

SOVIET STRATEGY AND U.S. COUNTER-STRATEGY

B
Pur by
"Author"
file

An intense--at times bitter--debate rages today with regard to U.S. national strategy; the course which American policies will pursue around the world in the years ahead. As the argumentation develops, it exposes deep divisions both within and without the Government itself. Those schisms encompass everything from net assessment of the threat confronting our nation to the strategy necessary to counter that threat...and the military force levels required to implement the chosen strategy. Within the U.S. Government this effort--sired by Presidential Review Memorandum No. 10; "PRIM Ten," as it is referred to in Washington's oral shorthand--is supposed to solve the new President's problems centering on national security. But professional military planners in the Armed Services were dismayed to learn that the study was to be undertaken simultaneously on two tracks: one group--headed by Professor Samuel P. Huntington-- essayed a net assessment of the threat to which the United States is currently exposed and what the future might hold; concurrently, a second group--this one headed by Dr. Lynn Davis, late of the Carter Transition Team and now ensconced in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Planning--set about devising national strategies and military force levels. When this modus operandi was revealed by the new team, the question immediately posed along the corridors and around the rings of the Pentagon must be considered a fair one: How can proper

strategies and supporting military force levels be determined ...when the threat which must be overcome has not yet been postulated? The answer, of course, is that they cannot. Thus, the inference which clearly follows: some other determinant must govern the exercise; perhaps the budget. Those who have spent most of their lives planning and executing the defense of the United States, know a far better way to solve American national security problems.

First, one defines U.S. national aims and objectives. Then an assessment is made of perceived threats which might preclude achievement of these objectives. Once this information is at hand--and understood--it is then possible to devise a range of strategies, each designed to achieve the defined goals in the face of the expected opposition. Finally, one can then determine military force levels necessary to execute the selected strategy. And, if the determined level of force proves not politically or fiscally supportable, if some lesser capability is elected by the governmental leaders, the planners can then estimate the national risk which must be assumed. Only with this kind of logical analysis can the nation's leaders--specifically, the President--make a sound decision as to the course the nation will follow. In this particular treatise, the latter--more rational--approach will be employed.

My opening premise is that, insofar as the United States is concerned, the Soviet Union is clearly our main antagonist. If the menace posed by the U.S.S.R. is adequately analyzed,

sound strategies are devised to cope with that menace, and the requisite forces are then fielded, the nation will be fully prepared to meet any other conceivable contingency which might materialize. Should these two events occur simultaneously, however, we'll need additional forces to cope with the additive threat. Moreover, the severity of the second contingency will patently drive the sizing of the additional forces.

Since today--and for the foreseeable future--the principal obstacle standing in the way of achievement of American goals is the Soviet Union, one must begin by analyzing Moscow's own aims and objectives--specifically those in conflict with our's--and how the Kremlin intends to accomplish them. So, what, indeed, are the Soviets about? Despite the euphoria which has periodically been generated in the West by Russian-originated terms such as "peaceful co-existence" and detente, the fundamental goal of the U.S.S.R. has remained unchanged since the days when Nikolai Lenin told the 8th Party Congress (1919):

We are living not merely in a state, but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end.

This basic theme has been reiterated over and over again by every Soviet leader who has succeeded Lenin, and never more bluntly than by Nikita Khrushchev when he threatened to "bury" us.

While relative military strength has been and still is a basic ingredient of the continuing Russo-American

confrontation, it would be a serious mistake to focus on this facet alone. For the Kremlin leaders obviously plan to use every method available to them in their campaign to reduce the power of any nation or coalition of nations that might be capable of frustrating what Moscow perceives as the ultimate destiny of the Red Revolution. As we shall see, the U.S.S.R. has employed just such a wide variety of means over the past half-century...and can be expected to do so in the future. Though the rubric may change, as the Soviet Communists shift tactics in order to manipulate world opinion at any given time, the underlying meaning as viewed from Red Square remains singularly constant.

This is not to say that the Russians are executing a detailed, long-range plan devised years ago; one which meticulously articulates a step-by-step program for the inevitable world dominion of Soviet-led Communism. This simply is not the case. As a matter of fact, on myriad occasions the Kremlin has demonstrated that its day-to-day policies are exploitive rather than creative. That is to say, Soviet leaders have always been quick to capitalize on any opportunity presenting itself, but by and large they have not been able to create conditions which could then be manipulated for gain. Still, it must be acknowledged that they have developed this exploitive capability to a rather high level...all too often not only counting on but receiving the unwitting help of their intended victims.

From the outset, however, the Soviets have pursued and

still do seek to achieve a series of short-term objectives... each one designed to further the long-term campaign. Perhaps the most notable of these has been the drive to develop a heavy industrial base. Lenin and Stalin realized early-on that once the Communist Party had consolidated its hold on the country, they could squeeze the people as hard as necessary to turn the U.S.S.R. into a modern industrial state, one capable of producing the military prowess required to shift the "protracted conflict"--as Robert Strausz-Hupe so aptly termed it--to the battlefield when and where required.

Complementing this internal drive for total self-sufficiency, has been Moscow's campaign to establish, then cement, ties with those Western European countries which it found itself unable to seize in the aftermath of the Second World War. At the same time, the Kremlin seeks to sever those same Western ties, not only with the United States, but with the so-called Third World. The objective is all too evident. By cutting the West off from raw materials required to feed its industrial maw, the Communists hope to perpetrate the capitalistic convulsion Karl Marx and Nikolai Lenin predicted.

In pursuance of these objectives, the Kremlin seeks everywhere to cut American connections with other nations around the world...thus reducing U.S. industrial and political power through a process of isolation. Viewing the international confrontation as a zero-sum game, the Kremlinites calculate that every country subtracted from

the U.S. orbit is automatically added to their own.

This strategy, employed across the years by the U.S.S.R., is a broad one utilizing the full range of Russia's strengths and advantages. Comprising political pressure, ideological propaganda, economic manipulation, use of surrogate combat troops, and resorting to Soviet military prowess only as a last resort, that strategy is also supported by tactical moves which can shift swiftly and dramatically. Moscow has been extraordinarily flexible in the use of these tactics, depending on its international position at the moment. For instance, in the aftermath of World War II the Kremlin--struck by the fact of its geographic power limitations--mounted a comparatively limited world-wide offensive, one essentially confined to ideological penetration. Acutely aware of the nuclear monopoly then enjoyed by the United States as well as recognizing the relatively limited reach of the Soviet military--constrained as it then was to crossing frontiers into countries contiguous to the Motherland itself, Moscow did little more than work on internal subversion of target nations and provide arms to prospective client states. Over the years, however, as a Russian nuclear capability evolved and, especially, as Russian military outreach lengthened, a far more aggressive Soviet policy emerged.

And just as quickly as the industrial base permitted, the leadership pressed expansion of most facets of Soviet military power.

Quite understandably, Moscow assigned first priority to strategic nuclear forces. But close on the heels of this effort followed an across-the-board program to provide all conventional forces with tactical nuclear weapons. Simultaneously, the latter forces were expanded and modernized in other ways. Subsequently, a blue-water Soviet navy was pushed and the beginnings of a true sea- and air-borne power projection capability made an appearance. In general terms, this has been the thrust of Soviet policies up to the present...and there is abundant evidence that more of the same is in prospect. To support the foregoing assertions, we will shortly take a detailed look at that evidence. But for the moment, given the current posture of the U.S.S.R., we must ask ourselves what sort of response the United States should make.

To begin with, of course, we must recognize that there exists a threat to our achievement of those aims and objectives we deem essential to the future security and well-being of this country. All too often, this has proved to be the largest part of the problem. In some instances, it is simply a case of the American people and their leaders being unable to detect an international development which carries the danger of damaging one or more U.S. interests. In other instances, it is a matter of deliberately ignoring the development because it is unpalatable. The tragedy herein is that the latter reaction has occurred even when an antagonist has publicly articulated exactly what he planned to do. Three

striking examples have transpired within the past five decades.

Despite the voluminous writings of Nikolai Lenin, it was not until the closing days of World War II that we came to realize he and his political descendents meant business; nor, moreover, that the latter now had a sizable fraction of the national power required to make Lenin's predictions come true. Then there was the case of Adolph Hitler writing Mein Kampf (My Battle) while sitting in a German jail in 1924. When it was first published, few people paid any attention to the book...it didn't become a world-wide best-seller until the waning days of the 1930's by which time the former Austrian house-painter had solidified his control of Germany, had rebuilt the Wehrmacht, and was about to unleash it to fulfill the grandiose plan he had put to paper in 1924. An even less well known--but altogether similar event--took place halfway around the world in the late 1920's. In Japan, the Foreign Minister--one Baron Tanaka--produced a Memorial which outlined Japanese plans for the establishment of a greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere; an endeavor which came painfully near to permanent reality in the opening days of World War II.

At first glance, it would appear that in such circumstances the citizenry are too concerned with the present, with their own personal problems and well-being; that their attitude is one of "ignore that nasty problem and it will go away." I, for one, lay the blame at a different doorstep. In my judgment, failure of the public to perceive an international danger in the making can be ascribed to the national leadership's

reluctance--or refusal--to level with the American people. If the facts are clearly laid out and the dangers fully explained, the American body politic will react with an unambiguous demand for whatever action might be necessary to put things right. More about this later.

Once it is recognized that there is a problem...the threat is acknowledged...the manner of dealing with it is fairly straightforward. We need first to devise a broad national strategy which will assure achievement of essential U.S. aims and objectives despite the threat posed by Moscow. Then we must calculate the power which will be needed to make that strategy work. Like the Soviets, it must be a comprehensive marshalling of the disparate strengths of the United States: political, economic, ideological, industrial, technological, and military. Above all, the posture we adopt must be backed with an evident national will which clearly signals to our antagonist that we will not hesitate to employ those means whenever and wherever necessary. Absent this latter factor, the others will bear little weight in dealing with a coldly pragmatic leadership such as that installed in the Kremlin.

I would characterize this sort of an approach to American security as the employment of total force; not only the use in international affairs of the strategic and conventional military and naval prowess of a nation, but the full power of its societal and resource capabilities, as well. Moreover, the components of total force must be applied in a coordinated, mutually reinforcing fashion. This is one area in which we

can learn from past actions of the Soviets, for they have proved significantly more adept at manipulating total force than have we. I will expand on this theme as we undertake a detailed evaluation of the evidence before us with regard to Soviet international machinations...and what they portend for the future.

Inasmuch as Moscow fully understands that we all really do live in a power-political world, and that the bottom line of the international power scale comprises strategic nuclear weapons, this is where any evaluation must begin. And at the outset, several things ought to be said about the strategic equation.

Beneath an umbrella of true strategic nuclear deterrence, the superpowers find themselves considerably constrained in their own freedom of action with respect to political as well as conventional military initiatives. Always in the background lurks the spectre of escalation to the ultimate nuclear holocaust...as we insist on terming it. Conversely, that umbrella provides significant freedom of maneuver to lesser nations. Charles de Gaulle decisively proved this thesis when he tossed NATO and U.S. military headquarters out of France in 1966.* He was able to do so because he knew the United States could not retaliate by removing that segment of the American strategic umbrella which then covered France, protecting her from Soviet attack or coercion. Our

* For a detailed discussion of this point, see Hanks, Robert J., Captain, USN, "The High Price of Success." United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 94, No. 4, April 1968, pp. 26-33

only option would have been to close the umbrella on that side of the Atlantic, thus exposing all of NATO. De Gaulle well knew we simply could not take that Draconian step. The danger herein, of course, is that actions of such lesser nations can precipitate unsought superpower confrontations. Witness the U.S./U.S.S.R. face-off at the height of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Finally, perceptions of the strategic balance--more accurately, of an imbalance--can influence the allegiance and actions of other nations, in itself creating significant shifts of political and military power in the world, e.g., Finlandization. Therefore, the positioning of the strategic nuclear scales--real and apparent--affects all else that we do or endeavor, and it is vital to the future of the United States that those scales be balanced or tilted in our favor. For a critical danger materializes when they become unbalanced in favor of one's antagonist. Strategic nuclear superiority confers on the possessor the ability to coerce others...to achieve its purposes without firing a shot of any kind--nuclear or conventional.

From the American point of view, the history of the nuclear weapons age is a dreary one. Starting with an unquestioned monopoly in 1945, we have--in my considered judgment--descended to the point that today we stand manifestly inferior to the Soviet Union. Moreover, present trends suggest that the exceedingly dangerous posture in which we now find ourselves will likely worsen. How did the United States manage to get itself into such a fix?

Following collapse of the Baruch Plan to place international controls on the nuclear genie--the Soviets steadfastly declined any sort of control, since they already had stolen most of the technology needed and were well on their way to becoming nuclear capable--the United States embarked on a program designed to provide sufficient nuclear strength to ensure our safety and that of our allies. By the mid-1960's we had fashioned a force comprising some 2000 delivery systems while the Russians trailed us about ten years in technology and 50% in numbers. At this point, we committed a cardinal error. We stopped. According to the Governmental wisdom of the day, we had adequate prowess to devastate the U.S.S.R., should Moscow ever be stupid enough to cross the unthinkable threshold. That wisdom anticipated the Kremlin would continue to build to levels something like ours, mutual deterrence would emerge, and the "holocaust" would be foreclosed. But the masters of the Kremlin refused to reason as did the then occupants of the Pentagon's E-ring and the White House's Oval Office. The Russians continued to build. And, to them, the name of the game was "Bigger is Better"...not only in numbers but in size which ultimately translates into range and throw-weight. Furthermore, with the advent of POLARIS ballistic missile submarines in the United States, the Kremlin lost no time emulating the U.S. move and soon began sending some of its own strategic nuclear force to sea. Still, we held to the magic number of 1,054 land-based intercontinental

ballistic missiles, about 650 sea-launched ballistic missiles, with the balance of the nation's strategic deterrent force comprising the aging B-52 bombers. By 1972 when the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) produced the Interim Agreement, putting a lid on total strategic delivery vehicles, the U.S. still had its 1,054 land-based ICBM's, but Moscow boasted 1,618...and these were significantly larger.* For instance, the Soviet SS-9 missile--by then in silos and targeted against the United States--possessed three times the throw-weight of our own MINUTEMAN. If this weren't enough, our SLBM advantage had gone down the drain as well. While the Interim Agreement permitted us 44 submarines and 710 launching tubes, the Soviets came away with 62 boats and a total of 950 tubes. Thus, convoluted reasoning and an inordinate Administration desire for an agreement--any kind--cemented the fact of strategic nuclear inferiority insofar as America was concerned.

It is, therefore, all too clear that neither through example--self-restraint--nor negotiations, as exemplified by the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, have we managed to slow or to inhibit in any way the Soviet drive for strategic superiority. When, to the clear evidence of the continuing Russian strategic build-up, one adds the complementary efforts they are making in dispersal and hardening not only of industry but command, control, and com-

munication facilities as well; and a huge civil defense
* SALT I also produced the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty which prohibits deployment of extensive ABM capability by either nation. The Soviets maintained their Moscow system--we promptly dismantled the one we were building to protect our land-based ICBM's.

program; it should become clear to even the most casual observer that in the Kremlin, the leaders believe an all-out nuclear war is possible...and they also believe they can win one if it comes.

No less an expert on the Soviet Union than the former Director of Harvard University's Russian Research Center-- Professor Richard Pipes--recently explained in some detail why the Kremlin believes this to be the case.* Noting at the outset that "American and Soviet nuclear doctrines... are starkly at odds," he continues by charging the American strategic community with a predisposition "...to shrug off this fundamental doctrinal discrepancy." To one bearing considerable impressionistic scar tissue from World War II, the Cold War, Korea, etc., it sounds like Lenin/Hitler/Tanaka all over again. And it bears repeating that it is the American Governmental leadership which holds these views and steadfastly refuses to present the blunt facts of the deteriorating U.S. strategic position to the American people.

If to this bleak picture of the over-ridingly important strategic situation, one adds the tactical nuclear advances being made by the Soviets, and then the massive conventional military effort--especially at sea--one finds it manifestly impossible to justify or explain the over-all endeavor except in terms of a concerted drive for global domination. It is against this background evidence that one must attempt to

assess Soviet intentions--present and, most especially, future.
* Pipes, Richard. "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War." Commentary, Vol. 64, No. 1, July 1977

Based on my own experience and examination, I believe the Kremlin is continuing its historic, single-minded campaign to achieve world dominion for Soviet-led Communism; that Moscow is quite prepared to use any and all means at its disposal to gain that end. Inasmuch as the U.S.S.R. has become a "have" nation since World War II, I further believe the Russians would like very much to achieve this fundamental goal without directly engaging the Soviet Union in a war of any kind; that Moscow harbors no great desire to put the Motherland at risk...unless the end result can be realized in no other way. Where the application of military force becomes necessary, the Communist leaders have employed and will continue to use surrogates to avoid direct engagement of their own forces in actual combat. Should it ultimately prove necessary, however, they are prepared to do the job themselves. An empirical examination of Soviet moves around the world provides revealing and informative evidence in support of this assessment of Moscow's intentions.

Perhaps the best point of departure for such an evaluation is a brief review of Soviet actions from 1945 to the present. The U.S.S.R. emerged from the Second World War-- behind the United States--as the next most powerful nation on earth. Though grievously hurt by that conflict, she nonetheless came out of it with greatly expanded borders--the only major nation to do so--and she, unlike the other main Allied powers, made no move to demobilize the enormous military machine she had assembled prior to and during the

war years. Within the newly acquired borders of the Soviet Union as well as in Eastern Europe, Iran, and the Far East, nothing happened to match what Winston Churchill described as a melting away of the armies of democracy. Nevertheless, Joseph Stalin had a serious problem standing between him and the goals he sought to achieve: the limited reach of his armed forces. In 1945, only nations whose borders were contiguous to those of the Soviet Union--or those of nations occupied by the Red Army--lay within range of the Russian Bear's power. Stalin, therefore, found himself forced to concentrate on such countries as he could reach. Over the next few years, he cemented Soviet control of European nations already under the heel of the Red Army. And only the declining, but still-to-be-reckoned-with, strength of the U.S. and Great Britain--backed (and this is crucial to understanding) by the American nuclear monopoly--eventually forced him to withdraw from Austria and Iran. Elsewhere, despite Allied protests, Moscow proceeded to nail down its territorial gains stemming from the Axis defeat.

But although his armed forces might could not reach into the rest of the world, the Russian dictator did not by any means neglect it. From his position of international power impotence, insofar as military muscle might be concerned, Stalin mounted a world-wide ideological offensive. Resurrecting the international Communist infrastructure spawned in the mind of Lenin, but allowed to hibernate subsequent to the abrupt reversal of Russo-German relations following

Hitler's assault in 1942, the Soviet dictator put this organization back to work subverting regimes around the globe. The Red Army might not be able to reach the Western Hemisphere, for example, but ideology certainly could. And so could Soviet-manufactured arms. Carried in Russian ships, they flowed in increasing quantities to those states which seemed to be surrendering to the ideological offensive: China, Indonesia, Korea, and--to be sure--the nations of Eastern Europe.

But beginning in the late 1940's a change in Russian foreign policy began to appear. It became noticeably more aggressive...and the timing of the shift can be traced directly to an emerging Soviet nuclear capability. The increasing militancy of Moscow's thrusts--ultimately into areas separated from the U.S.S.R. by salt water which heretofore it had been unable to influence with military power--gradually manifested itself. First, however, came the confrontation over Berlin. And here one finds Moscow making its first cardinal mistake in post-war foreign policy. By throwing a blockade around Berlin, the Russians managed to transform the embryonic European Union--just beginning to recognize that it had helped to vanquish the legions of Adolph Hitler only to see them immediately supplanted by a far more powerful and implacable foe--into the North Atlantic Alliance and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). More importantly, they had caused the United States to reverse its departure from Western Europe and voyage back across the