressing their governments for increased arms expenditures, he asserted, the Soviet Union must "take appropriate measures to strengthen our country's defense capability."

Grechko, too, in the available excerpts from his election speech, displayed reservations concerning arms limitations. He warned that "imperialism is even now preparing for war" and that "the danger of war remains a grim reality of our times." Grechko argued that Soviet defenses must therefore remain prepared not only for the most likely course of events but for "unexpected shifts" as well.

In arguing that defense planning must be based on worst case assumptions and not simply on the most probable course of events, Grechko repeated warnings that Army General A. Yepishev had given in

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May.\* Yepishev, head of the Main Political Directorate of the Armed Forces, in an article keyed to the 29th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War II, argued that history has shown that "one must take into account not only the most probable course of events but also...possible unexpected reversals..."

Yepishev also observed that detente might lead some to wonder if "such attention to preparation of the population for armed defense of the fatherland is necessary." In response, Yepishev argued that "such views are radically wrong." In support of his position he cited Lenin on the need to accompany "our steps toward peace" with the "intensification of our entire military preparedness."

#### Kulikov--A Cap to the Debate

Just before the Vladivostok Summit of November 1974, Army General V. Kulikov, chief of the General Staff and First Deputy Minister of Defense, authored a review in *Pravda* of a recently published collection of writings by a former Soviet chief of staff, B. M. Shaposhnikov.\*\* Kulikov singled out Shaposhnikov's chief work, *The Army's Brain*, a study of the General Staff which first appeared in the twenties, noting that "this work may serve even today as an example for researchers." The appearance of the book review in *Pravda* rather than the military press, and Kulikov's reference to "researchers," imply that his message was meant for both groups of debaters--the political analysts and the military philosophers.

Kulikov stressed the subordination of military strategy to policy and the party's leadership of the

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\* "Education in the Heroic Traditions of the Soviet People," *Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1974 (signed to press 13 May 1974).

\*\* "The Army's Brain," *Pravda*, 13 November 1974.

armed forces, while at the same time emphasizing the General Staff's role in framing solutions to military problems. The review then went on to reaffirm "the Leninist understanding of the essence of war as a continuation of policy," the fact that "the arms race has not yet been halted," and finally that "the CPSU Central Committee and the leading organs of our state continue to devote unremitting attention to strengthening the might of the socialist motherland."

The timing of the Kulikov book review, some ten days before the Vladivostok Summit and after a six-month hiatus in the sharp public exchanges associated with this debate, implies that the practical defense policy questions involved in the debate had been resolved. Kulikov's explicit approval of the state's handling of military affairs--including decisions on "the composition and structure of the armed forces, troop training, the provision of military equipment, and the choice of the methods and forms of waging war"--implies that the debate was settled on terms that the military found satisfactory. The treatment in the military press of the results of the Vladivostok meeting suggests that the accord reached there had not invalidated defense policy decisions made beforehand.

#### Implications

The evidence of divergent views on major strategic and arms control matters which has appeared in the Soviet press has failed to provide specific information on future Soviet strategic goals. Nevertheless, the debate implicitly, and at times explicitly, indicates dispute over strategic doctrine in an era of political detente. This suggests the existence of higher level disagreement, or at least indecision, over Soviet future strategic force objectives.

The assertions of military spokesmen imply concern over the effects detente and arms-control negotiations

will have on Soviet defense posture, particularly strategic force posture. The arguments of the USA Institute analysts suggest a greater willingness to accept negotiated arms control agreements and imply movement among some segments of the Soviet polity toward the concept of mutual assured destruction as the key to strategic sufficiency.\* These Soviet disputants probably are not privy to high-level discussions on strategic matters but the expression of divergent views which have at times taken the form of open polemics would not be possible without some higher level approval. Discussions of the continuing validity of the Clausewitz dictum and the winnability of nuclear war seem Aesopian to Westerners but are the medium by which the Soviets publicly discuss strategic doctrine.

It is clear that, since Khrushchev's fall, the Soviet political leadership and the military have maintained a working consensus on both defense and foreign policy. The 'great debate' since 1965 suggests no more than the existence of strain or reservations, with different attitudes trying to pull the consensus in different directions. The Institute spokesmen clearly seem to be lobbying for more maneuvering room in detente and arms control policy. The military ideologues clearly are concerned, at a minimum, that traditional doctrinal proprieties be safeguarded and, at a maximum, that a vigorous Soviet arms program be the necessary price of detente.

Published evidence itself does not substantiate the inference that the 'great debate' has simply pitted military versus civilian political leaders. On the contrary, the inner debates over defense policy and related doctrinal matters probably cross institutional lines. And positions taken may be somewhat opportun-

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\* See M.A. Milshteyn and L.S. Semeyko, "The Problem of the Inadmissibility of a Nuclear Conflict," *SSha Ekonomika, Politika, i Ideologiya*, No. 11, November 1974 (signed to press 10 October 1974). The authors, two USA Institute analysts who are former military officers, imply that mutual assured destruction is an acceptable starting point for further arms control negotiations.

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istic. For example, some senior Soviet military leaders probably accept the evaluation that "nuclear war would mean suicide" as a reasonable characterization of the present balance of strategic nuclear forces. But they may welcome the preservation of traditional doctrine because it supports their claims on resources and keeps their future options open. Senior political leaders may be personally indifferent to arcane disputes over the "nature of nuclear war" but alert--as they always must be in the Soviet context--to the practical implications of symbolic language. Conservative figures would welcome preservation of traditional strategic doctrine because it tends to reinforce orthodox political ideology and values. More flexible, though not necessarily more liberal, leaders might promote some revision of strategic doctrine both for increased latitude in defense and foreign policy and to catalyze change in other areas--for example, in economic management or cultural policy.

Evidence of a dispute in the central press, including *Isvestiya*, *Kommunist*, *Red Star*, and *Communist of the Armed Forces*, suggests that despite the controversial nature of these arguments Soviet editors have, for whatever reason, been instructed to allow them to appear. The possibility exists that the debate is part of an effort to convince US policymakers that concessions on SALT matters will strengthen the position of Soviet moderates. Traditional Soviet concern with political indoctrination in the armed forces would, in any case, necessitate a response by military theorists that would dispel any adverse collateral effects such a political strategem might have on morale and "vigilance."

The military ideologues continue to adhere to doctrinal formulations of the early sixties which were premised on the contention that, with the proper preparations, the Soviet Union could be victorious in a nuclear war. This indicates that Soviet strategic doctrine is even now built around the proposition that, should deterrence fail, the prior development of war-fighting and war-winning capabilities will prove meaningful in both a political and military sense.

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The revisionist arguments of the Institute analysts are now more prevalent than ever before. However, it cannot be determined whether this indicates that the tacit support offered by more powerful members of the Soviet hierarchy is commensurately greater than in the past.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks may have the effect of disrupting the compartmentation of knowledge on strategic matters in the USSR. Detente and SALT have certainly opened up areas of discussion previously closed to Institute analysts and Ministry of Foreign Affairs specialists. The complexity of SALT activity places a high priority on the development of knowledgeable specialists capable of responding to the difficult questions that are raised. The degree of access these specialists have to Soviet decisionmakers and their role, if any, in the decisionmaking process are unclear.

It is likely that the Politburo has reached a consensus on the deployment of the current or fourth generation of Soviet ICBMs and other programs for the next five years, but unlikely that longer term force modernization decisions have been made conclusively. The arguments that have appeared may relate to long-term strategic developments or perhaps indicate that some Soviet decisionmakers are concerned about the effects current force modernization programs will have on SALT and hence on the future of detente. In any case, as long as the Soviets seek to pursue both detente with the West and steadily improving strategic force capabilities, it is likely that the Soviet debate over the nature and consequences of nuclear war will persist and reappear in public. It should continue to provide some insight into the attitudes prevailing among the Soviet elite.

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