

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

7 February 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NIO's

FROM : David Y. McManis
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

SUBJECT : An Alternative View of Soviet-American
Relations in 1984

1. The most recent issue of the New York Review of Books has an article by Seweryn Bialer of Columbia University entitled, "Danger in Moscow." I recommend this article as an alternative view of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1984 and ask for your thoughts.

2. Professor Bialer supports U.S. policy initiatives under President Reagan but, after visiting Moscow three times since Andropov came to power, he wonders if the administration appreciates that the mood in Moscow is one of either anger at the official level, or war hysteria at the level of the average Muscovite. Anti-American propaganda in the USSR is reminiscent of the Stalin era and even internationally minded scholars are publishing virulent anti-U.S. "counterpropaganda." As a consequence, the Soviet Union may seek to reassert its greatness at home and abroad. Soviet officials at all levels are responding intensely to real or imagined slights from Washington because they genuinely believe that the administration does not see the USSR as a global power. They have come to expect the worst from this administration and, in fact, do not foresee any reduction in American military spending if the Democrats win the presidency in 1984. Bialer says that Soviet leaders have been hurt by the rhetoric of the U.S. government and may have decided that any attempt to improve relations with Reagan would be futile. Therefore, they regard the 1984 U.S. presidential elections as the major problem confronting Soviet foreign policy.

3. Bialer writes that the Soviets are well aware of their vulnerability with a weak economy, unstable relations with China, and the drain of resources caused by their allies around the world. Andropov's illness, while disquieting to the Soviets, has mysteriously produced more loyalty rather than dissension on the part of Soviet leaders, possibly because of an intense feeling of patriotism in the face of the American challenge. All of this

does not necessarily lead to a cautious Soviet foreign policy, says Bialer, but it might provoke a greater willingness by the Soviets to take risks out of fear that the USSR is not being taken seriously enough by the U.S. government. While on the surface Moscow may appear to be on the defensive, Soviet leaders may be seeking an opportunity somewhere in the world to assert Soviet power.

4. Bialer concludes by stating that Soviet leaders may believe that the correlation of forces in international affairs may now be tilted toward the United States, but they will not be content to let them stay that way. Bialer thinks that the United States must soften its rhetoric and acknowledge its strong position in international affairs by seeking to reduce tensions and seek a genuine peace. Otherwise, a serious confrontation could result that neither side really wants.



David Y. McManis

Attachment:
Article

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