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THE PROBLEM OF SOVIET VULNERABILITIES

SPECIAL REPORT



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⑥ THE PROBLEM OF SOVIET VULNERABILITIES.

⑨ Special rept.,

by

⑩ ~~10~~ Richard P. Clayberg

⑪ 30 Dec ~~1977~~

⑫ 187P.

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FOREWORD

This paper is an outgrowth of research into a topic that would seem to bear directly not only on the task of estimating the aggregate East-West balance but also on the establishment of national strategy objectives, priorities, and implementing programs.

However, strangely enough, extensive research uncovered a peculiar lack of published materials on the weaknesses of our major rival on the world scene. Not only that, it became abundantly evident that even major specialists in Soviet affairs apparently found it either difficult or simply not useful to think in such terms. Why does this seeming anomaly exist and, even if so, what does it matter? The purpose of this paper is to consider the intrinsic value of research into vulnerabilities as such, the first chapter being devoted to a discussion of theoretical matters followed by an examination of the applicability of such an approach to the Soviet Union.

For the convenience of the reader Chapter 7 (in blue paper) has been designed to serve simultaneously as overall conclusions for the study itself and as an executive summary.

This series of papers is designed to encompass a wide range of project reports and concept memoranda. These papers, which may be formal or unstructured in format, are outside the scope of the specific study projects of the Strategic Studies Institute, yet are viewed as contributory to the understanding of national and military strategy and policy or the functioning of the military as an institution. The papers of this series may be the result of individual or group effort, and may be the offshoot of other work or of personal initiative.

The author of this special study was LTC Richard P. Clayberg. Drs. James A. Kuhlman and Keith A. Dunn served as technical consultants. MAJ Sava Stepanovitch assisted with research in the military area.

Joseph E. Pizzi
JOSEPH E. PIZZI
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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Section I. A Theoretical Foundation.

1. Definition of Terms. One obvious aspect of the dearth of materials on Soviet vulnerabilities alluded to in the Foreword has been the relatively modest attention devoted to developing our understanding of the term itself. What, then, do we mean when we say "vulnerability?" How does it relate to such concepts as limitations, weaknesses and constraints? Judging by Webster, it would appear that the special characteristic of vulnerability, one that distinguishes it from its sister terms, is the idea of being "liable to . . . injury" or "capable of being wounded," inferring directly an openness or susceptibility to deleterious external influences.¹ Turning to JCS Pub 1, it can be noted that while the general definition places no specific limit on the type of external means through which a nation's or a military force's "war potential or combat effectiveness may be reduced or its will to fight diminished," the definition of "system vulnerability," for some reason, excludes all non-manmade hostile effects (e.g., the harmful effects of severe weather, infestation, or natural disasters). The only other direct evidence from this source is the term "vulnerability study," which is defined as "an analysis of the capabilities and limitations of a force in a specific situation to determine vulnerabilities capable of exploitation by an opposing force" [emphasis added].²

2. External Influences. The problems arising out of trying to define vulnerability begin to become apparent when an effort is made to proceed to the next logical step, that of trying to segregate, articulate, categorize, and analyze the external influences that should be included. Once again the

question must be raised: just what is a vulnerability, or--as some prefer to put it--vulnerability to what, where, when, and under what circumstances?³ In practical terms, can we determine not merely whether the Soviet system has significant imperfections but, more importantly, where and how it is vulnerable and how this might be exploited? Unfortunately, it is at this stage that the available literature not only falls off; it can in many areas be said to be virtually nonexistent. Thus it would seem entirely appropriate to wonder whether this lack of conceptual development as well as practical application represents a genuine gap in our knowledge or simply indicates that the topic has been found not amenable to detailed analysis. It is the author's contention that the former may well be the more accurate description of the situation.

3. Vulnerability and Power.

a. How, then, are we to get at the nature of vulnerability? One approach could be to examine it in terms of a related, more developed concept--that of power. Drawing on the extensive material devoted to the latter,⁴ we may define power as the ability to cause others to act, or refrain from acting, in a manner in which they would not otherwise do. From the point of view of the party against whom this power is employed, this constraint is brought about by an assessment of an unacceptable level of real or perceived risk if the designated behavior pattern is not observed. Thus it can be noted that power is not merely capabilities; history is filled with cases where there have been noticeable inconsistencies between raw strength and actual influence, our own country during the period between the two world wars being almost a classic example.⁵ Rather, power, like beauty or fame, lies in the eyes of the beholder; to be real it must be perceived.⁶

b. Still, there must be some sort of strength to perceive.

What elements can we find that contribute to national strength? Citing Simons and Emeny, Holsti presents the following list of resources, or "great essentials:" "food, power [energy], iron, machinery, chemicals, coal, iron ore, and petroleum."⁷ Morgenthau sees power as being based on a much broader assortment of characteristics. In addition to natural resources and industrial capacity, he identifies geographic environment, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy, and something he calls "quality of government" as constituting the elements of national power.⁸ Inherent in Morgenthau's concept--as exemplified by his inclusion of quality of diplomacy and government--is the notion that possession of capabilities must be accompanied by less tangible factors such as the ability to develop and coordinate resources and to employ them skillfully in the pursuit of appropriate and achievable goals. This implies also a willingness to function, and even to compete, in the international arena. Because Morgenthau's concept is even more comprehensive than its Soviet counterpart, the "correlation of forces," it, rather than the latter, will be used as the basis of reference in this paper.

c. However necessary strength as such may be in the overall power equation, there still remains the problem of ensuring that such a collection of capabilities, organizational skill, and will is properly understood by the desired target audience. Because of this, the concept of power must also include the successful understanding and application of how to communicate. This involves not only possession of the necessary technology of physical access but--of equal importance--the ability to recognize and

and manipulate those concepts, signs, and symbols best able to tell the desired story or to stimulate the desired attitudes and responses. This is not to negate either the value of factual information or the ability of the moderately sophisticated to draw valid inferences therefrom; rather it is to serve as a reminder that truth unadorned by adequate explanation and reference to a value system is all too often misunderstood, sometimes seriously so, especially when the effort to judge takes place against a background of obfuscation, distortion, and polemics. Since target audiences are groups of human beings representing a wide range of cultural values and degrees of intellectual sophistication, this ability to communicate is, to say the least, a highly complex affair. Thus, while a particular state may have an impressive amount of raw strength, a high degree of skill at organizing itself, and a persuasive palette of inducements (arguments, rewards, and punishments), the desired target group may perceive neither the need nor the desire to pay proper heed⁹ (e.g., the interplay between the United States and North Vietnam up through 1975). It is at this point that the would-be wielder of power has to assess the relative merits of raising the costs of noncompliance in terms of the likely increase in risks. In any event, the key point to remember here is the necessary functional tie between communication and the perception of power.

d. Using the above considerations, how might we broaden our understanding of the nature of vulnerability? Can we legitimately proceed from a description of power in terms of strength, its perception, and the effects of such perception to a parallel view of vulnerability as weakness or a "capability of being wounded," its perception, and the effects of the latter? Is it valid to reverse the definition of power and try to define vulnerabilities as that collection of perceived areas in which action by an

opponent appears likely to be able to interfere with our efforts to achieve some desired goal, i.e., those areas in which an opponent may cause us to act, or refrain from acting, in a manner in which we would not otherwise do? Clearly, there are hazards in postulating anything like an exact inverse relationship; nevertheless, there would appear to be room for further exploration.

e. To the extent that the above approach can be developed into an acceptable definition, it would seem beneficial to examine the parallels, if any, between the perception and effects of perception of power versus those of vulnerability. While the possessor of power must be aware of that power in order to make conscious use of it, it cannot be operative unless the party to be constrained recognizes its existence and acts appropriately. On this basis a case can be made that it is not necessary for the possessor of power to be aware of the entire influence equation for it to function. With respect to vulnerability, it would seem that both the vulnerable party and his opponent must be aware of the weakness to be exploited, although there need not be any close correspondence of degree or timing of such perception (e.g., a vulnerability may be blundered upon by an opponent or, likewise, may catch the vulnerable party by surprise). As for the effects of perception, there would seem to be a clearer correspondence. While the result of power is to impose constraints on the behavior of other than its possessor, the reverse would seem to be true with respect to vulnerabilities, the obvious caveat being that should the vulnerable party perceive such exploitable weaknesses to be in a vital area, the risks involved in their attempted utilization by an opponent may be prohibitive. Thus, for example, the present Administration may want to pursue the human rights issue as a means of constraining undesirable Soviet

conduct either at home or abroad; however, the effectiveness of this lever becomes open to argument once US initiatives are perceived by the Soviet leadership as threatening the stability of their political system or their power position.

f. One evident outcome of this difference in effect of perceptions is the manner in which power and vulnerabilities relate to communication. It needs very little worldly wisdom to be aware that while the one is usually openly publicized, the other--depending on the political culture involved--tends to be subjected to more or less careful camouflage. Even in the West, strange as it may seem, despite a propensity to bewail publicly national deficiencies, efforts are, and have been, made in this direction. The closed society, taking advantage of its ability to control access to information, merely "clams up" a little tighter regarding its perceived weaknesses; the open society, making a virtue of its very accessibility, resorts, consciously or not, to the inundation technique, i.e., publishing such a myriad of data and "expert views" as to all but overwhelm those seeking to ferret out exploitable areas.

g. There is one further consideration that merits discussion prior to proceeding beyond the problem of definitions, namely, the relationship of strength to vulnerabilities. While it would seem to be logical to concentrate our attention on those areas where our target is demonstrably weak, it would also be practical to examine its strong points as well, for circumstances can combine to render what would normally be thought of as a desirable characteristic (e.g., great size or large population) a massive handicap.

4. Identifying Vulnerabilities.

a. Given the above, what approach should we use in a search for

vulnerabilities? All things considered, it would seem practical to take advantage of the extensive attention devoted to analysis of the constituents of national power. Because of the importance of the subjective aspects of vulnerability identification, a certain reordering of Morgenthau's list seems indicated, producing the following proposed categories: ideology, political system (including domestic socio-political factors and foreign relations), geography, the military, and the economy. Despite the usual American distaste for ideology, it must be given first priority because of its absolutely critical role in defining goals, value systems, and the very foundations of systemic legitimacy. This, it would seem, should be followed by examination of politics, first, because of its direct tie to ideology and second, because it is the core of the system. The exact ordering of the remaining topics is somewhat less sensitive, in part because of the degree to which they are mutually interreactive.

b. In addition to inspecting the different building blocks of national power for exploitable soft spots, our attention should also be directed towards the process by which these basic elements are transmuted into power itself; i.e., we should look into the areas of communication and perception formation. By far the least demanding aspect of this would be a survey of the physical means: the organization, equipment, and procedures for the transmission of concepts, signs, and symbols. The techniques for this have long since been developed and are in active use, although not necessarily with the goal of deliberately seeking out exploitable vulnerabilities. What is either inadequately understood or, for cultural reasons, left to wither on the vine is the huge and demanding field encompassing concept and symbol development and manipulation, particularly as it relates to the deliberate projection of the perception of power. However rudimentary this understanding and application may be in the West, there is absolutely no question that

this matter is clearly grasped, greatly respected, and lavishly employed by states ideologically hostile to Western values, with the Soviet Union being first and foremost.

c. Given the customary attention to the concealment of perceived weaknesses, whether at the building block stage or in the power conversion process, how might we identify feasibly exploitable vulnerabilities? Once again we find ourselves in relatively uncharted territory. While in no way purporting to be definitive, it would seem that there are several possible approaches to the problem. Fortunately, there is a world of difference between attempts to hide something and actual success in doing so.

d. One approach, suggested by Dr. Leon Goure,¹⁰ is to try to put ourselves in the position of the leaders of the polity being examined. Once having "gotten inside their skin," we should try to see them and their environment as they do and to understand how they define success, victory, or goal achievement. The second step is to attempt to identify what they see as those areas where external influences can act to deny them such success. The point here is to try to sidestep the more salient hazards of ethnocentrism, a failing to which Americans tend to be prone.

e. Another method is to work from an analysis of behavior patterns. Telltale signs like significant silence or defensive reactions such as efforts to deny, cover up, and compensate; counteraccusations or other ploys aimed at guilt transference; or attempts to control access to accurate information--all point to sensitive spots in someone's armor. In this respect, there would seem to be parallels between the conduct of individuals on the one hand, and groups or even nations on the other.

f. Finally, of course, vulnerabilities may be discovered or confirmed through direct revelation, whether accidental or deliberate. Unguarded

comments or behavior by key leaders, reports by important defectors, or the fruit of other means of intelligence collection are but a few of the more evident possibilities.

5. Making use of Vulnerabilities.

a. Having identified what appear to be areas ripe for fruitful exploitation, the first step, it would seem, would be to examine the range of identified vulnerabilities for significant patterns. Whether groupings of exploitable weaknesses may be sensitive to time, place, or certain sequences of events, it ought to be--given present and foreseeable constraints on Western resource availability, policy options, and acceptable means--basic wisdom to be prepared to take advantage of the synergistic potential of such patterns,

b. Although a detailed description of the steps beyond this stage lies outside the scope of this paper, it appears that any catalog, whether of raw vulnerabilities or even of discernible patterns, will have to undergo a refining process involving comparative goal, value, means, and risk assessment before being drawn into the arena of national policy formation. The output from this effort could then, it would seem, be put to good use in such areas as placing capabilities, threat, and intentions estimates in their proper perspective; in the net assessment process (whether at the individual service, Department of Defense, or at the National Security Council level); and finally in the formation and implementation of national strategies, policies, and programs, again at more than one level of government. As noted, however, the fact remains that this is not being done, or--if and where it

is--the scale and degree of the effort in no way begins to match what appears to be the potential.

Section II. Soviet Vulnerabilities: General Considerations.

6. The Present Situation. Since this paper intends to do more than expound on theoretical matters--however important the latter may eventually prove to be, it is appropriate to turn our attention to practical application. If we accept the functional importance of vulnerabilities as an input to the national assessment process, the next question becomes can we indeed come up with an accurate, comprehensive portrayal of the exploitable weaknesses of our major international rival? Having been tasked with something approximating this mission and having devoted considerable time and effort to assembling such a picture, the author has concluded that despite decades of collection and analysis and despite extensive attention devoted to such factors as Soviet capabilities--whether by government or academia, the state of the art as far as identification and assessment of vulnerabilities are concerned is still at a very primitive level. In contrast to the theoretical study of vulnerability, it was found that there are more than a few students of Soviet affairs who were quite knowledgeable about the topic; however in direct parallel with the theoretical side of the house, the published literature is notable for its rarity (see bibliography). Further, despite the acknowledged existence of these infrequent, small-scale efforts, a case can be made, and defended, that as of this writing no specific attempt has been made to examine Soviet vulnerabilities across the board.

7. Causative Factors. What has led to this particular state of affairs? Why has there been a noticeable--and persistent--tendency to shy away from pointing up, publicly or privately, the glaring deficiencies in the Soviet system or position on the world stage? Although there is probably

little to be gained here from providing a detailed account, suffice it to say that this peculiar blind spot has been observed in the intellectual sphere, among academicians, and within government; further, the author has by no means been alone in noticing it.¹¹ In any event, a supportable case can be made that this lack of balance--whether inadvertent or deliberate--has measurably interfered with Western freedom of action, either in response to Soviet initiatives or in developing and implementing programs of its own.

8. Accessibility of Soviet Vulnerabilities.

a. In practical terms, how accessible are Soviet vulnerabilities? Does this lack of effort--or of results--mean that the topic is destined to remain beyond our reach? Is it possible for the West to see Soviet weaknesses as the latter themselves perceive them? Unfortunately, national traits and political culture alike make gaining access to reliable information of this type less than easy. As Hedrick Smith noted, Russians--even those hostile to the system--instinctively go to considerable lengths to hide deficiencies from the outside world, resorting to almost any type of subterfuge, counter-charge, or non sequitur to obscure the facts. The following comments made by a "bright young government consultant on foreign affairs" to Smith in private are particularly revealing:

We do it naturally; it is to our advantage. Deceit is a compensation for weakness, for a feeling of inferiority before foreigners. As a nation we cannot deal with others equally. Either we are more powerful or they are. And if they are, and we feel it, we compensate by deceiving them. It is a very important feature of our national character.¹²

b. Based on the research conducted for this paper, the answer to the questions posed appears to be that it is indeed possible to penetrate the defensive screen the Soviets have erected around themselves. Further, it appears entirely feasible to assemble an adequate picture of exploitable

Soviet vulnerabilities, both among the "building blocks" and in the power conversion process. However, the evident magnitude of the task so far overshadowed the resources that could be devoted to this paper that all that could be hoped for at this stage was to present a modest sampling of the type of material that could be expected in a truly comprehensive study. Keeping in mind the theoretical model developed earlier in this paper, attention will be directed to selected vulnerabilities in the areas of ideology, political system, geography, the military, and the economy; following this, an examination will be made for patterns of weakness and, following a few conclusions, some suggestions will be made for policy.

CHAPTER 2

IDEOLOGY

Section I. Basic Description and Assessment.

1. The Role of Ideology.

a. As a people Americans have tended to regard ideology as such with a mixture of dislike and indifference. On the one hand, recalling the turbulent events of the current century, many associate ideologies with fanatics and see competing systems of ideas and values as red flags, whose major contribution seems to have been to stir up undesirable passions in an already overheated and over-politicized world. On the other hand, there is probably an even larger number who, if they think about the matter at all, generally look down on ideologies as less and less relevant in an increasingly technological environment. Further, it would seem that among those Western thinkers for whom idea systems have had any attraction as food for thought, the overall thrust has been away from reinforcing public commitment to traditional values--whether to patriotism, democracy, or what have you--leading to noticeable, and measurable, erosion of popular belief.

b. Despite this lack of American respect for organized idea and value systems, the fact remains that the stability of all societies in whatever age rests ultimately on an adequate degree of acceptance of and commitment to a common "something," whether this be called a personal and social myth system, a guiding force, a way of life, a religion--or an ideology. Whether or not this system is able to stand the test of scientific analysis, is, even in this modern era, irrelevant; rather, its importance lies in its ability to assist in the preservation of individual sanity by providing "the tentative answers and guidelines necessary for coping with the problems of

life,"¹ i.e., for filling in those gaps that more scientifically based knowledge is unable, and may never be able, to handle.

2. The Nature and Role of Soviet Ideology.

a. Whatever our views of what they had to say or what was done to carry out their beliefs, it must be recognized that the founders of Marxism-Leninism have had an almost unprecedented influence on the course of events in this century. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels forecast accurately that the state would have to assume directly substantial responsibilities for the well-being of the individual; further, they convincingly brought to the world's attention that before he can afford to interest himself in such niceties as politics, science, art, or religion man must have adequate food, clothing, and shelter; and finally, Marx and his followers, by revealing causes behind the visible strains in the economic and political order, contributed to no small extent to our understanding of these fields of human endeavor.²

b. The value of Lenin's contribution to the modern world is much more controversial. Essentially, Lenin was an expert in power: what it is, how to increase it, and, above all, how to hang on to it. Thus it is his record as the pioneer of arrogant, totalitarian authoritarianism that serves as the watershed dividing those who are attracted to his example as a means to solve overwhelming problems of nation-building and modernization from those who are repulsed by the dehumanizing effect of draconian measures on perpetrators and victims alike.

c. For the Soviet Union as well as for all other polities professing allegiance to Marxism-Leninism--of whatever coloration--the latter serves as the essential legitimizing foundation for the whole system, justifying the injustices, the sacrifices demanded of both true believers and the masses, and, of course, the perpetuation in power of the ruling elite.

d. Among the special peculiarities of Marxism-Leninism is that it professes to be all-encompassing, providing neat, simple answers to such widely ranging phenomena as the nature of reality, human history, and economics. In addition, it tends to be highly moralistic, extending the opposing concepts of "good" and "bad" into areas where other philosophical systems fear to tread or remain neutral; this has been managed not only so as to garner for believers in this ideology a total monopoly on good in a black and white world but also for the Communist leadership, as ideological "high priests," unlimited discretion in defining, or redefining, that which is good. Finally, by universalizing Marx's restructuring of the Hegelian dialectical process, it commits its followers to belief in an eternal process of upward growth and change, one to be found in all aspects of reality, to include society, technology, the economy, and politics.

e. The special appeal of Marxist-Leninist ideology lies in its universalistic claims; its near worship of rationalism, science, and progress (i.e., of the power and potential of modern man); its trenchant analysis of the oppressive nature of uncontrolled, early-stage capitalism; and its strongly humanitarian protest against exploitation of the many by the few. Furthermore, by proclaiming the inevitability of the overthrow of "evil" (i.e., capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, the exploiters, etc.) by "good" (read socialism, the working masses, the Third World, the exploited, etc.) it offers a glittering guarantee of a better future for the disadvantaged and frustrated. In addition, although this is not widely disseminated, it tends to appeal to the ambitious intellectual who sees in it not only a means to alleviate all the wrongs of the society around him but also an

opportunity for a dramatic improvement in personal status. As implied, for the rulers of a Communist-run country, Marxism-Leninism offers the convenience of unusual elasticity, being easily adjustable to meet--and justify--the tactical exigencies of the moment (a famous case being the successive 180-degree turnabouts in Soviet relationships with Nazi Germany during 1939-1941).

Section II. Identifying Vulnerabilities.

3. Application of Analytical Tools. How can Goure's approach be applied to the realm of ideology?

a. On the ideal level, victory or goal achievement in the eyes of the Soviet leadership can be said to have been reached only when there has been universal, unquestioning acceptance of their own particular interpretation of Marxism-Leninism. Their total security, their position of power as the only guiding force in socialist society--by definition the only acceptable form of social organization for all mankind--has as its basis the premise that "this position of power . . . is only guaranteed in practice if that ideology is seen to possess sole validity" [i.e., to the exclusion of all other idea and value systems].³ The absolutist nature of this need is the ultimate source of much of the hostility, insecurity, and aggressiveness of the Soviet Union.

b. In real world terms, such victory or goal achievement is defined rather more modestly. At the defensive level there is the need to be assured that the official ideology, its picture of the world, values, and statement of goals are fully accepted by the Soviet people, if not actively then at least passively. Within the Soviet sphere of control, which as a

minimum consists of the other Warsaw Pact member states, Soviet ideological preeminence--to include the right to define the acceptable boundaries of orthodoxy--is also to be fully accepted, again at least passively. At a lower level of priority, the exact degree of urgency being open to argument, there is the Soviet ambition to regain their lost position of ideological hegemony over the world of international communism, at least in appearance if not in fact. Finally, Marxism-Leninism must be perceived by the world at large as the wave of the future, while capitalism and those states which espouse it are to be seen as decadent, doomed to fall, and as interfering with the forces of history, peace, and progress.

4. Perceived Ideological Vulnerabilities.

a. Given an alleged absolute assurance as to the correctness of their ideology and as to the inevitability of its spread at the expense of our way of life, do the Soviets themselves evince any misgivings? Turning to behavioral analysis, it seems clear that the political leadership of Communist countries in general, and that of the USSR in particular, suffer from a serious lack of confidence in the ability of their official ideology to compete in the realm of ideas. Laying the blame for such weakness at the door of "difficulties or contradictions of socialism at advanced levels of development," CPSU General Secretary Brezhnev as well as other influential figures have publicly voiced fears that "bourgeois ideological offensives or creeping counterrevolution . . . held the potential for reversing the course of history."⁴ In behavioral terms, this lack of self-assurance is reflected in the sheer extent of governmental efforts to "protect" its people from undesirable information, concepts, or value systems--whether foreign or home-grown. Iron curtains, censorship, jamming,

travel restrictions, armies of informers and security police, even outright resort to armed invasion of wayward fellow Communist states all attest to the narrow boundaries of acceptable conformity and fear of ideological contamination.⁵

b. Never publicly mentioned as such--although, according to Solzhenitsyn and others a common topic in private conversation, a basic cause of this lack of confidence is what may be termed a crisis of faith; i.e., does anyone seriously believe in the official ideology any more? This lack of belief has been noted by a number of Western scholars,⁶ although the most extensive accounts are still to be found in emigre writings.⁷ Essentially, both power elite and masses alike cannot help but be aware of the extent to which the officially presented picture of reality differs from reality itself, of the failure of theory to be borne out in practice, and of promises to be fulfilled.⁸ However, this gross dichotomy is, of course, officially denied, with fabrication being heaped on fabrication in apparently sublime assurance (or is it, perhaps, desperate hope) that the Russian masses will continue to accept (or ignore) almost any explanation. That the leadership is concerned about this state of affairs is evidenced not only by the enormous scale and persistence of the sales effort designed to raise the ideological consciousness of the masses but also by the perceived need to hide awkward realities, such as the plush lifestyle of the privileged few.⁹

c. With what does this leadership feel so unable to compete ideologically?

(1) Among the internal foes of the official philosophy are political apathy (i.e., active disinterest not coupled with support of any alternative), widespread among youth and the scientific elite; the surprisingly resistant hold of traditional religion (the churches, mosques, and synagogues

may still be filled primarily with older people--but they are new old people; further, many young Soviets are turning to religion in their search for lasting values); and--according to Amalrik--a whole spectrum of embryonic philosophical positions ranging from neo-Stalinist nationalism to liberal democracy.¹⁰

(2) Externally, Moscow is finding itself having to navigate between the Scylla of Chinese accusations of revisionism, bad faith, and social fascism (quite a horrid term to an orthodox Communist) and the Charybdis of nationalist-inspired ideological nonconformism among its East European neighbors, such as Yugoslav workers' self-management or the 1968 Czech experiment. To add to Soviet discomfort, apologists for such varied interpretations of Marx and Lenin have not been averse either to staking their own claims to ideological purity or to faulting the Third Rome for its heresy.

(3) But of all the in-house challenges to the Kremlin's self-proclaimed ideological hegemony, one of the most disquieting comes from entirely outside the Soviet sphere--present or former--in the form of Euro-communism. Although all the tallies have not yet been counted, a case can be made that by dismissing the very idea of a world Communist movement or of any special role for Moscow; by rejecting any reference to Marxism-Leninism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and even the concept of official national ideologies; and by recognizing the legitimacy of party pluralism and parliamentary democracy (at the 1976 meeting in East Berlin)¹¹ the Communist parties of Western Europe would surely seem to have served notice to would-be "hegemonists" that the Reformation (a term specifically used in this context by Santiago Carillo, leader of the Spanish party)¹² had come. The potential

danger to the Soviet leadership in this would seem to lie first, in the implications it has for the "house of cards" pretensions of their official ideology and second, in the disruptive influence it may have on Moscow's already restive East European empire. To the extent that the leaders of West Europe's Communists are serious in their declarations, a subject of no little controversy, it would appear that, going well beyond the nationalist, but still fairly minor permutations of their East European "coreligionists," Marchais, Berlinguer, Carillo, et al. have resurrected the old Menshevik line of Martov, one whose threat to dogmatic absolutism Lenin, for one, was quick to recognize. That this has not been lost on the more perceptive East European leaders is demonstrated by the reaction of Rumania's Ceaucescu, long an avid supporter of all opposition to Soviet domination; the latter, recognizing that the "Western Parties were going too far," has been noted as reversing his direction and moving closer to Moscow.¹³

(4) Last, but by no means least, is the perceived vulnerability to what the author feels to be the most attractive and insidious foe of all, namely what he calls the "Coca-Colaization of the world." This philosophy of interest in and dedication of substantial individual and national resources towards making the good life available and affordable to the broad masses--rather than only to the elite--is so compelling that many politically and economically weaker states, those whose leaders realize that they are unable to fulfill such a level of expectations, are forced to take measures to blot out or still this siren song. That this is a problem can be gauged in part by considering the scope and persistence of interest in--not to speak of raw lust for--things Western that exists in the Soviet Union, a phenomenon that has to be experienced to be believed.¹⁴ Typically, the official

response to this threat of "bourgeoisification" has been "a counteroffensive in the realm of ideas" and further efforts to "strengthen the Soviet state and the Communist Party;"¹⁵ however, judging by parallel situations described by Herbert Goldhamer, this has probably merely led to defensive reaction and a continuation of the vicious cycle.¹⁶

5. Other Vulnerabilities.

a. An unavoidable difficulty in attempting to apply Gourev's approach too rigidly lies in the problem of perceptions. Do the leaders that work in the Kremlin realize how far their misconceptions lead them astray? As pointed out in the previous chapter, for a vulnerability to be operative it needs to be recognized by both parties involved. If we restrict ourselves to what little can be dredged up as to Soviet perceptions of their limitations and if their ideology blinds them to the existence of even more weaknesses, does this force a conclusion that exploitable vulnerabilities beyond the pale of adequately supportable Soviet recognition thereof are either insubstantial or inaccessible? It would seem that if we keep in mind the observation made earlier that a vulnerability may exist prior to its being understandably admitted to by the party possessing it, it might well prove beneficial to examine those weaknesses about which the Soviet leadership is either insufficiently aware--or, perhaps, being all too aware, has thus far successfully managed to keep its concerns obscured.

b. The universalistic claims of official Soviet ideology to encompass all truth and to project the inescapable future of mankind leave its "high priests" open to all kinds of otherwise avoidable problems, whether this be having to answer to accusations of heresy, reneging, or cowardice; justify whatever awkward details of their own history even they have been unable to

rewrite out of existence; or cope with anomalies arising out of the fact that in reality truth is pluralistic rather than a single, scientific whole.¹⁷ Worse still, since the Leninist element of their philosophy so strongly stresses assisting the forces of history, the Soviet leadership is often forced to assume or maintain domestic or foreign policies of a clearly counterproductive nature,

c. The fundamental assertion in Marxism-Leninism's laws of dialectical and historical materialism that all phenomena are transient, that change and progress in all areas is a universal truth is a two-edged sword. In the first place, it clearly infers that all ideologies and politico-economic systems--to include the Soviet--are fated "to abide their destined hour" and then be superseded. But, even prior to this unavoidable demise of communism, if and when ever achieved, there remains the unfortunate fact that, for once, Marx happened to have been somewhat explicit as to what was to take place in the transition to communism itself. It was his view that along with classes and class antagonisms, the state and ideology--and thus any type of organization that had claims to be the vanguard of a particular class, the leading element of a nation state, or the sole repository of ideological orthodoxy--also were destined to wither away. Faced with the necessity of demonstrating visible progress towards doctrinal historical goals, the achievement of which has on more than one occasion been tied to specific dates (such as Khrushchev's prediction of the onset of full communism by 1980), and confronted with this evident incompatibility between the strictures of their official ideology and their own preferences (i.e., for hanging on to their position of power and privilege), the Soviet leadership has, logically enough, resorted to revising the former to

conform to the latter. However, in doing so they have opened themselves up to serious questioning as to both orthodoxy and motives.¹⁸ Whether this makes any difference should be judged in light of the fact that a significant percentage of the internal dissent within the Soviet Union is directed not against the regime itself or the official ideology but rather towards pressing the former actually to live up to its declarations.¹⁹ The other edge to the sword has to do with the assumption that progress itself is a universal good, a view that has gradually come under attack as an increasingly crowded world tries to cope with growing spatial, environmental, and resource problems.

Section III. Future Trends.

6. The Impact of Further Modernization. It is, perhaps, a reflection of the spectrum of views entertained about the USSR that there is little agreement as to what the future holds for Marxism-Leninism in that country. One prominent student of Soviet affairs has suggested that, as the Soviet Union continues along the path towards modernization and ever deeper penetration of advanced technology into its society, regard for and interest in ideology as such will continue to diminish; not only that, the exigencies of these changes may well have a direct effect on the content of the official idea and value system itself through continued erosion of its "egalitarian and utopian aspects."²⁰

7. Marxism versus Leninism. In considering the alterations made on the original ideology by Lenin in light of the recent history of world communism, it seems more than a little significant that the parties who saw the necessity to abandon several of the basic tenets of Leninism itself were from advanced capitalist states. In trying to elicit pattern from this,

Peter Wiles suggests that, perhaps, Leninism, with its denial of personal freedom, can best be seen as "a doctrine for backward peoples, with advanced ones choosing Marxism" as more appropriate. Thus Wiles, for one, is not surprised that neither the Third World parties nor the Soviet Union show signs of following the Eurocommunist example.²¹

8. Expected Elite Reaction. However, backward or no, the firmly entrenched ruling elite are apparently well aware of the key role played by ideology in legitimizing the system as well as justifying their continued monopoly of power; consequently, it is most unlikely that they will acquiesce in this "moral decay" without a struggle. Thus they can be expected to use every available means and to spare little expense in their battle for the "hearts and minds" of the Soviet people. One means enjoying increasing attention in recent years has been the employment of, for the Soviets, advanced social sciences techniques such as public opinion polls. Laird, in trying to assess the possible effects of this program, appears to hesitate between fears that it will merely give the regime newer and better tools for defending its belief system against competing interpretations or against foreign, especially Western, criticism and hopes that such use will eventually open the Pandora's box of "disparity between popular beliefs and public desires and what has been asserted to be the doctrinaire truth," thereby serving as some sort of force for liberalization.²²

9. Author's Forecast. In looking over Soviet-style communism from the broad perspective of history, it would seem that, like other revolutionary, ideologically-based movements, it is fated to see its fervor continue to fade and its newness supplanted by other, more fashionable movements or rendered less relevant by events. Further, as accurately perceived by Mao Tse-Tung,

preservation of pristine ideological dedication, brotherly comradeship among the faithful, and puritan abstemiousness from worldly comforts face an ever steeper uphill battle for survival as a revolutionary polity moves in time beyond the first generation. Within the Soviet Union, for one, the decreasing dedication to such values hardly needs to be pointed out; in fact the rigid stratification into layers of privilege and, as mentioned before, the hankering after consumer goods on the part of elite and masses alike is painful to behold. The key question remains, however, to what extent this estrangement from publicly-declared ideals can be expected to affect an essentially intolerant, aggressive, absolutist world view, one committing the true believer to expending scarce resources on aiding the forces of history. The Soviet leadership, as already suggested, can hardly be expected to abandon their comforting sheathe of myths, particularly because of the intimate tie between the latter and maintenance of system legitimacy. Then, too, the massive culture and export of anti-Western (and Chinese) hate propaganda has, it would seem, developed a life and vested interests of its own. Still, time and world change continue to march on, leaving those who take Marxism-Leninism--with all of its obsolescent 19th and early 20th Century dogmatic baggage--seriously with the prospect of having it either more and more discredited²³ and ignored or of being forced at last to resort to more than the usual cosmetic alterations (as it appears that the West European parties have done), with all the unforeseeable consequences that such a move may entail.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Section I. Basic Description and Assessment.

1. Introduction.

a. The view of the Soviet system, particularly from the West, too often becomes distorted through overconcentration on its apparent strengths. Clarity and stability of national goals; the sense of an utterly righteous, messianic world mission, the ultimate success of which is held to be inevitable; and the possession of nearly total control over vast military, political, and economic resources, permitting the channeling of enormous power towards goal achievement--capabilities of this sort would seem to bestow on the Soviet leadership guaranteed success in any direction.

b. In truth, the Soviet system does possess a number of distinct advantages. With no need to account for its stewardship to an electorate and a minimal requirement to allow for popular desires, the Soviet hierarchy is theoretically capable of formulating policies, making changes, or directing implementation with a speed a democracy cannot equal. Further, it is in fact capable of directing the allocation of resources to priority areas in execution of plans of far longer range than the limited time span allotted to the typical American administration. Part of this lies in the extended periods that Soviet leaders manage to stay in power (there have been twelve US Presidents since 1917 but only four top Soviet leaders). In addition to being highly centralized and hierarchical (Laird, for one, even goes so far

as to characterize it as being a single, integrated, "super-bureaucracy"¹), the Soviet system also remains essentially in a wartime configuration even in peace--a sort of perpetual mobilization, a result both of power elite outlook and the institutionalization of a succession of "temporary" measures adopted during crises.

c. Despite all this, the thoughtful observer cannot help but sense that a picture of the Soviet system as a juggernaut, as rolling forward like an irresistible tide, is somehow faulty. There just has to be some reason why the appearance of such great power is not followed up by anything like an appropriate application of same, either at home or on the international scene. If their monopoly of power is actually as complete as it would seem it ought to be, why are we confronted so frequently with announcements of yet another effort made or means developed to tighten yet further Moscow's grip over one or another aspects of its domestic or foreign empire? If the Soviet Union has indeed, as some have proclaimed, at last gained some sort of strategic edge over a declining, divided, and irresolute West, why has this "fact" so conspicuously failed to be demonstrated by effective Soviet dominance of the world scene, especially in the critical area of crisis management?² Because of this seeming paradox, a certain amount of explanation is necessary prior to initiating our search for vulnerable areas.

2. The Nature of the Soviet System.

a. It is a truism that there are almost as many models of Soviet political dynamics as there are analysts; nevertheless, an adequate case can be made for suggesting that, shorn of its ideological

plumage, the system as found in the Soviet Union bears a more than passing resemblance to a parasite,³ alien but not necessarily foreign, implanted on a more or less unwilling host and living in a relationship that partakes of both symbiosis and civil war. With specific respect to the Russian experience, implantation of this parasitic growth took place by coup d'etat rather than through any genuine popular revolution. Because of this basic alienness, the ruling regime has had to go to extreme lengths to proclaim its legitimacy, to stir up popular support and the appearance of widespread involvement, to constantly seek scapegoats and excuses for failures, and otherwise acquire protective coloration. This in no way is meant to suggest that elitist political systems lacking explicit popular legitimization have not occurred in the past or that they have not proven successful in terms of power accumulated or longevity, nor is it meant to imply that any of the present crop of leaders are not staunch nationalists; however, it does assist in rendering understandable certain consistent behavior patterns among both rulers and ruled.

b. A somewhat similar analytical model of the Soviet system has been proposed by Richard Pipes, one based on the notion that the Soviet power elite--in quite traditional Russian style--feel they own the USSR, lock, stock, and barrel.⁴ Although this would help explain any observable lack of a sense of accountability to their human "property," the Soviet citizenry, and their resistance to sharing anything with the latter, it seems less successful in explaining certain other types of observable behavior.

c. In the eyes of a current citizen of the USSR, one recently arrested for trying to hold its leadership to account for its failure to live up to the Helsinki accords, the Soviet system has been characterized as having "in practice assumed the features of 'feudalism without private property,'" except, of course, for the labor camp inmates, whose position was essentially that of "slaves of the state."⁵ Clearly, there is more than a little truth in his assertion, witness the type and scope of restrictions placed on the masses (e.g., denying the average collective farmer a passport and thus, theoretically, binding him to the soil); nevertheless, as with Pipes' model, the analogy cannot safely be extended too far.

d. Unlike hereditary aristocracies of the past, the Communist power elite is truly functional in nature, with power and privilege being almost exclusively tied to position; further, access to this elite, within reason, is open to those willing and able to play the game and pay the price. Structurally, the system is hierarchical and bureaucratic; however, to assume substantial parallels between life under such a system and apparently similar organizations such as a large corporation or the military seems dangerous at best. Although, hopefully, there are exceptions, the mass of available evidence suggests that downward loyalty is conspicuous by its rarity, with the attitudes and behavior of the elite towards the masses being frankly exploitative⁶ in nature (it is this, rather than some sort of ex cathedra definition of the Soviet system as inherently evil, that Milovan Djilas identifies as the core cause of elite-mass relation problems in the USSR⁷).

Given the basic Marxist concept that value is added only through application of labor, there would seem to be more than a little injustice for such creation of value by the mass of workers--whether in industry, services, or agriculture--not to be recompensed by an appropriate scale of wages in an avowedly Marxist state; yet the facts of the matter are clearly shown in the stunted standard of living "enjoyed" by the citizens of one of the supposedly great economic powers in the world, a standard which, interestingly enough, is recognized by all as being perceptably lower even than that found among its East European allies.

e. Although Marx failed to address the problem of relations among states professing his ideology, his views and those of his disciples, even in the early days following the seizure of power in Russia, were internationalist in flavor, with conflict being theoretically possible only between those classes and political systems seen by definition as fundamentally hostile. Unfortunately for the idealists, the exigencies of ruling a nation state within a system of nation states and the imperatives of geography, history, and national self-interest overrode comradely equality across boundaries--as the Chinese discovered to their chagrin as early as 1922 when the new Soviet regime reversed its earlier stand regarding the need to eradicate the results of centuries of unfair treaties.⁸ So too were the various minorities under tsarist rule to discover that their desires and rights--however proclaimed (see the new Soviet Constitution)--were simply to be subordinated to the manifest destiny of Great Russian nationalism.

Section II. Statement of Soviet Political Goals.

3. Ultimate Goals. Turning to Goure's approach, what can we say regarding the Soviet political system? As with ideology, systemic victory or goal achievement can be defined in absolute or practical terms. If total ideological conformity and subservience are the ultimate aims in the former realm, their achievement would--in Soviet eyes--be meaningful only if accompanied by appropriate realignments in world political organization and loyalties. As some have put it, Soviet lust for power will be satiated only when all are under their control, Soviet expansionism will cease only when there is nowhere else to grow, and Soviet need for security will be satisfied only at the price of total insecurity for everyone else.

4. Immediate Goals. However, although still real enough, these are for the distant future. On the more pragmatic level, Soviet political aims tend to be multilayered. Briefly stated, the latter start with successful maintenance of the status quo at home, include an only slightly less urgent need to preserve Soviet dominance over a politically loyal and ideologically acceptable buffer zone in East Europe, and extend to such ambitions as gaining full acceptance as a superpower. In a manner not too dissimilar from that of other expansionist empires, the Soviet leadership is desirous of spreading the power, presence, ideology, and influence of the USSR at the expense of all rivals, real or perceived. Although such divisions tend to obscure the degree to which interpenetration occurs, it will be easier to treat domestic affairs, intra-Pact relations and other foreign relations sequentially.

Section III. Domestic Socio-Political Factors.

5. Introduction. As already stated, one of the most noticeable peculiarities of the Soviet political system is the evident dichotomy between seemingly limitless state power and actual application of the latter towards the achievement of publicly proclaimed goals. What, then, are some of the intrinsic characteristics of the system which in the eyes of the leadership serve to inhibit its freedom of action? Let us start with the possessors of all this power themselves, the Soviet power elite.

6. The Problems of Leadership.

a. First and foremost is the degree and depth of insecurity the system breeds. The lack of an institutionalized method either for limiting or transfer of individual power (witness the summary treatment of Podgorny), coupled with the severe, though no longer catastrophic, cost of a fall from eminence, tend to make rivals of colleagues and nearly every policy decision one of power politics. This so colors perceptions that everything that happens, at home or abroad, becomes seen not as the operation of social forces as it should to a believer in the official ideology but as the result of "intrigues by various crafty individuals"⁹ (i.e., the well-known and often-cited Soviet penchant for belief in "devil theories").

b. Partly self-imposed and in part due to the inexorable logic of the system itself, the Soviet Union suffers--at times severely so--from what can only be described as hierarchical constipation. The confluence of forces inhibiting responsiveness and willingness to

innovate, change, or take risks are awesome indeed: the sheer size and pervasiveness of the bureaucracy; the intensely politicized nature of all decisionmaking; the lack of institutional stability or of institutionalized controls and safeguards, forcing even the dedicated Soviet civil servant to seek protection from the effects of possible error; the momentum of total centralized planning for everything, using everything, and at maximum capacity--all culminate in an "enormous centripetal pressure" to concentrate all important policy development and decisionmaking at the highest possible level.¹⁰

c. To make matters worse, because the top leadership has arrogated to itself a monopoly of truth, knowledge, and wisdom in every area, it becomes forced to dissipate its active interest and to make decisions in all aspects of Soviet society. Lacking any type of independent public media or loyal opposition, this leadership is also denied anything like independent input, whether in the form of policy suggestions, criticism, or even general information.¹¹ The corrupting atmosphere of absolute power, being no respecter of political systems, also seeps into the Kremlin, where the Soviet rulers cannot help but be prone to attracting sycophants and to developing delusions of omniscience, with all the potential this has for divorcing them from reality. Even when good sense prevails, it becomes impossible to avoid at least pretending in public to know all the answers. As Nikita Khrushchev put it (in a 1957 address to agricultural workers in Gorky):

We leaders are responsible for everything. Therefore we must understand everything, recognizing right from

wrong and good from evil, supporting the right way and vanquishing the wrong way.¹²

d. Although the leadership is evidently aware of its problems, witness the repeated calls for reform and decentralization, vested interests in the status quo and bureaucratic inertia have successfully thwarted every serious attempt at improvement. Additionally, despite a realization that it indeed is not and cannot be all-knowing, the Soviet leadership, while augmenting its standard collection and evaluation agencies with a series of academic-style institutes and similar organizations (such as the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada), still must be aware of its susceptibility to information deprivation, distortion, or manipulation by those in control of data accumulation, analysis, and input, whether out of ideological bias, personal axes to grind, or simply doubtful competence.¹³

e. On the other side of the coin, whatever the reason for limitations of ability or insight on the part of the leadership, their mandatory infallibility in all areas forces "all elements of society, even scientists and technicians, to affect the same blindness as that of the leadership," a situation that can and has played havoc (e.g., Lysenkoism).¹⁴

f. Thus, despite a theoretical ability to move quickly, analysis of actual Soviet practice indicates that both policy formation and efforts to implement changes tend to get bogged down. The Soviet leaders themselves, despite the possession of an enormous concentration of power, are so hemmed in by the system and its bureaucracy that their latitude of choice is far more restricted than would appear. The

longevity and unusual stability in office of the power elite tend to magnify the effects of ordinary people having to be both omniscient and the source of all policy initiative as well as the corrupting influences of limitless power. And finally, because the leadership really cannot handle everything, they tend to narrow their attention to those areas with which they are most familiar, which leads to neglect elsewhere and compounds the effects of planning rigidities and bureaucratic conservatism.¹⁵ The result of all of this is a leadership which, however restricted in their understanding of the full scope of their limitations, show repeated signs of doubts as to the efficacy of the system which they rule. Being able to give orders is one thing; the key question remains, however: will such instructions be properly understood and, if so, executed in a manner conducive to the achievement of the orders givers' goal--on both macro and micro levels? The Soviet power elite, it would appear, are much less certain about this than we seem to think they are.¹⁶

7. Elite-Mass Relations. Why? To a great extent this has to do with the reactions of the Soviet citizenry to the demands of its leadership. Faced with an apparently overwhelming concentration of power in the hands of a ruling elite whose lack of concern for his views, needs, and aspirations is abundantly evident; awash in a sea of propaganda proclaiming a world whose relationship to reality is to a great extent coincidental; pressured from all sides to conform to the desired mold, think the desired thoughts, and "fill and overfill the plan;" treated politically as a child despite growing education and

sophistication; the average citizen attempts to cope, to make the system work for him. Defensive reactions such as passive resistance, tuning out propaganda appeals, developing a carefully constructed outer facade of conformity, and, as Shanor puts it, resorting en masse to a mixture of "cunning, obsequiousness, knavery, thievery, petty empire building, goldbricking, buck passing, and time serving"¹⁷--all this tends to render somewhat suspect the picture of an all-powerful, all-effective political system. Essentially, the lack of downward loyalty, the rank injustices, and exploitation are merely reflected back upwards by the people. This then leads to the vicious cycle effect commented on earlier: additional efforts on the part of the regime to tighten controls, raise production quotas, and try even harder to enforce the desired behavior patterns only leading to a fresh series of defensive reactions.¹⁸

8. National Minorities.

a. By far the most important tension in the USSR stems from precisely the same source that exploded all of the other 19th century European colonial empires, namely, the rising power of national self-awareness and self-assertiveness. Thus far the Soviet Union has eluded this common fate, in part by the happenstance that its colonial territories were contiguous to the Great Russian homeland, in part due to the leadership's success at defining colonialism so as to exclude the Russian experience, and in part because of the tightly knit system of population control.

b. How serious is the minority problem in the USSR? In the first place, by threatening the very principle of Soviet federalism

(i.e., control from Moscow), minority unrest calls into doubt the "most potent unifying and legitimizing systemic force within Soviet society-- great power nationalism," a major contributor to the political stability of the Soviet state. Secondly, minority self-awareness has been alleged to be growing faster than loyalty to the central government, being nourished, paradoxically, by a deliberate policy of encouraging the maintenance of national languages and culture (originally intended as a sop to keep the natives happy and as a device for lending credence to exported claims of systemic superiority) as well as by continued socio-economic progress; nationalism is simply not withering away. Third, and probably most dangerous, it has begun to infect local national (i.e., non-Great Russian) bureaucracies, both state and Party, leading to a situation where ethnic concerns and regional interests are being increasingly taken up by minority members of the political elite.¹⁹ Regions identified as being plagued with unrest include the Ukraine, Lithuania, Armenia, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Moldavia, and among smaller groups such as the ethnic Germans, Meskhetians, and Crimean Tatars.²⁰ Thus the Western tendency to associate such problems primarily with Soviet Jews tends to obscure the breadth of the dissent.

c. What has been the official response? Here behavior seems to speak louder than words. What such conduct suggests is both an evident uneasiness as to the loyalty of their minority population as well as something less than an adequate understanding of how to deal with the situation. Efforts to assuage ethnic sensitivities, described above, are more than offset by nervous clamping down on "anti-Soviet"

behavior, resulting in the stimulation of the very sentiments most unwanted. On the other hand, Sovietization (read russification) programs and minority dilution through resettlement are to an unmeasurable extent negated not only by the continued insistence on ethnic labeling on official documentation such as identity cards but also by frequent manifestations of ethnic prejudice on the part of the dominant Great Russians.

d. As if the above were not enough, the whole situation is being further aggravated by the steady erosion of the once substantial population majority formerly enjoyed by the Great Russians due to lopsided growth rates, especially in Central Asia.

Section IV. Intra-Pact Relations.

9. The Nature of the Warsaw Pact.

a. In order to place a discussion of the Warsaw Pact into proper perspective it is necessary to restate briefly certain basic facts. First, in Soviet eyes maintenance of an adequate degree of control over this geographical and politico-ideological buffer zone is a matter whose paramountcy is overshadowed only by the imperatives of national and systemic self-preservation. Additionally, by serving as a physical demonstration of the success and correctness of the Marxist-Leninist analysis of history, as well as by multiplying the Soviet voice in the international arena, the USSR's string of East European client states provides direct political advantages as well as satisfying positive feedback to the collective ego of the Soviet leadership. Finally, the USSR has derived, and probably expects to

continue to derive, substantial economic benefits from its ties with Eastern Europe.²¹

b. Although designed to resemble as well as provide a propaganda-prestige response to its NATO counterpart, the apparent similarities between the Warsaw Pact and the Western alliance are highly misleading. Official descriptions notwithstanding, the central reality of the Pact is that it is a Soviet creation, designed by and almost exclusively for the convenience of Moscow. Moreover, despite the existence of a series of political and military institutions, to include some sort of international command structure, there is evidence to suggest that, like the former US Strike Command, it is not intended for operational use, whether against NATO or internal disorders (e.g., in Hungary or Czechoslovakia), but rather as a means for coordination of peacetime functions such as training, exercises, and equipment standardization.²²

c. It would seem that the Soviet leadership has few illusions about its East European neighbors or about the alliance system that binds them together. Thus while maintenance of compliance and conformity is perceived as an urgent concern and worthy of considerable attention, the Kremlin appears willing to accept facade in lieu of reality in terms of non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) commitment to the alliance, even to the point of maverick behavior such as Rumanian independence in foreign policy, as long as vital Soviet interests are not endangered. Also, when the chips are down, as was the case in 1956 and 1968, Moscow obviously prefers to rely on its own resources

and organizational system, with contributions from its allies to such activities as military operations against recalcitrant Pact members-- however willingly supplied--being integrated directly into the Soviet military command structure.

d. Despite an evident disparity in national points of view, the leaders of all Warsaw Pact member states do share a more or less common ideology, with its special value system and long-term goals. Also, a number of Pact members have a common uneasiness about their borders as well as doubts as to the depth of their popular support at home. It is this circumstance which, when coupled with the vision of ancient enemies within the opposing alliance, that tends to make Pact solidarity--at least on the survival level--a matter of mutual advantage.

10. Perceived Vulnerabilities.

a. Where might Moscow perceive itself to be vulnerable as regards its ties with the rest of the Warsaw Pact? Unquestionably it must realize that it has failed to generate sufficient trust and mutual willingness to make sacrifices among its own allies for the latter to be willing to sustain both the effort and the costs that enterprises such as a successful military campaign in Europe--with all of its consequences--would entail. The lack of such a relationship is demonstrated not only by the degree of control maintained by Moscow over the leadership of its allies, despite the fact that the latter are dedicated Communists with long records of personal sacrifice and even imprisonment, but also by the degree to which the latter are apparently not consulted or otherwise involved in substantive matters.²³

That the gross imbalance in concept, functions, organization, and level of their involvement, as well as the degree of Soviet mistrust, are not lost on the other Pact members seems clear enough from all available information; also, there are numerous indications not only that this state of affairs is bitterly resented but that several East European states, the most celebrated case being Rumania, are making more than a little use of the existing alliance institutions in an attempt to reverse the flow of influence.

b. Despite a generation of enforced togetherness under an ideology and political system that tends to idealize proletarian brotherhood, the Soviet leadership must be aware that neither nationalism nor ancient hatreds and prejudices have been successfully eradicated within the alliance. The bad blood between Hungary and Rumania over Transylvania still remains. Worse still, the Russians must smart under the realization that culturally, as well as in many other respects, they themselves are simply not looked up to by the rest of East Europe as they would prefer. Most serious of all, however, is the Warsaw Pact "German problem." A case can be made that one of the more persistent American failings is an inability to comprehend the depth of European--East as well as West--discomfort over German proclivities and potential. With respect to the USSR this attitude apparently verges on paranoia; that the adoption of a proper ideology or even a highly pro-Soviet foreign policy is no protection is shown by Soviet treatment of East Germany.²⁴

c. To heighten Soviet anxieties, there are indications that two decades of intensive inculcation of the merits of Soviet-style

socialism have had less than the desired results on the political consciousness of the peoples of several East European states. As one author has noted, it would seem that a key cultural prerequisite for its acceptability has to do with the location of the state concerned with respect to the high-water mark of the Renaissance, with only those states historically accustomed to Byzantine-style patriarchy and suspicion of foreign--especially Western--influences finding themselves sufficiently comfortable with its particular approach.²⁵ Curiously enough, this leaves out East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, a group which includes the key Soviet "enemy," the critical northern tier of states, and the targets of active Soviet interventionism. All in all, it is not difficult to see why the Soviet insistence on maintaining hegemony over Eastern Europe by the presence of threatened use of naked military power rather than by genuine alliance is seen as "potentially one of its weakest foreign policy positions."²⁶

Section V. Other Foreign Relations.

11. The Nature of Soviet Foreign Policy.

a. As with intra-Pact relations, an examination of Soviet vulnerabilities in its dealings with states beyond its sphere of control would seem to be best prefaced by a word or two of explanation. Analyzed in behavioral terms, much of the public conduct of the USSR, it would seem, can be explained (there is, of course, as wide a variety of views here as about the political system) as arising from a truly monumental inferiority complex, coupled with what has often been described as a siege mentality. Ideological imperatives, reinforcing

an instinctive national bent toward secretiveness, are reflected by a compulsive need to conceal perceived faults, no matter how blatant, from the peering eyes of outsiders; to resort to elaborate, sometimes even self-deceiving, subterfuges in order to present a seamless facade; and to exhibit publicly an obnoxious self-righteousness coupled with an inability to see any merit in or say any good about their opponents of the moment, foreign or domestic. Contrasting with this are definite indications of private self-doubt as to whether they measure up either to their public image or to their inner self-expectations.²⁷

b. Essentially, Soviet foreign policy is a composite of the dual roles perceived by its leadership--that of rulership over a nation state within a system of nation states reacting to the cumulative effects of geography, history, and traditional national interests, and that of self-ordained "high priests" of an international ideological movement, exhibiting concerns about orthodoxy and unity as well as a driving need to demonstrate--by manipulation of terminology if all else fails--the ineluctable progress of the forces of history (i.e., towards the collapse of capitalism and the victory of world socialism).

c. An ideological view of international relations as a perpetual struggle between the forces of good and evil and belief in the ultimate triumph of the former (i.e., socialism) coupled with traditional Russian expansionism tend to commit Moscow to a dynamic, outward thrusting foreign policy. Because this expansionism is one of the major irritating aspects of Soviet conduct on the world stage, the causes behind it are important to understand; unfortunately, however,

as elsewhere, there seems to be little agreement. Some see it as instinctive incrementalism, with each new "grab" suggesting or necessitating the next; others picture the USSR as being like a body of water, forever flowing outward whenever and wherever it encounters no significant opposition. One interesting theory claims that poverty of climate and topography have traditionally stimulated a high level of outward population flow; this same source then goes on to deny that this expansionism has been due to any "sense of insecurity and need for buffers."²⁸ Offsetting this aggressiveness is a sense of caution, derived, it would seem, partly from the above-mentioned sense of competitive inadequacy and partly from a deep-seated fear of risking even the slightest danger to the socialist motherland.

d. Superpower relations since the end of World War II have been clearly characterized by an informal, not always explicitly articulated, consensus that armed conflict between the big two, their alliance systems, or even certain client states carries with it an unacceptable risk of mutual destruction. Out of this recognition arose the Khrushchevian concept of peaceful coexistence, which can be defined in Soviet eyes as struggle by all means short of that which the West defines as war. Although under this rubric can be found a declaration of support for "wars of national liberation," such a policy is by no means a universal, but is applied on a highly selective basis (compare the Angola case with Soviet involvement in Ethiopia).

e. In the conduct of its foreign policy, the USSR has had numerous advantages: a fashionable, appealing ideology (although it

has been frequently argued that Marxism-Leninism in toto has lost much of its former attractiveness, the Leninist element--the organization and control of power--is still a strong drawing card, especially among the more fragile states in the Third World); vast resources; an enormous, seemingly invincible military machine coupled with unmatched supplies of armaments, generally of good quality; minimal popular or allied interference with policy selection; extensive, extra-national support (allies, client states, pro-Moscow political parties, sympathizers, and a widespread leftist or anti-Western climate of world opinion); good fortune (principally in being able to evade the label of colonialist power--despite history--and in the accidental congruence of Soviet anti-Western aims with those of many Third World nations); and a combination of pragmatism, patience, and perseverance, reflected in an ability and willingness to operate at a loss--economic or political--for an extended period in the hope of long-term gain.

12. Perceived Vulnerabilities.

a. Nevertheless, all is obviously not peaches and cream. Where and how do the Soviet leaders feel constrained in their attempts to achieve foreign policy goals? It is evident that perceived liabilities across the entire spectrum of inputs into the national power equation can and do act to reinforce the Soviet tendency towards caution and conservatism in the political sphere (a reality that continues to make the necessary divisions of this paper less than easy to keep tidy). Once we try to proceed beyond this elementary observation, however, the inadequacies of the state of the art alluded to in an

earlier chapter begin to become painfully evident. What, if anything, do we know about Soviet perceptions of their weak areas in such a central issue as politics, the very stuff of power? Based on extensive digging, the author was able to piece together only a very scanty and incomplete picture, based in part on an analysis of the impressions of a team of US specialists in Soviet affairs who participated in a joint symposium with senior representatives of two major Soviet international affairs research institutes.²⁹ Despite the fact that the parties involved were not--and felt themselves to be not--at the center of the policymaking process, the combination of their commitment to the political system, shared background with and access to the key policymakers, and opportunity to conduct research based on Western sources makes their relatively unvarnished perceptions of the Soviet situation immeasurably more revealing, it would seem, than the usual official communications.

b. Although at first glance the fears expressed by the Soviet symposium participants--all specialists in American affairs--appeared to be broadly assorted, on closer inspection they revolved primarily around the questions of the relationship of the United States to the official Soviet view of the world and of the problem of control. To start with, the Soviets were evidently at a loss when it came to comprehending or trying to cope with phenomena that did not conform to Marxist-Leninist categories (one example being the multinational corporation). Essentially, the United States, due to its technological dynamism (several Soviet participants acted noticeably defensive about

perceived US superiority in this area), superior economy and weaponry, and other "improper behavior," was refusing to fit the role designated for it by official Soviet ideology (i.e., that of decadent and fading superpower). Instead of passively accepting the Soviet ideal of detente, the United States, making unfair use of its political, technological, and economic strengths, was openly seeking to gain unilateral advantage over the USSR, from which position it could then manipulate Soviet policy, keep the Soviets out of world crisis management, and in general deny Moscow its predestined place in the sun. In sum, it could be inferred that the USSR needed detente more than its rival did, that the Soviets felt that their quantitative advantages were of little or no value against US technological superiority, and that the worst sin the United States was committing was in refusing "to stand still and allow the USSR to forge ahead."³⁰

c. If we extend our research beyond the above, it appears that the Soviet leadership must feel more than a little difficulty in understanding other players on the world stage as well, whether this be the People's Republic of China, the Federal Republic of Germany (both objects of deep, visceral fear), or the nations of the Third World. Surely someone in Moscow must have wondered why after all those years of expensive, and occasionally even risky, Soviet aid have client states such as Egypt, North Yemen, and the Sudan summarily evicted their Soviet advisers? In general, why does it so often seem that just as the USSR is finally getting to where it can expect some solid gain from its investment do relations with a client state

government--even allegedly Marxist ones--begin to sour (e.g., the current Somali disenchantment with Moscow)? And then why do national leaders like the Sudan's Jaafar Nimeri insist on rubbing salt into the wound by accusing the Soviets "of trying to dominate Africa in a 'new form of colonialism,'"³¹ a charge that is not only wrong and unfair but patently impossible (since selfless rendering of assistance to the forces of history by definition cannot be either great power domination or colonialism)?

13. Other Vulnerabilities. Once again, it seems appropriate to supplement the above, admittedly sketchy, description of Soviet perceptions of their own limitations with an examination of weaknesses of which the Kremlin is likely to be insufficiently aware.

a. Probably the key shortcoming of Soviet foreign policy is that it is fundamentally selfish and limited. While in a sense this is true of all foreign relations efforts, the USSR as an ideological-messianic, antistatus quo system experiences considerable difficulty in comprehending a need for, let alone demonstrating an ability to conduct, a policy of enlightened self-interest. This can be seen primarily in its persistent lack of a sense of responsibility or accountability beyond the narrowest self-concerns (e.g., avoiding nuclear war). The concepts of compromise, mutual benefit, and ability to get along with diverse political and social systems on a basis approximating equality and mutual respect found at the heart of societies based on commerce are, for Communist states, alien and unnatural at best and for the Russians in particular totally foreign to their national experience.³²

b. As proponents for an ideology preaching conflict and class struggle, the leaders of a Communist state, it would seem, are most at home when fomenting disorder and revolution. For the Soviet Union, with its burning ambition to be recognized and accepted as a global super-power and co-equal in all respects of the United States, the matter is even more pressing. For, despite much rhetoric that has seen print, the blunt fact of the matter is that, except for its military might, the Soviet Union possesses no effective attribute of a genuine super-power. Thus Soviet "influence in the world--outside her traditional zone of control, and apart from a few selected areas beyond--[has] depended overwhelmingly on arms and little else,"³³ a circumstance that assists to no small extent in explaining the persistent efforts made by the Soviet leadership to expand their already substantial military establishment, the continued Soviet stickiness in the SALT talks (after all, the West has numerous other strong suits from which to play in the political card game), and the necessary emphasis on military assistance to favored regimes in being and on support for armed insurgency against regimes not so favored. Unfortunately for the USSR, once the nasty Western colonialists have been removed and a local elite takes over, further revolution becomes at once highly uninteresting, and stability, economic development, and acquisition of the know-how and means to solve pressing problems--which do not automatically disappear with the elimination of colonialism--become important concerns. Thus it is that once the temporary confluence of Soviet and Third World State interests of reducing Western political presence and influence has led

to adequate success, the client state tends to find a widening divergence of priorities with its Soviet patron and a growing disillusionment with Soviet capabilities to be of practical assistance. To a great extent this problem underlies the less than outstanding Soviet success in a number of countries, such as Egypt, Syria, and Indonesia; in securing a substantial participating role in dealing with the Lebanon or Rhodesia situations; or in extending the Angola pattern elsewhere in Africa.

c. Next, there is ample evidence to suggest that Soviet difficulties in understanding the nature and motives of other powers are based on an even deeper noncomprehension of their underlying cultures. Part of this inability stems from the traditional exploitative/manipulative attitude of the dominant Russians towards their own minorities and part of this is attributable to ideological biases or other aspects of national character. At any rate, the Soviets both as a nation and as people have been repeatedly accused of being arrogant, ham-handed, crude, insensitive, wasteful of clients' resources but stingy with their own, antisocial, inflexible, and uninterested in the safety and well-being of the individual. All too often Soviet aid projects seem to have been designed to meet Soviet interests and compulsions, not the needs of the recipient state.³⁴

d. Since--other than certain raw materials--the only competitive, attractive export the Soviet Union has is its armaments, together with ancillary advisory, training, and maintenance support programs, continued Soviet success in maintaining or expanding its

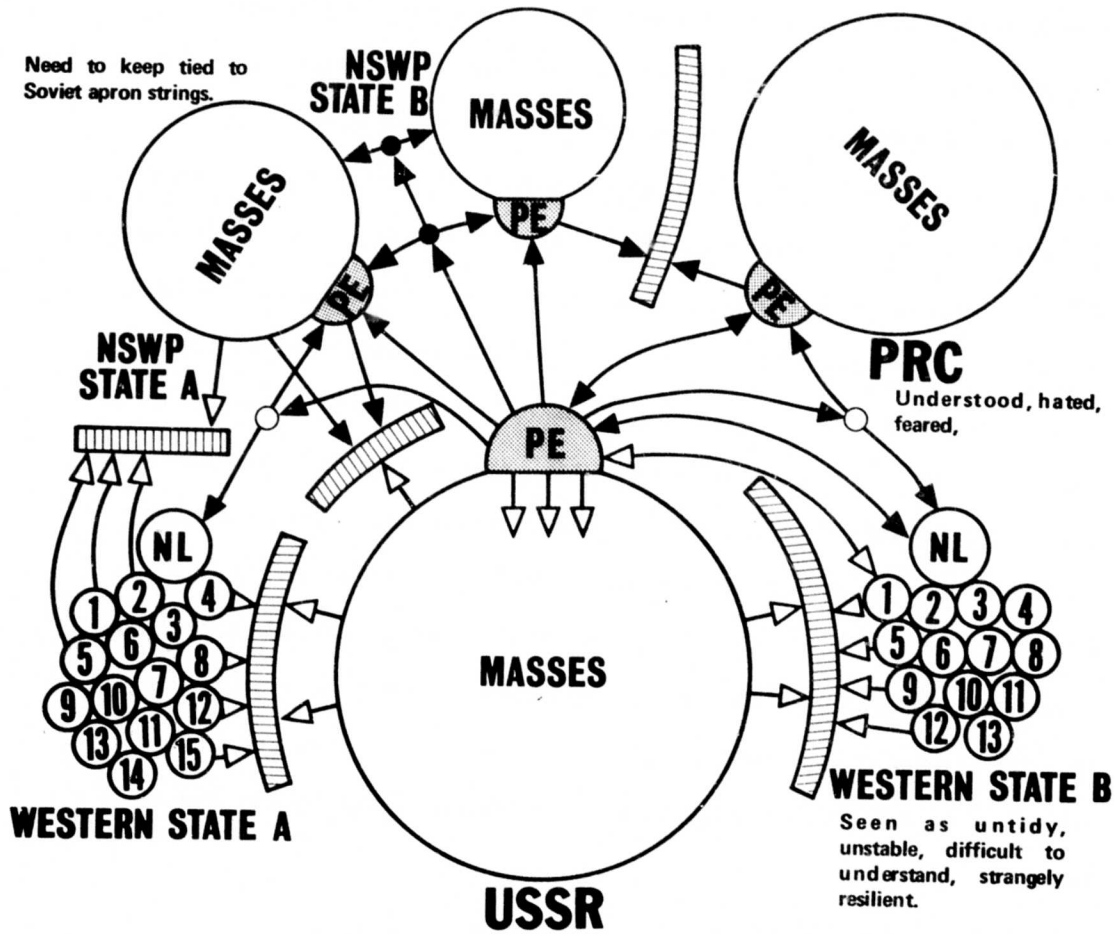
foreign presence and influence through military assistance is, it would seem, a critical component of its foreign policy and, to a somewhat lesser extent, of its continued status as a military superpower. Because supplies of military hardware--as well as the necessary expertise to make it operable and able to contribute directly to modern military power--serve at once a number of critical objectives to leaders of fragile developing nations (e.g., keeping the military elite, as a key element of a political power base, propitiated), the Soviets, by maintaining tight control over the means of keeping such equipment in functioning order, realize that, however unpopular they may be in the short run, a recipient of substantial quantities of Soviet arms simply cannot afford to disregard Soviet desires on a permanent basis. Thus once in, the Soviets reason that they are in to stay. The Achilles heel of this argument lies in the Soviet assumption that their monopoly of spare parts and expert maintenance cannot be broken, and, once lost, in the fact that there seem to be few, if any, Soviet prospects to reacquire anything like the same leverage by any other means.

Section VI. An Integrated View.

14. Introduction. Since one of the goals of this paper was to seek for patterns of Soviet vulnerabilities, it would seem appropriate, in view of the complexity of this particular chapter, to try to fit together and summarize the more salient observations made thus far about the Soviet political system. Figure 1 is an attempt to portray the overall political task of the Soviet leadership as they see it.

A MODEL OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM

Need for absolute power, control a symptom of fear, distrust of unknown, the uncontrollable. Osmotic pressure to diffuse power, privilege must be resisted.



Need to dominate all internal structures, prevent formation of independent substructures; control all attitudes, info access; channel all resources, effort towards PE chosen goals, priorities.

LEGEND:

- PE - Power Elite
- ▤ - Defensive Wall
- NL - National Leadership
- ① - Interest groups (Polit, econ, cultural, etc.)

- (with open arrowhead) One sided influence flow below state level.
- ↔ (with open arrowheads) Two sided. . .
- (with solid arrowhead) One-sided state-to-state influence flow.
- ↔ (with solid arrowheads) Two-sided. . .
- (with solid arrowhead and a dot) Control mechanism over influence flow of 3rd parties.
- (with open circle) Attempt to do same.

Figure 1

15. The Soviet Ideal: The "Light Bulb." The basic building block of the analytical model shown is that of the ideal Communist state, in which a tiny power elite runs everything and the masses simply do as they are told. Obviously, however, the model cannot remain quite so undifferentiated; no power elite, even with all the resources of modern control technology at their disposal, is able to see to the implementation in detail of all its directives. There must be institutionalized channels and an organized system of bureaucracies (i.e., other people, involved). Thus the trick in managing the whole operation is to so balance matters that the overwhelming direction of influence flow is downwards, from the elite to the masses. To achieve anything resembling this ideal state, the leadership must maintain a firm grip on everything that matters, especially over anything likely to lead to the formation of independent power centers, however modest. Reduced to its barest essentials, the Soviet leadership in its relations with its own population craves power--in the form of the widest possible control, freedom of action, and freedom from accountability.

16. The Soviet Ideal: Relations Among States.

a. Ties between Moscow and the rulers of the other Warsaw Pact states, from the Soviet point of view, reflect an evident need to have Eastern Europe fit within this desired internal elite-mass relationship pattern. Also, judging by the available evidence, it would seem that the Kremlin would like to project this ideal political template--to include terminology, ideology, value system, and control over intrapolity relations--out as far as possible, with a stated

ultimate goal of remaking the entire world to conform to the Soviet picture of reality.

b. Setting aside the problem of achievability, a special peculiarity of this system of reality projection and recreation is its ancillary system of defensive walls (iron curtains, censorship, travel restrictions, etc.), evidently designed to prevent the parties currently within the sphere of control from gaining access to competing sources of information. As implied earlier, it appears that maintaining this system of defensive walls is perceived to be an urgent necessity, one well worth the cost and trouble involved.

17. Dealing With the West: The "Bunch of Grapes." When one looks at the second basic building block of the model in Figure 1, that of the Soviet picture of a typical, Western-style democracy, the scope of Moscow's headaches becomes more evident. Here, in stark contrast to the neat, functional simplicity of the Communist ideal, is a veritable hornet's nest of independent subentities and activity (political parties, organizations, interest groups, multinational corporations, etc.³⁵). Is it any wonder, then, that the Soviets cling to their comforting devil theory of Wall Street monopolists running the whole show behind the scenes, or that they should feel the need to protect their peoples from such contagion? What may be harder for us in the West to comprehend is the equal or even greater need to keep the Soviet masses from realizing the differences between their lifestyle and that of their socialist brethren in Eastern Europe (or, if known, from actively questioning the rationale behind such an anomaly).

18. Patterns of Vulnerability. What sort of patterns can be discerned in the above?

a. First, the ability of a tiny group of people to maintain their position of exploitative dominance both over the huge masses of their own population and over a group of not entirely complaisant allies depends in the final analysis on the willingness--for whatever reason--of the dominated population, including those occupying positions in the supervisory and controlling bureaucracy, to accept the structural status quo, their position in it, and their share of the rewards and expectations. Thus it is this very willingness and those factors which contribute to it that serve as the foundation for Soviet power and national cohesiveness and potentially as its greatest vulnerability.

b. Second, the gross dichotomy between the world as it is and the view of the world that the Soviet leaders seem to need to have everyone believe in--or at the very least those people within their sphere of control--would seem to suggest that this willingness is based to a great extent on false or distorted information. That this is not entirely lost on the more observant Soviet citizen can be inferred from those means of communication that have managed to escape being molded by Soviet officialdom (e.g., writings of dissidents).³⁶

Section VII. Future Trends.

19. Introduction. As is evident to any serious student of the Soviet political system, there is very little agreement as to what the future holds, a situation which makes any brief summary a hazardous proposition. Nevertheless, there are a few trends that merit more than passing attention.

20. The Power Elite.

a. One major change in the Soviet Union that is almost guaranteed during the next decade is a near total turnover in the top leadership. With the average age of the Politburo at around 70 and that of the Central Committee a scant decade less, and with a highly atypical tendency under Brezhnev to minimize turnover at the apex (except for occasional weeding out of obstructionists, discrete packing with Brezhnev cronies, and, of course, ousting overambitious, would-be contenders for power)--in contrast to the custom of his predecessors--a log jam is building up that eventually will have to give way.³⁷

Whether or not Podgorny's sudden departure was the result of power struggle or significant policy differences with Brezhnev, his advanced age (74) cannot help but have been a contributing factor.

b. Who the post-Brezhnev generation of leaders will be and what alterations, if any, they will be likely to make in the current political arrangement within the Soviet empire and in the order of elite priorities are open questions. Although apt to differ from their predecessors in background, education, and outlook (a key watershed here is that dividing those whose formative professional development--and promotion--occurred during the dehumanizing turmoil of the pre-World War II purges from those who rose to eminence under less Darwinian conditions), and although increasingly likely to disregard the more inconvenient ideological imperatives as policy determinants, it can be safely assumed that the new leaders will be oriented towards nationalistic objectives and will be judged--and replaced, if need be--by results. Thus, given the incompatibility between many national

goals of the two superpowers, there is no assurance that under new Soviet leadership the United States will have it any easier.

21. Elite-mass Relations. Less easy to forecast is the direction that relations between rulers and ruled is likely to take. Some tend to feel that the new Soviet man will in effect come into being as the myth and value system so persistently being inculcated takes firmer hold. Accompanying this will be a further entrenchment of elite controls over the population, resulting in a situation where the opportunities for exercising individual initiative, seen as less now even than under Stalin, will continue to contract as Soviet society becomes even more tightly structured.³⁸ Others, somewhat more hopefully, sense a trend towards the exercise of a more rational, although still firmly authoritarian, style of rule.³⁹ As will be indicated in the chapter on the economy, with the depletion of nearly all usable labor reserves, further economic progress will be to a great extent dependent on intensive growth (i.e., through an increase in productivity). Here the power elite faces the thorny dilemma of how to stimulate motivation with minimum diversion of national resources to consumer satisfaction and without substantial loosening of their monopoly of power. Judging by a recent study, it would seem that there have been some groping efforts towards improvement in the situation.⁴⁰

22. The Warsaw Pact. As an alliance system the Warsaw Pact is likely to continue to be useful to the USSR. With respect to the other members--to the extent that circumstances give them any choice--the advantages cited earlier are likely to remain in force. Nevertheless, given the continued inability of the shared official ideology to

stem the tide of nationalism, the essential incompatibility between Soviet goals and those of its allies, and the difficulties the political system engenders--sometimes even despite occasional good intentions on the part of the people in charge--in trying to cope with rising population expectations, further explosions, particularly on the order of the 1970 and 1976 Polish confrontations between the rulers and the ruled, are to be expected. As with previous such cases, the main decision will be whether order and stability within the limits laid down by Moscow can be restored without the active intervention of the latter. Each time a decision to become involved is made in the Kremlin, the specter must arise, however, of invading Soviet forces being met by more than passive resistance, with all the unthinkable consequences this might have both in terms of Pact stability and Soviet image abroad.

23. The Soviet Union and the World.

a. Forecasting the future course of Soviet foreign policy is also a chancy business. Some see in the growth of Soviet military power vis-a-vis the West a juggernaut-like trend of ominous portent. Others decry the Soviet Union as a second-rate superpower with an obsolete, increasingly irrelevant ideology, a decay'ng leadership, and at best a facade of unity and strength. There are those who see in detente a traditional Soviet effort to mute its deep-seated hostility to the West while it obtains urgently needed help to gird it for the next--and, hopefully, last--round in the life-and-death struggle for world dominance. This is countered by a perception of detente as

serving the needs of a Soviet leadership desperate for Western technology and investment to help it patch together its ramshackle economy before it slumps uncontrollably of its own dead weight. This same distressingly broad spectrum of views can also be found in assessments of Soviet dealings with the Third World. All of this boils down to the fundamental question: is time on the side of the Soviet Union? Although all the returns are not yet in, there would seem to be a case for stating that it is not--a prospect that by no means guarantees a corresponding gain for the United States.

b. The effect that the predicted, drastic turnover in the top Soviet leadership is likely to have on the style and content of Soviet foreign policy is difficult to foresee; clearly, however, both the commitments of official ideology and the inherited imperatives of national and elite interests will remain.

c. One possibility, one that seems to be serving as the basis for US policy towards the USSR, is that it is feasible to attempt to persuade the Soviet leadership to assume some of the responsibilities of world leadership in tandem with the United States.⁴¹ This presupposes that the USSR will eventually become a satisfied power i.e., that, whatever ideological principles its rulers may continue to profess, the pragmatic concerns of maintaining an existing, desirable status quo will have become the dominant factor in the actual conduct of Soviet foreign affairs. Obviously, such a dramatic change would require some adjustments in the official system of national goals, as well as a generous dose of rationalization, but Marxism-Leninism has

in the past been called upon to do stranger things than that. Unfortunately, due to a variety of reasons--among which is the nagging relationship with the People's Republic of China, the author tends to share Professor Pipes' reservations as to the likelihood of such a prospect.⁴²

CHAPTER 4

GEOGRAPHY

Section I. Basic Description and Assessment.

1. Introduction. Many of the basic facts about Soviet geography are common enough knowledge, such as its enormous size, its northerly location, its notoriously inhospitable climate, the great length of its seacoast and borders, and the mosaic complexity of its ethnic composition. Nevertheless, since our aim is to search for exploitable vulnerabilities, it would seem useful to indulge in a brief review of certain aspects of these well-known features in addition to several other characteristics of the USSR that may, perhaps, be less familiar.

2. Location and Size.

a. The most fundamental geographic characteristic of the USSR is, of course, its physical situation. Sprawled across two continents and with close proximity to the strategic Middle Eastern crossroads, the Soviet Union would seem to be ideally situated for a power of imperial ambitions. In fact, such apparent situational superiority has spawned a number of geopolitical theories and countertheories (e.g., MacKinder's "heartland" vs. Spykman's "rimland") purporting to support the inevitability of world domination based on simple physical location.

b. The second most obvious fact about the USSR is size. Some 2 1/2 times the dimensions of the United States, this enormous empire has a vastness and a strategic depth that contributed in no small degree to the defeat of a succession of attempts by would-be conquerors whose concept of scale was molded by experience with the compactness of European states (Poland, Sweden, France, and--in our century--Germany). With a land border of nearly 13,000 miles

connecting it directly to twelve states, with both the United States and Japan as very close neighbors, and with twenty-odd divisions stationed in East Germany, a dynamic USSR, it would seem, ought to be able to exert more than a passing influence on a batch of neighbors which include, population and power-wise, nearly all the states that count.

3. Population.

a. It has been a long-term policy of the Soviet leadership to take advantage of its tsarist colonial inheritance by deliberately establishing seemingly autonomous and prosperous ethnic political subdivisions directly adjacent to neighboring states harboring population of identical or similar racial, religious, and cultural background. Whether the purpose behind this is still to try to entice dissatisfied groups, regions, or entire states to join their "successful" blood brothers, thereby further augmenting Soviet territory and power, is open to argument. The mass migration of Armenians from abroad to their new "homeland" has apparently not been widely imitated;¹ however, there is still an unquantifiable degree of influence that the USSR can exert by means of ties between domestic and foreign ethnic (e.g., Jewish) and cultural (e.g., Russian Orthodox) groups.

b. With respect to population distribution, it is rather more difficult to make a coherent case. Clearly, government policy has been in the direction of diffusing ethnic Slavs throughout the more important populated areas and of spreading the population as a whole more evenly within the borders of the country. Success, such as it can be noted, has been more evident for the former than for the latter.

4. Natural Resources and Climate.

a. It has been conventional wisdom to look with something approaching awe on the vast array of natural resources at the disposal of the Soviet Union.

In fact, more than one source has implied that perhaps alone of the great or near-great powers, the USSR is able to be self-sufficient in this respect.²

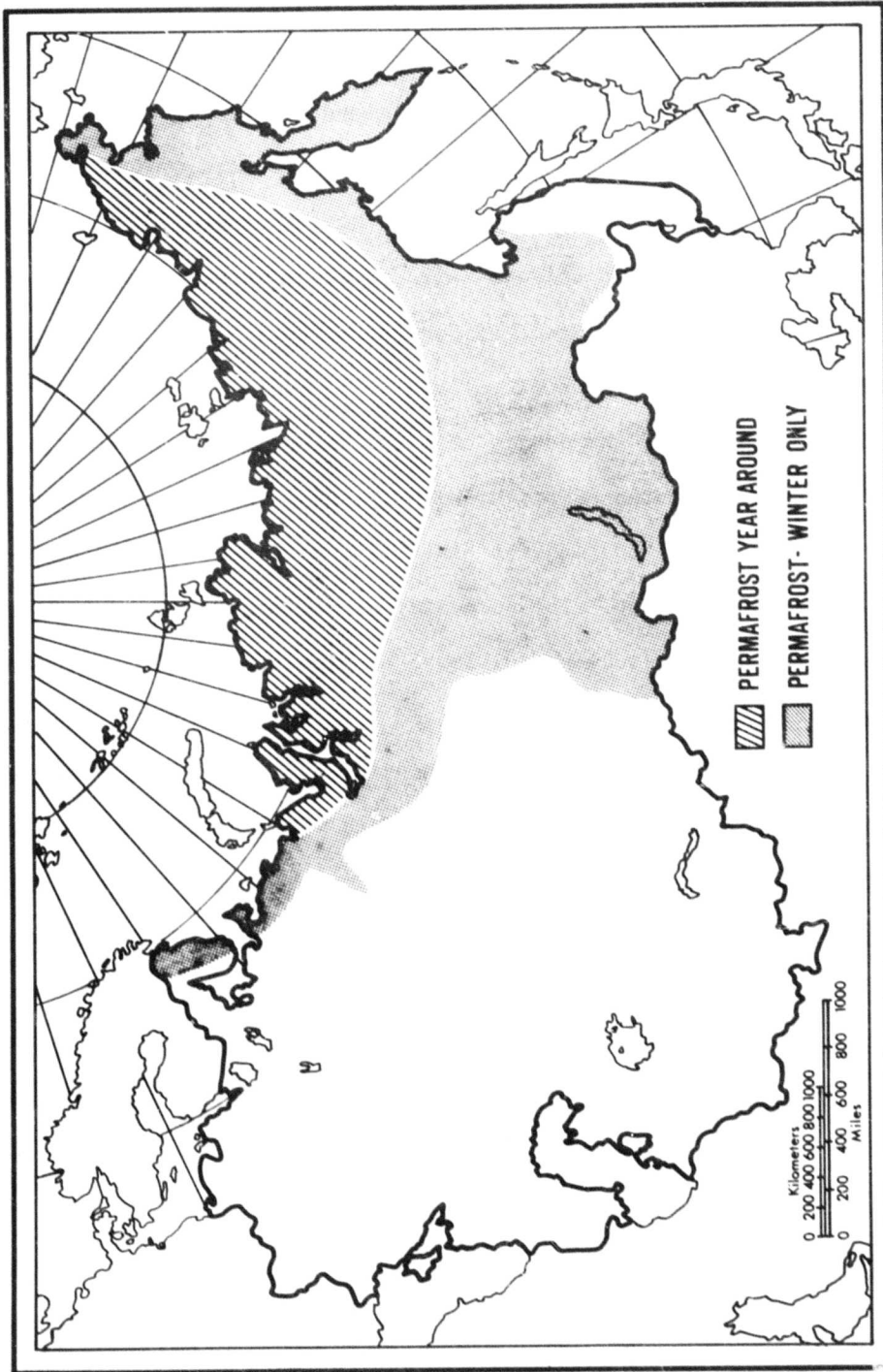
In the critical energy area, the USSR has claimed possession of more than half of the earth's supply of coal, about one third of the natural gas, and more oil reserves than any other country. Further, it has 12 percent of the world's water-power potential, second only to Zaire.³ Since much geological exploration remains to be done, the full extent of Soviet resources is as yet unknown, but the sum of what has already been discovered is indeed impressive.

b. The rigors of the Soviet climate, as suggested, are one of the country's outstanding characteristics, with "General Winter" and "General Mud" serving as no mean allies to "General Size" as contributors to the defeat of various invaders of the past. The necessity of having to cope with such climatic conditions has produced a substantial level of expertise and has naturally affected such things as equipment design and building construction.

5. Geography and Power Projection. No discussion of a state having pretensions to superpower status can be complete without at least some attention paid to its ability to project influence beyond its borders. From the strictly geographic point of view, a case has been made that the USSR has been successful at breaking out of US containment efforts, especially in the Middle East--as witnessed by the extent and durability of Soviet presence in states such as Syria, Iraq, and Somalia as well as by the activities of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron.

Section II. Identifying Vulnerabilities.

6. Application of Analytical Tools. How might we evaluate the Soviet geographic position using Dr. Goure's approach? As with the material presented in previous chapters, there is an apparent lack both of detailed assessments



BASIC CLIMATOLOGICAL SITUATION

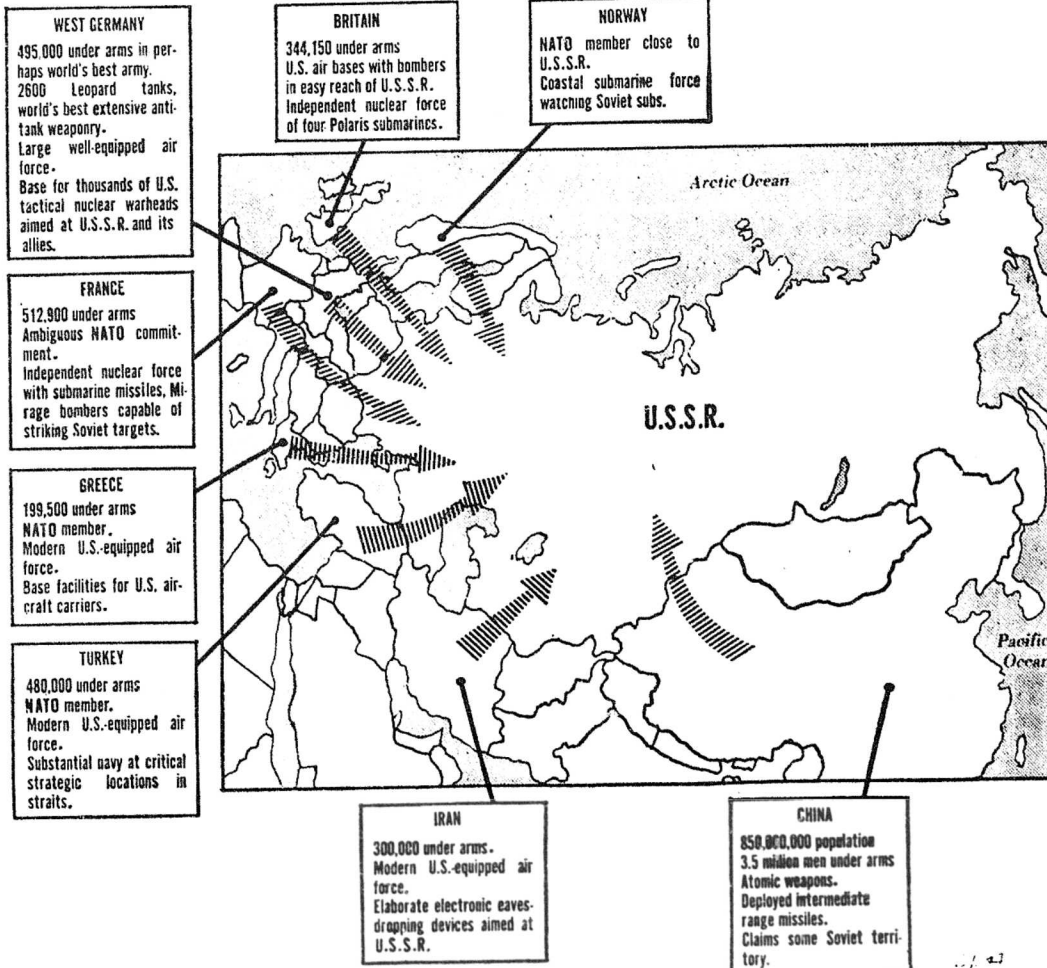
Figure 2

and of consistency among what little has found its way into print. Even so, it is possible to piece together a fragmentary picture.

7. Perceived Vulnerabilities.

a. How do the Soviets see themselves in geographical terms? Historically, the present, distended size of the Russian state was not the result of some type of long-range plan, but, according to one analyst, came about instead in piecemeal fashion, with each new addition "requiring or suggesting additional ones." In order, however, to justify such conquests, both in their own eyes and for external consumption, a "variety of rationalizations and 'necessities'" were put forth; thus a "thrust to the sea" or "warm water ports" were only "an occasional after-thought, not a preconceived aim"⁴ (obviously, Professor Pipes would not be in entire agreement with this rationale; see Chapter 3, endnote 28). Nevertheless, this growth did not result from anything like a string of successive victories. On the contrary, those lessons of history which burned the most deeply into the national psyche, it would seem, have been the national defeats, humiliation, and suffering: the Mongol conquest and long subjugation, capture of Moscow by the Poles, defeats by the Swedes under Charles XII, the Napoleonic invasion, the Crimean War, the repeated frustrations imposed on Tsarist Russia by European great power diktat in the late 19th Century, the crushing defeat by Japan, the disastrous experience in World War I, the attempt by the victorious allies to destroy the infant Soviet state at the end of World War I, the period of imposed isolation by the Western powers, the humiliating debacle and near-defeat of the Finnish War, the pain of the German invasion of 1941, and, most recently, the embarrassment of having to back down over Cuba in 1962 and the continued, and generally successful, US efforts to deny the USSR access to center stage. However "innocent" NATO members, the Chinese, or other

Through Soviet Eyes: Unfriendly Neighbors



By Ken Burgess—The Washington Post

SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBORS

Figure 3

immediate neighbors feel themselves and their foreign policy to be, the Soviets tend to feel surrounded by hostility and danger. The fact that much, if not most, of this has been only too well deserved is disregarded.

b. Haunted, then, by defeats in war, the Soviets look on their size not just as a given, the result of some sort of national destiny, but with more than a touch of defensiveness. Obdurate Soviet refusal even to discuss with Japan the return of such miniscule territorial booty as the Kurile Islands is based not merely on a Nicholas I-type assertion that "Russians may not retreat a step once the flag has been raised over new terrain" nor only on a Khrushchev-type philosophy that "what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable." Rather, it seems to be a visceral fear that the very survival of a state whose borders are so indefensible as those of the USSR depends on continuous expansion.

c. The point here is that a long boundary and direct access to numerous and powerful neighbors is a two-way street, with an absence--as in the Soviet case--of natural barriers along these borders constituting as little impediment to invasion from abroad as to expansion from within. In land terms, awareness of this fact has been repeatedly demonstrated in the past, both in the West (witness territorial grabs prior to and after World War II and the already mentioned concern over East Europe) and elsewhere (control over Mongolia as well as more or less assiduous wooing of Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey). As should be obvious, this sensitivity to territorial vulnerability tends to merge almost indistinguishably with parallel ideological and political fears (bringing us back to the need for defensive walls described earlier). As perceptive Russians have remarked more than once, this problem would become more real to Americans only if they had a hostile Mexico and

Canada with which to contend.⁵

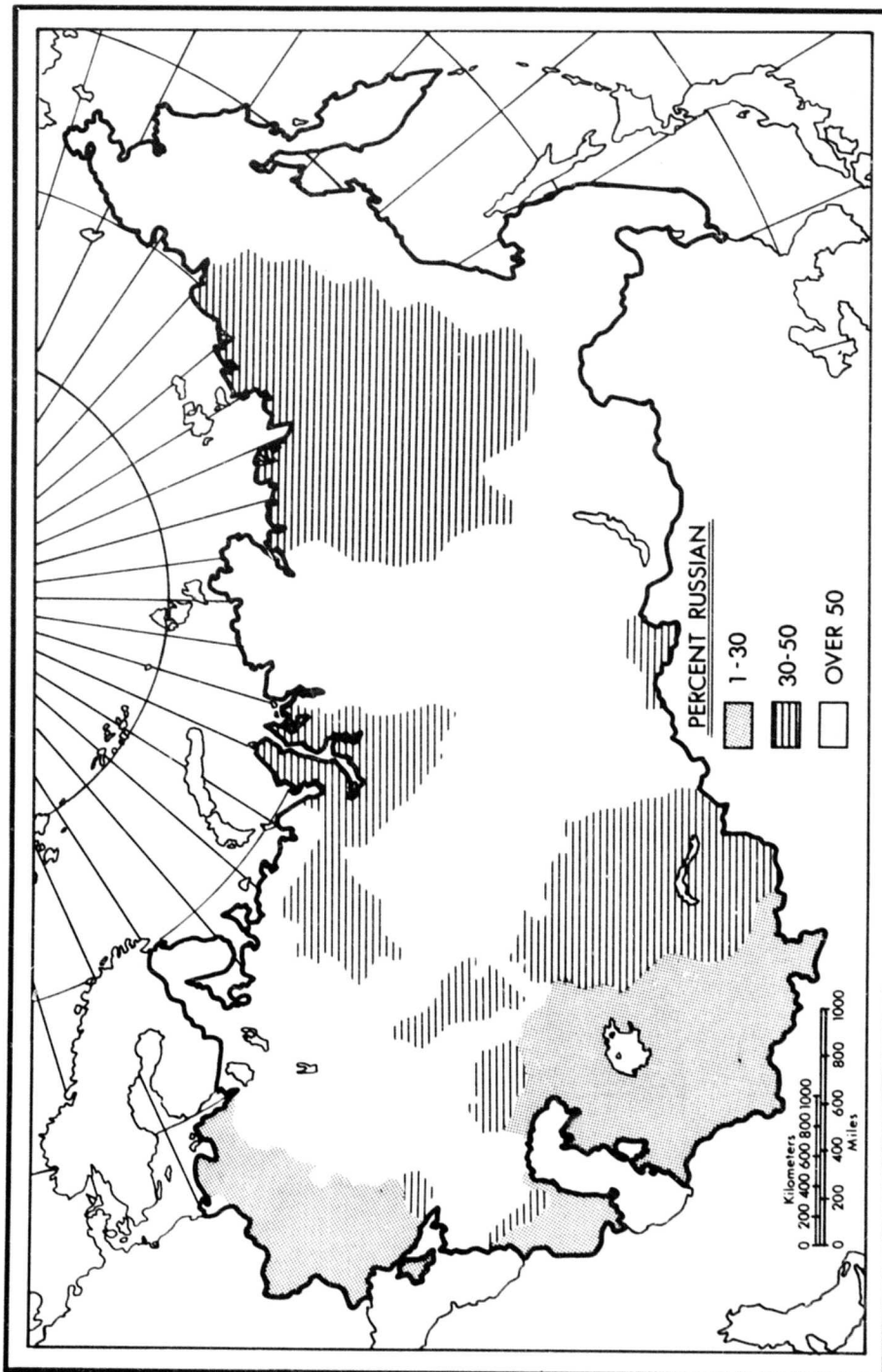
d. With respect to sea boundaries, the available evidence suggests a perception of all maritime borders as vulnerable flanks, all adjacent seas as territorial waters that must be under total Soviet military control, and all straits leading into such bodies of water as entrances for enemies.⁶

e. Once all this is understood, Soviet vulnerabilities--perceived or real--pertaining to those national minorities grouped along the border become more apparent, since success in the eyes of such minorities may well differ in its definition and scope from the views of the rulers in Moscow and the magnetic tug of influence may, on balance, be in other than the desired direction.

8. Other Vulnerabilities.

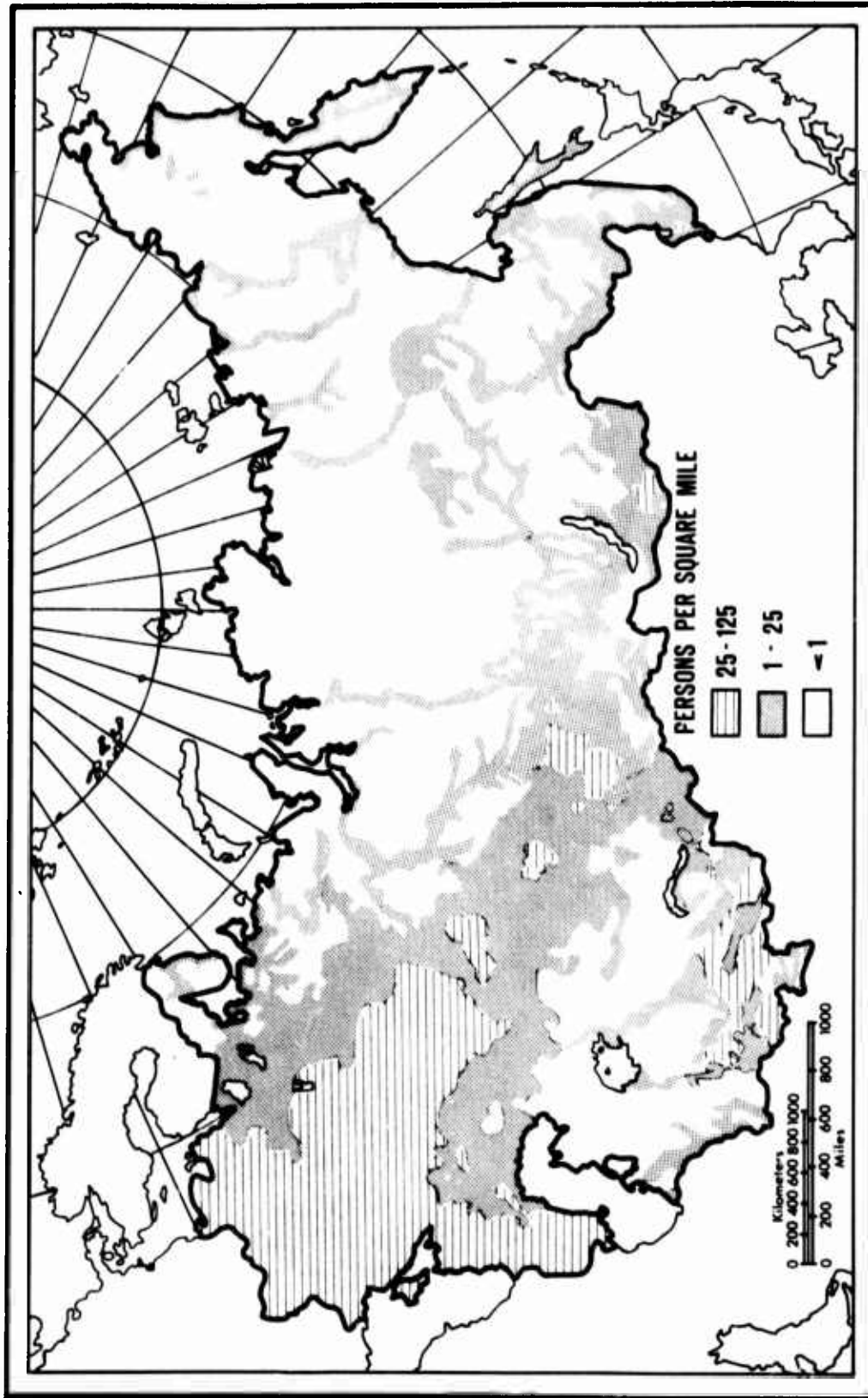
a. Soviet failure to improve general population distribution (see Lydolph for a detailed account⁷) has resulted in still further growth of the major population centers--thereby increasing their potential as targets--and in a continued lack of strategic depth in much of Siberia and the Far East, where the overwhelming bulk of settlement, agriculture, industry, and infrastructure remains strung along a narrow belt right against the southern border. To make matters worse, the lifeline of this entire region is still only two railroad tracks wide.

b. The apparent absence of serious examination of the Soviet natural resource situation from the point of view of possible vulnerabilities makes informed comment here much less than the importance of the topic warrants. In the area of minerals, for instance, there are little data available, and even then a lack of agreement. Based on a composite of two sources, it would seem that the USSR has been having troubles with natural rubber, bauxite, alumina, tantalum, tin, tungsten, fluorospar, and possibly uranium, copper,



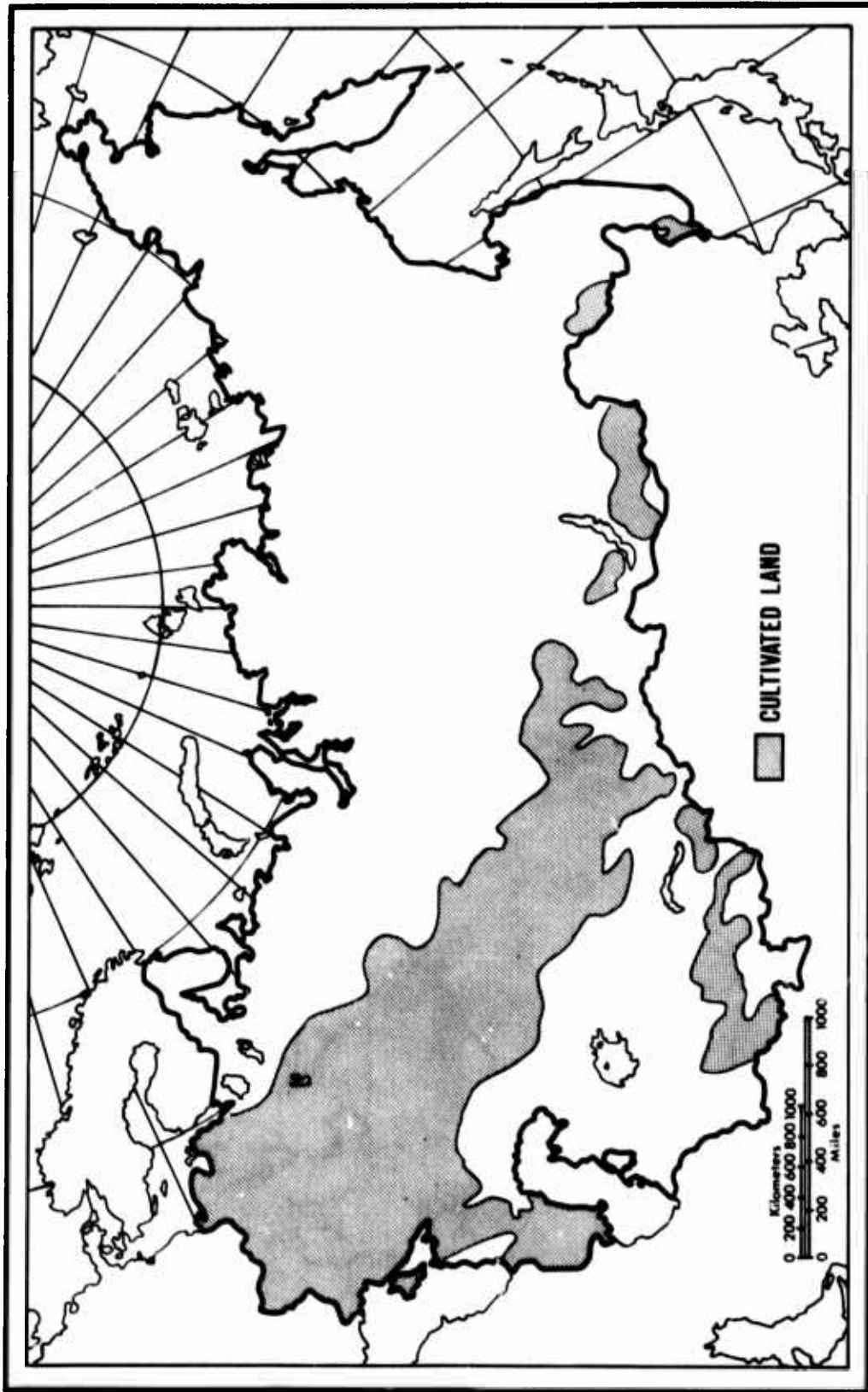
MINORITY POPULATION DISTRIBUTION ALONG THE BORDER

Figure 4



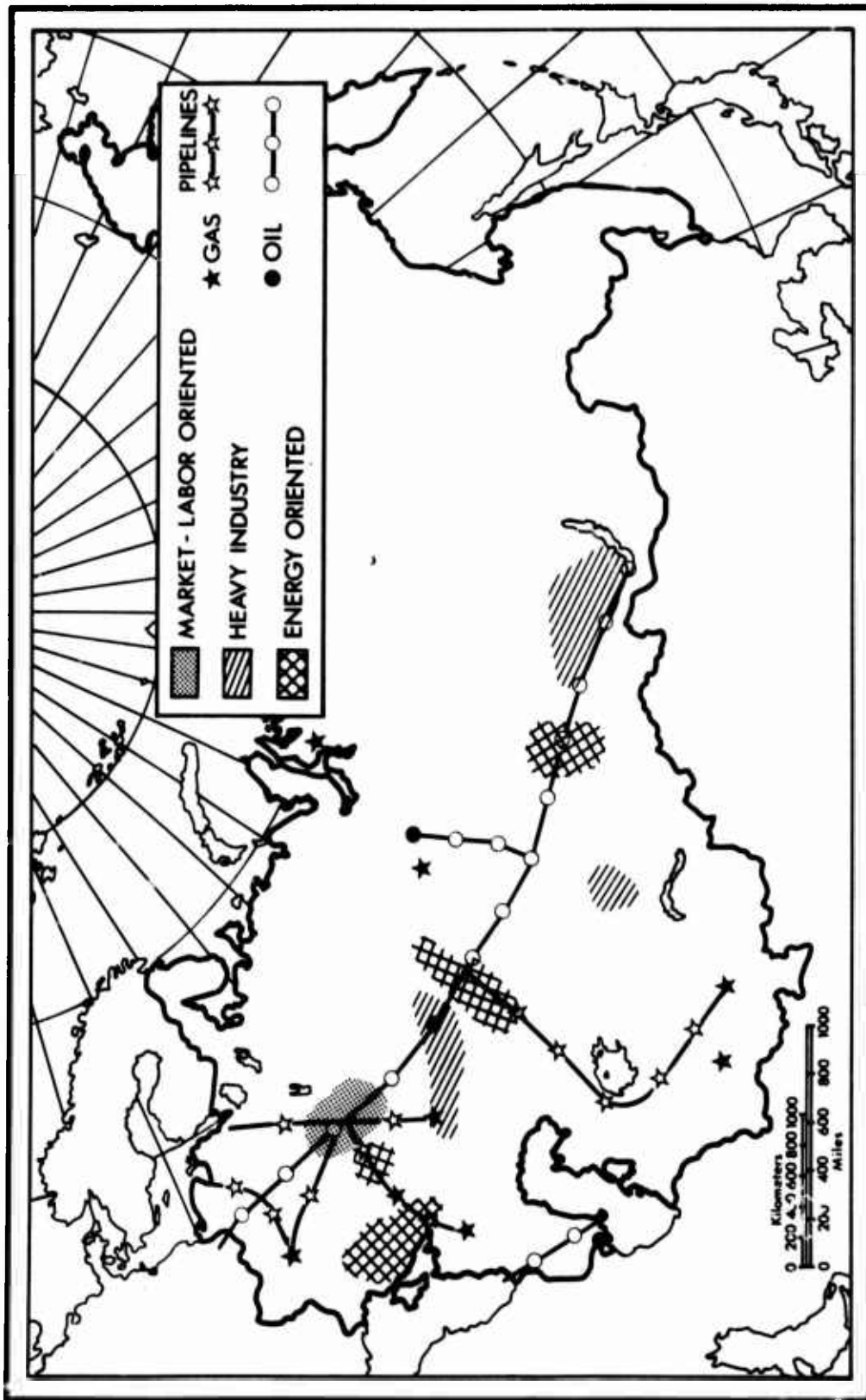
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Figure 5



AGRICULTURAL DISTRIBUTION

Figure 6



INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION

Figure 7

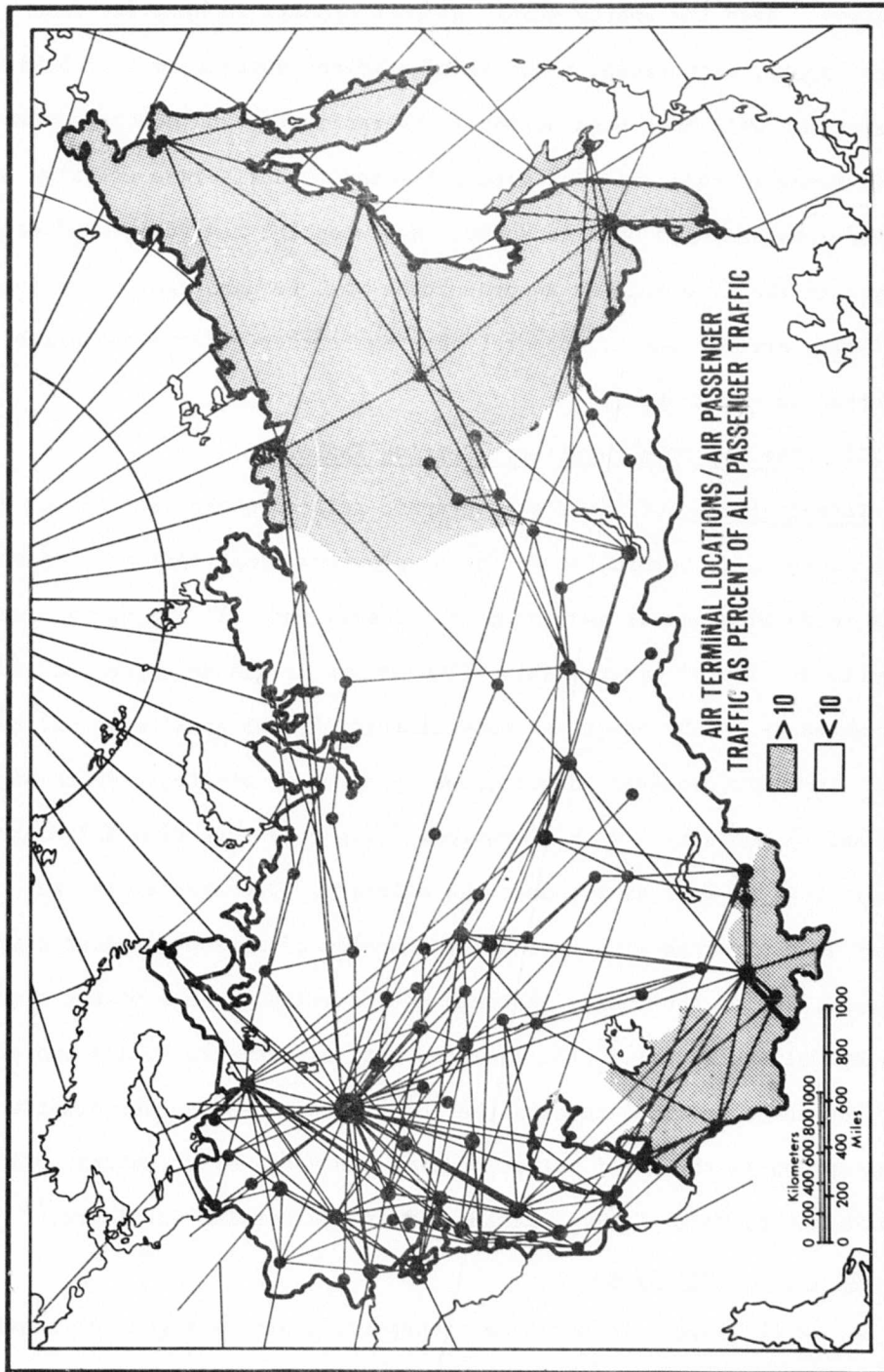
and vanadium.⁸ Even the energy supply picture appears to have its less than bright spots, with recently published evidence suggesting that Soviet oil reserves may well have been seriously overestimated and Moscow's vaunted self-sufficiency in this critical material--despite deliberate stunting of private use--increasingly open to doubt. How soon the key turnaround date from growth to absolute decline in production will be upon the Soviet leadership is still being argued, but it appears, barring further major discoveries, to be only a matter of a few years.⁹

Section III. The Key Vulnerability: Getting There.

9. Introduction. Of all the geographic-related weaknesses of the USSR deserving of further, careful study the single, most important one, it would seem, has to do with access and movement. Simply put, all the natural wealth in the world becomes of questionable value unless it can be gotten at and moved to where it can be used; the same limitation also applies to military strength. In short, however advantageous in terms of strategic depth huge size may be, by definition such dimensions bring with them time and distance costs--political as well as economic and military. But once again the researcher is confronted with an unhappy scarcity of serious studies devoted to the topic, and of the really thorough ones available, such as the transport analyses by Holland Hunter,¹⁰ the whole thrust, as seems to be all too customary, does not happen to be aimed towards the identification of vulnerabilities. A rare exception is the brief but perceptive study of Soviet railway system vulnerabilities by Major H. F. Ferguson of the USA Russian Institute.¹¹

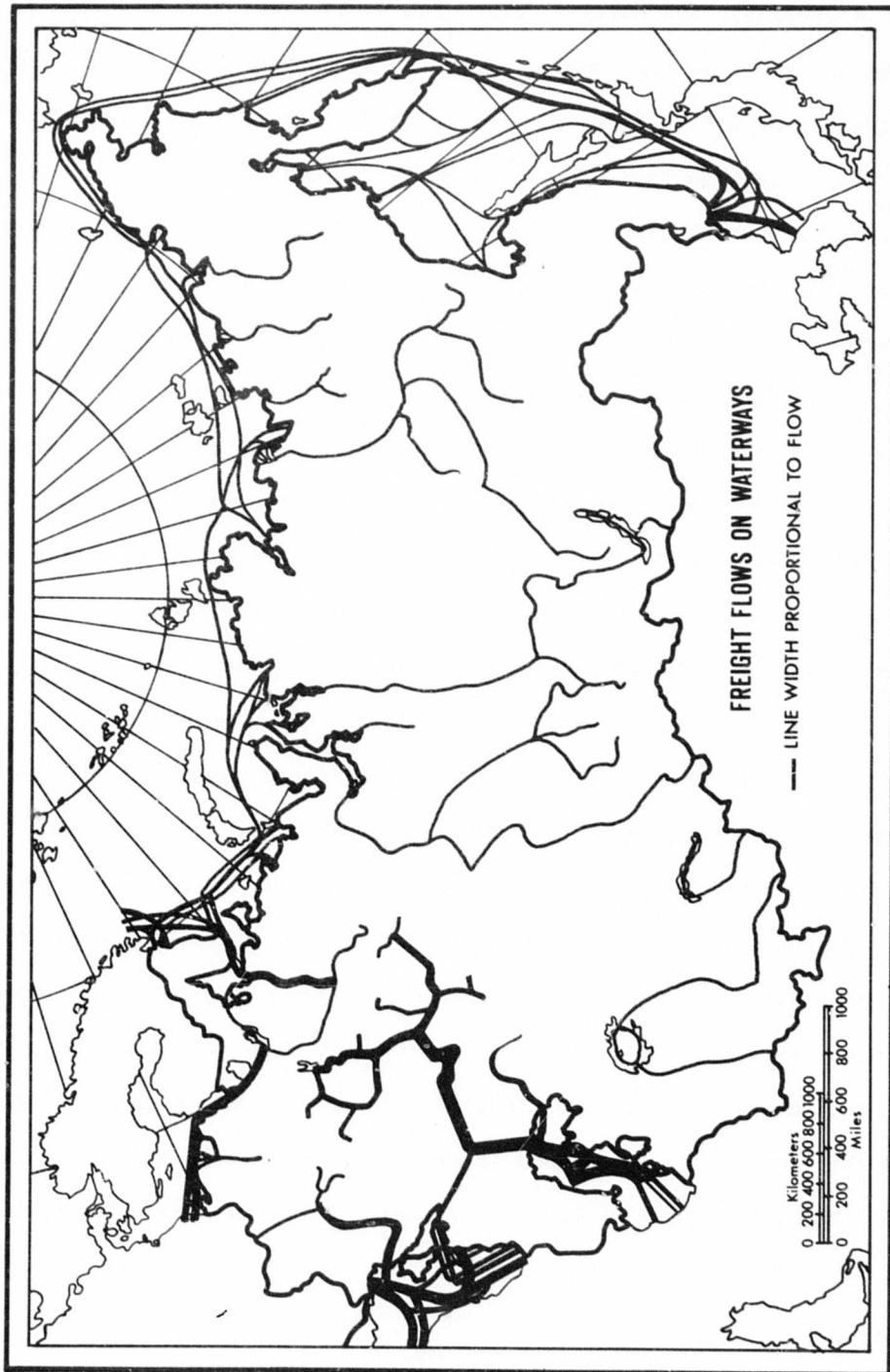
10. Movement Limitations.

a. With respect to maritime transport, there is a general consensus that of the great powers the USSR is clearly the worst endowed. Briefly stated, its rivers are located in the wrong places, the great bulk of its



AIR TRAFFIC DISTRIBUTION

Figure 8

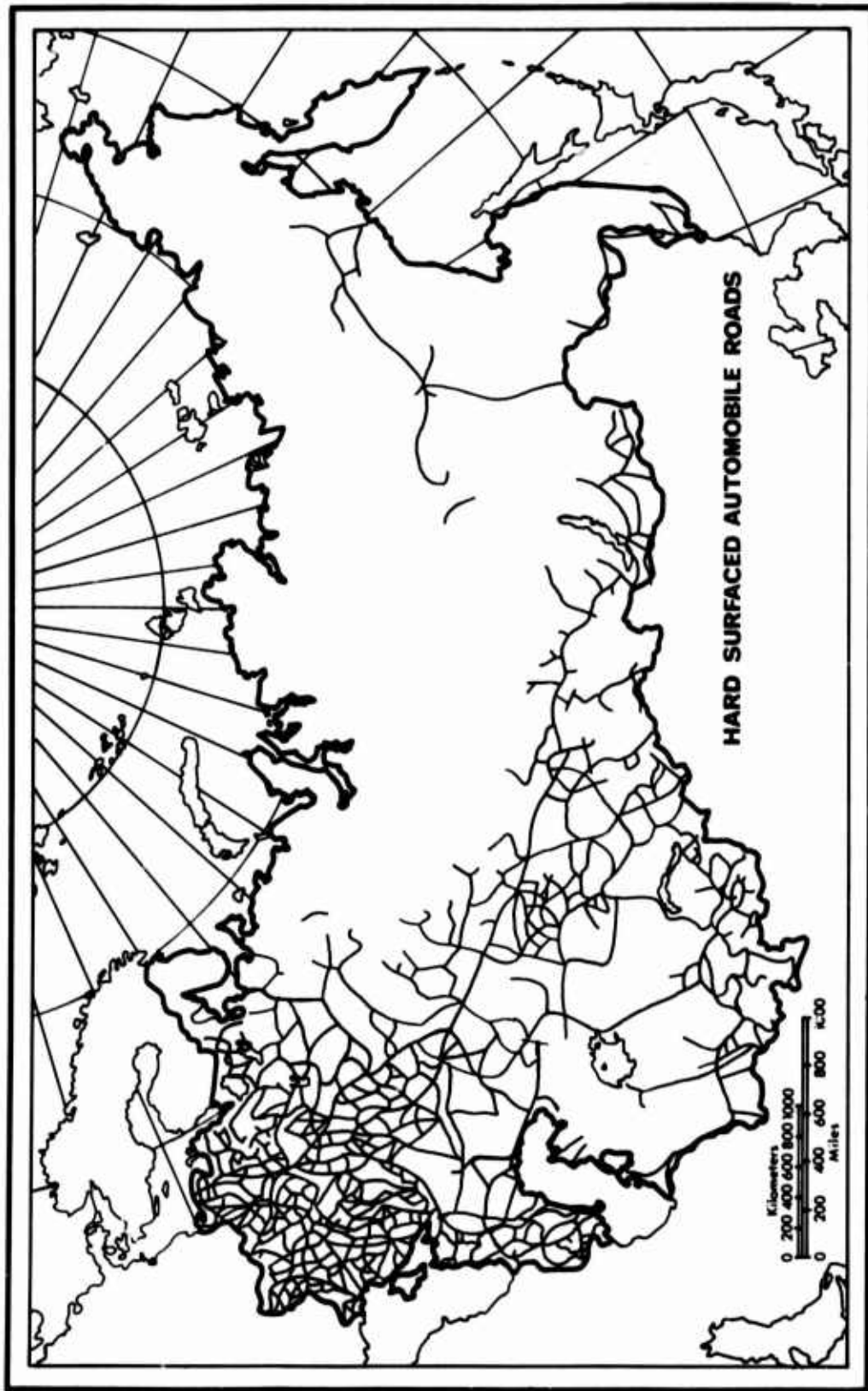


WATER TRAFFIC DISTRIBUTION

Figure 9

seacoast is unusable, and hostile power groups still maintain a stranglehold on all the important egress routes (e.g., the Bosphorus, Dardanelles, and the Danish Straits) or are well placed to exact a serious toll on Soviet sea movement (e.g., passage from Murmansk and the White Sea to the Atlantic shipping lanes, through the Mediterranean and its outlets, or out of the Sea of Japan). To make matters worse, Soviet relations with other key controllers of strategic waterways such as the Cape of Good Hope, the Suez Canal, and the Straits of Malacca leave much to be desired. Even if all such political obstacles could be smoothed over, the northerly position of the USSR means that water transport of all types is seriously interrupted due to freezing--the area around Moscow, for instance, being closed at least five months of the year. Finally, there is the matter of distance, an extreme case being the 11,600 mile trip from the Black Sea to the Soviet Far East.

b. Despite strenuous efforts to expand the usefulness of the existing water routes, whether through construction of canals, dredging, or other improvements, in general the Soviet government has found the results to be very disappointing, with investment and maintenance costs at least twice those for land transport, routes still excessively circuitous or outlying, the system of water reservoirs being more of a hazard than a convenience (due to high waves), the boat locks at the various dams constituting severe traffic bottlenecks, and the administrative as well as physical complications of trans-shipment making mixed mode transport prohibitively difficult. The upshot of this is that the already small share of freight ton-miles moved by water seems destined to continue its steady decline.¹²

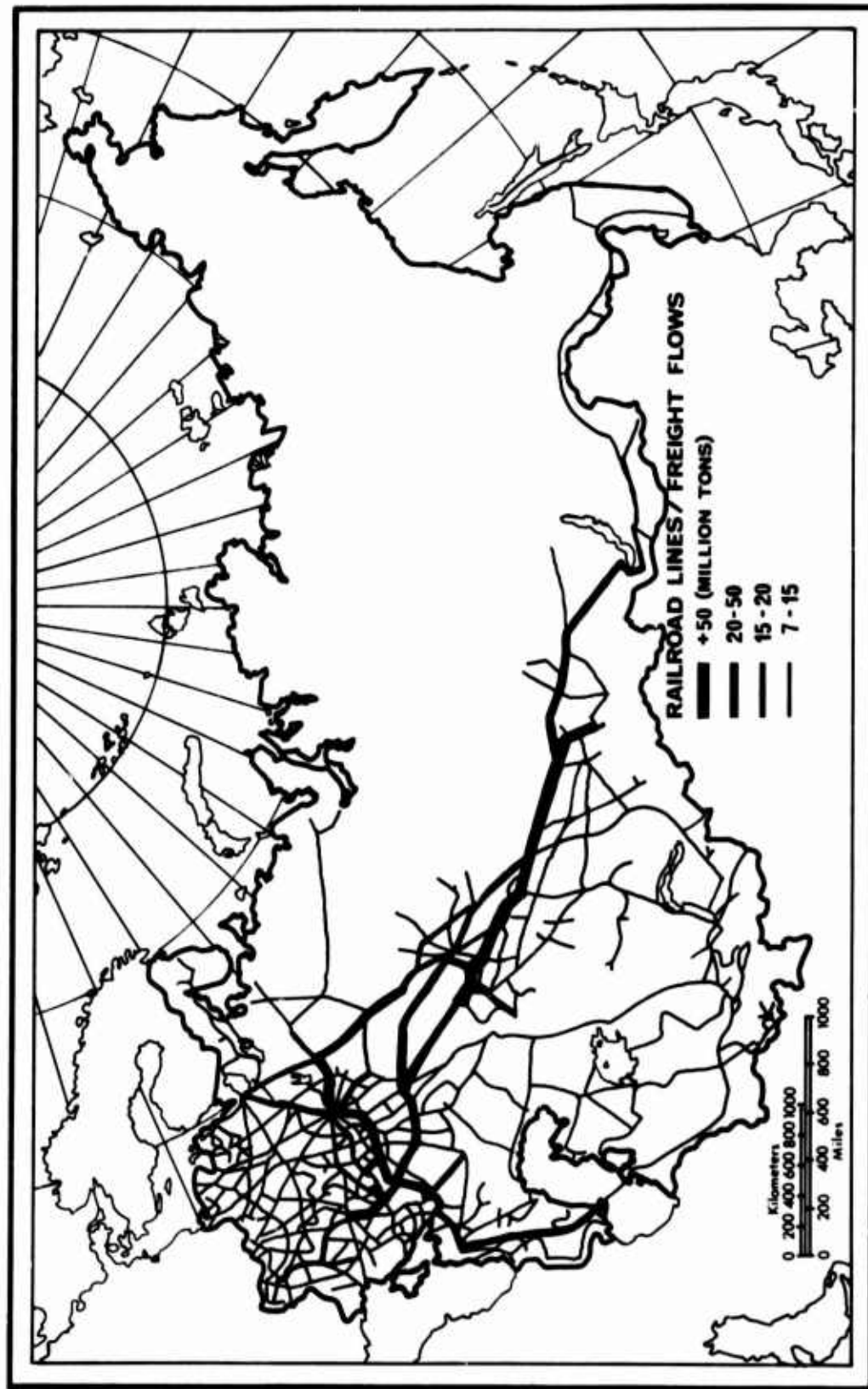


HIGHWAY DISTRIBUTION

Figure 10

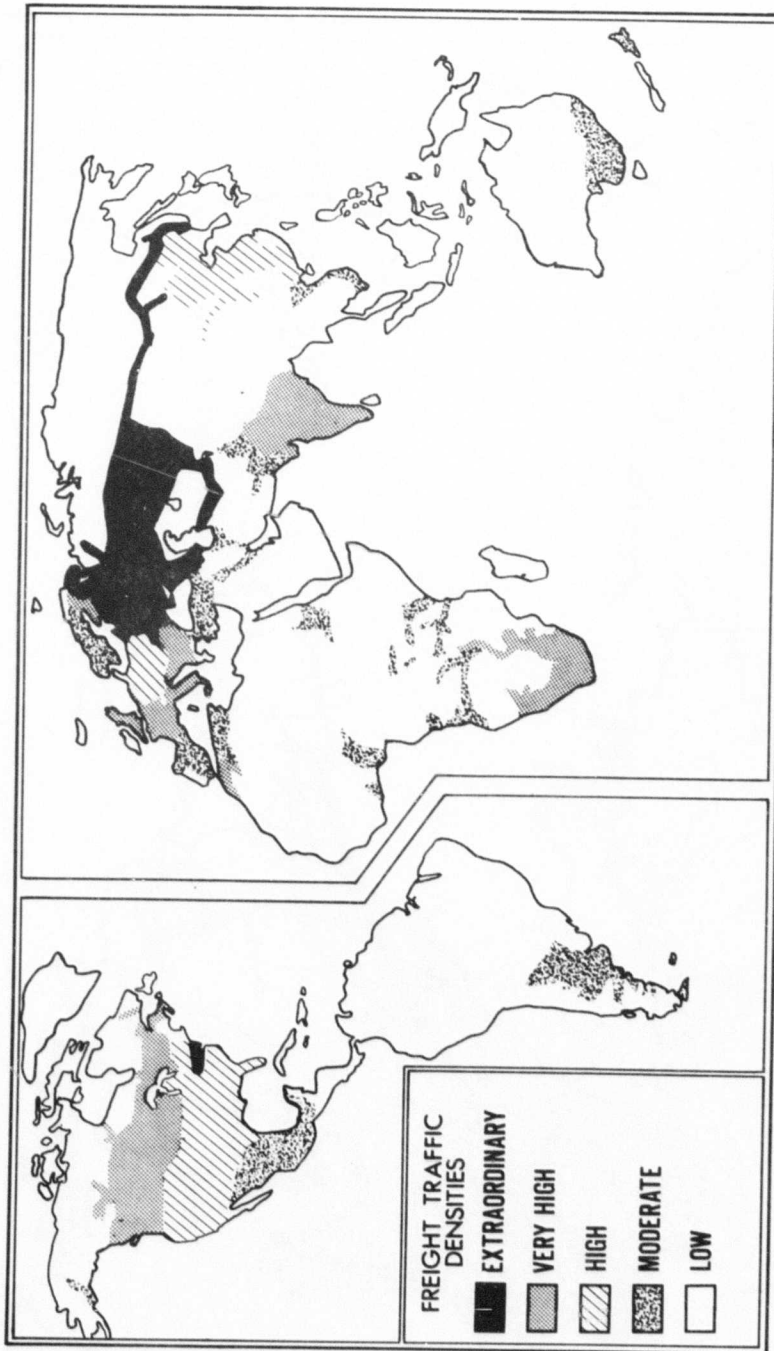
c. The USSR is thus forced to devote the great bulk of its transport efforts to land routes, i.e., by highway or rail. However, paradoxically enough, it appears that despite its size; the significant maldistribution of population centers, natural resources, and energy supplies; and its generally favorable topography--basically flat--the available evidence suggests a deliberate, long-term policy of minimizing investment in land transportation of any type. For instance, despite gradual improvements in the situation, the Soviet Union even today cannot be said to possess anything resembling a comprehensive network of all-weather highways. In fact, truck haulage seems to be limited almost entirely to short runs (around ten miles one way), with inter-city wheeled traffic of any type varying from extremely limited to nonexistent. Beyond the major centers the situation deteriorates dramatically, with substantial stretches of the USSR being virtually inaccessible by road in the spring and fall due to mud and in winter due to heavy snow drifts. The reason behind this almost complete neglect of the country's highway system appears to be a combination of lack of demand, lack of understanding, bureaucratic rigidities, and the psychology of a politico-economic system that is happier thinking only in large-scale terms and is unsuited to considering consumer needs or convenience.¹³

11. The Soviet Railroads. By default, then, the lion's share of all movement in the USSR must be handled by the railroads (some 64.5 percent of all ton/kilometers of freight haulage in 1971¹⁴). Essentially, the above restrictions on capital outlay, the tendency to make a fetish of economies of scale, and the persistent trend towards expanding already existing industrial and other centers has led to a number of striking peculiarities in the geographic distribution and usage of the Soviet rail network that would seem to offer sizable opportunities for exploitable vulnerabilities.



RAIL TRAFFIC DISTRIBUTION

Figure 11

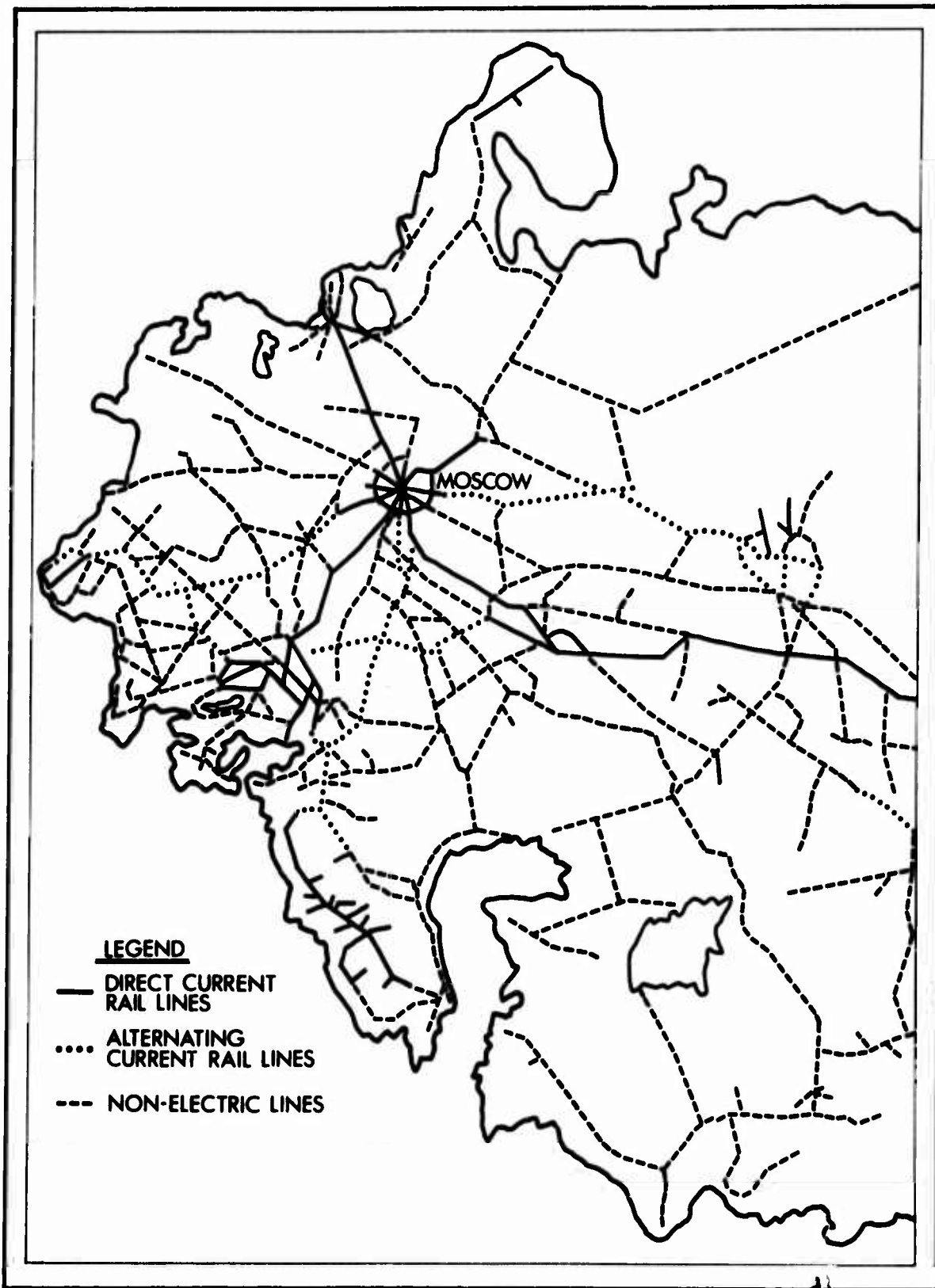


COMPARATIVE RAIL TRAFFIC DENSITY

Figure 12

a. In the first place, the Soviet railroad system carries twice the freight and five times the passengers of its US counterpart on only one third the trackage, resulting in an overall carrying density some 500 percent of that in the United States. Furthermore, much of the expansion of track miles has been in "supertrunking" between a few major centers "at the expense of extending new lines into underdeveloped areas."¹⁵ New construction, then, is built only to meet specific, urgent needs, not vague, future goals. That such needs are likely to include strategic considerations is demonstrated by the ongoing work on the Baikal-Amur Magistral in the Soviet East (when completed, this will, in addition to opening up new stretches of territory to exploitation, provide some urgently needed strategic depth behind the exposed Trans-Siberian Railway).

b. Besides being the key link in the entire Soviet transportation system and what amounts to near saturation levels of usage, the Soviet rail system suffers from additional peculiarities, some of which, it seems, could have been avoided or corrected. Among these are differences in rail gauge both within the USSR and between it and Eastern Europe; a high percentage of electrified trackage, which is not only much less easy to restore to use after bomb or other damage but which is further divided into mutually incompatible AC- and DC-operated lines; an overall network so laid out as to make Moscow an irreplaceable central link in the system, a circumstance seriously aggravated by the polyglot mix of diesel, AC, and DC track; and significant problems with maintenance and flexibility of use of both locomotives and rolling stock.¹⁶



EUROPEAN USSR: RAIL MOTIVE POWER COMPATIBILITY PROBLEMS

Figure 13

c. Because of the above and due to the existence of certain terrain configuration, it would seem evident that a potential exists for significant interference in such freight movement, should this be desired. However, one analysis in depth of the lessons of World War II suggests that the efficacy of German rail interdiction efforts as a means of halting or delaying Soviet military advances left something to be desired, although the Soviets were never able to rebuild bridges anywhere near as rapidly as destroyed or damaged track.¹⁷ In reviewing the experience of World War II, it is highly interesting to note that Hunter concentrates only on overall quantitative statistics. It was his conclusion that German seizure of a large segment of the Western USSR only served to reduce demands on the Soviet rail system while at the same time increasing the density of available rolling stock in the area still under Soviet control (due to evacuation). He then notes that at no time throughout the war did the overall density of traffic flow exceed ten percent above prewar densities (the point being that nonmilitary rail demand, even though restricted, still remained vastly greater than even that required to support an all-out defense of the motherland and thrust into Central Europe).¹⁸ What Hunter somehow failed to observe is what was quite evident--at least in retrospect--to Wehrmacht participants on the Eastern Front, as well as to historians of both world wars, namely, that some sections of the Soviet rail net are enormously more important to overall system operability than others (specifically the Moscow hub).¹⁹

12. Impact on Access.

a. What impact, if any, do the restrictions on movement described above have on the problem of access? In the political sphere, as should be evident from the material presented in the previous chapter of this paper,

the key problem for the power elite is that of maintaining complete, centralized control over all the manifold institutions in the Soviet system (the other side of the coin of totalitarian power is total responsibility for running everything everywhere). Unquestionably it would seem that sheer distance and delay coupled with all the latent disruptive tendencies of a multinational state must compound the headaches of the Soviet leadership; the difficulty lies, of course, in our ability to estimate such degradation and its effect on Soviet capabilities and intentions with sufficient accuracy.

b. In economic terms, distance and transport limitations accentuate the costs in time, money, and man-hours incurred by population, resource, and energy maldistribution, a circumstance that all too often is made even worse by systemic insistence on power maintenance over efficiency and centralized direction over regional autonomy. Such nonrational factors lead to gross waste, whether through cross-hauling, forcing transport users to adjust their needs to the convenience of the transport system, or inability to handle time-sensitive products (e.g., foodstuffs) efficiently. Since the Soviet system is unable to estimate costs of any type, the impact of access limitations, while real enough, is probably difficult even for them to measure in any meaningful way.

c. Militarily, of course, the most pronounced effect of movement and access limitations is the effective dilution of Soviet combat power, with timely mutual support and reinforcement in wartime difficult at best for the more widely separated ground elements and practically impossible for the navy (for more details see the chapter on the military).

13. Impact On Power Projection. Just as the above circumstances influence the situation within the USSR proper, they also affect the ability of the Soviets to extend their power and presence beyond their borders.

Generally speaking, Russia has traditionally been more successful at power projection--whether in the acquisition of stable patron-client relations or in outright territorial aggrandizement--when the target region was contiguous to its boundaries. Judging by history, at least part of this has been the result of deliberate choice.²⁰ Thus Soviet perceptions of their geographic position and limitations have not only tended to exacerbate the political vulnerabilities already outlined but are directly reflected in the Kremlin's system of goal ordering, described elsewhere by the author as a series of concentric circles of descending priority, with level of interest being to a significant extent a function of distance from the Soviet motherland.

Section IV. Future Trends.

14. Author's Forecast. Far more than the areas addressed elsewhere in this paper, the situation with respect to the Soviet geographical position seems relatively impervious to change, barring, of course, revolutionary alterations in the political allegiance of states such as those controlling Soviet access to the open sea or barring important additions to Soviet territory. Despite the reticence alluded to earlier, the Kremlin has shown through its behavior that it recognizes at least some of the problem areas discussed above. Representative examples of corrective action being pursued include persistent efforts to patch up relations with the People's Republic of China; repeated overtures to Turkey in an attempt to weaken the latter's perceived need for--and thus loyalty towards--NATO; indirect encouragement of Danish neutralism; pressure on Norway; continued crackdowns on manifestations of non-Great Russian nationalism, especially in border regions; continued search for more easily accessible, untapped resources; pioneering in the development and use of ice breakers and other means of extending the usability of territorial waterways;

construction, as mentioned, of a back-up route for the Trans-Siberian Railway; and a patient, albeit not frequently successful, search for new allies or client states willing to provide something approximating basing rights for Soviet ships and aircraft. In the final analysis, however, the inhibiting effects of distance, remoteness, difficulty of access, climate, and those problems arising out of the nature of the politico-economic system or history (e.g., mental outlook, population distribution, level of investment in transportation, and bureaucratic rigidity) seem likely to continue to constrain Soviet ability to change even those areas where corrective action would seem feasible--at least for the foreseeable future.

CHAPTER 5

THE MILITARY

Section I. Basic Description and Assessment.

1. Introduction. Peculiarities in the perceptions, philosophy, organization, and values of the Soviet system have had a major impact on the mission, size, and structure of the Soviet armed forces, leading in some cases to striking asymmetries between the latter and their Western counterparts. Since these disparities have spawned such a wealth of different, and differing, views as to their relative significance, it would be beneficial to preface direct examination of the weaknesses of the Soviet military establishment with a brief exposition of some of its more salient special characteristics.

2. The Soviet Military and the Political System.

a. Probably the most obvious fact about the Soviet military is its size and the persistence of efforts made to increase its capabilities. Although there are disagreements as to its exact dimensions and which, if any, of the various paramilitary agencies should be included, there seems to be little argument that the Soviet military presents a truly formidable appearance, earning for the USSR deserved respect as a first-class military superpower. Further, there also seems to be an adequate consensus that the dedication of the power elite to raw military strength, as reflected in the steady commitment of resources of growing scarcity, seems to be fundamental and unalterable.

b. The next question would seem to be why is the Soviet military establishment as large as it is? Given the perceptions, ambitions, and fears of the leadership, it has been argued that it is not oversized. This view is more easily accepted if one is also inclined to accept the often stated

dictum that the Soviet leadership feels that it must not only be able to survive with its political system and empire basically intact, a major conflict with one of its chief rivals (e.g., NATO) but also to have sufficient residual strength to ward off successfully any attempt by its other chief rival (i.e., the PRC)—alone or in some sort of concert with one or more appropriately motivated Soviet neighbors (to include even East Europe)—to exploit the aftermath.¹ The only other states whose position is at all analogous—politically, territorially, and militarily—are, interestingly enough, Israel and South Africa; however, as should be evident, the stakes for the Soviet Union are somewhat higher (here it merits noting that the Soviet leaders are the only rulers of a major power who wake up each morning with the realization that the nuclear weapons of everyone else, with the possible exception of India, are targeted on them). And finally, it must be recalled that its military establishment is the Soviet Union's only genuine superpower credential.²

c. However, this still does not seem to answer the question as to why the need to spend quite so much of the Soviet GNP on armed might. In speculating on the possible reasons, one source felt that a "determination to achieve all-round military superiority" was not the entire story, but that other factors, such as the Soviet penchant for overinsurance (i.e., more must be better), the influence of parochial vested interests within the huge bureaucracy, and the likely exigencies of "power broking" among the top echelons, also played a contributory role.³

d. Thus it can be seen that the Soviet leaders perceive a more than ordinary need for the security and other benefits that great military strength is supposed to provide. Paradoxically, however, the very problems that seem to trouble them so—whether this be memories of foreign invasion,

visions of a hostile environment, or frustrated concerns over increasingly uncooperative allies--are matched, it would seem, by a nearly equal fear of their own military elite as a possible rival for power, a circumstance that has often led to highly ambivalent policies. The Party's desire to control all sectors of society cannot help but create special problems in the military, whose own hierarchical organization and chain-of-command subordination would seem to leave no room for "external" involvement in decisionmaking or the execution of orders. Unquestionably, the ambiguities and conflicts between military and political authority, with their attendant influence on willingness to exercise independent judgment, assume responsibility, or take calculated risks, cannot help but have a direct bearing on overall military effectiveness.

3. The Military and Foreign Policy.

a. Although classical Marxism-Leninism preaches the inevitability of armed conflict between the forces of socialism and capitalism, a realization of the costs of any such war, particularly in terms of the destruction that would be visited on the socialist homeland and the fruits of a half century of sacrifice, led following the death of Stalin to some sort of reevaluation of the function of armed might. While in no way altering the perceived need for defense and national security, it would seem to have brought about a rethinking regarding the offensive usefulness of the Soviet armed forces. Since actual war was now seen as counterproductive, there was little to be gained from making serious preparations for such war, except as necessary to deter potential enemies.

b. Therefore, the offensive function of armed forces, it would seem, has devolved to the contribution they can make towards achieving Soviet national goals through means other than armed conflict, i.e., through their

ability to have the maximum political and psychological impact on designated target audiences. The approach used to implement this philosophy naturally tended to reflect traditional partiality towards bigness and quantity over quality, as well as a penchant for cutting corners in those areas which, while of substantive importance for actual operations (i.e., the conduct of war), were seen as less needed for the successful projection of the desired image of such a capability.⁴

4. The Military and Soviet Society.

a. Although it was, perhaps, Prussia and the ensuing German Empire that was most notorious as a "state built around an army," the extent to which Soviet society has been structured along military lines is striking to those of us accustomed to a highly civilianized pattern of social organization and relationships. Part of this is, of course, traditional, going back to tsarist times, and part is an inevitable outgrowth of Lenin's fundamentally militaristic approach in mobilizing, politicizing, controlling, and directing the energies of a large population by and for the benefit of an omniscient, infallible, and privileged few. In any event, the Soviet military establishment and its needs have been integrated into, and consciously supported by, the other societal institutions to an unusual degree (a factor that renders significantly more difficult the task of estimating total Soviet military expenditures); thus agencies such as the border guards, internal security forces, merchant marine, civil airline, and educational system are all geared to be able to complement and supplement the overall military effort, whether during peace or in time of conflict.⁵

b. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Soviet leadership feels

less than satisfied with the degree to which it has been able to foster Soviet nationalism, loyalty to the system, and devotion to its leadership among the growing plurality of non-Russian minorities--or even among many of its own Russian youth. Mandatory service in the military, then, has the additional task, as the late Marshal Grechko put it, of "making Soviet citizens" out of those that pass through the draft system, a policy reflected both in the attention paid to political indoctrination and to Russian language instruction for the over 60 percent of non-Russian draftees who do not speak the language fluently.⁶

5. Organization and Deployment. The Soviet armed forces, it would appear, have been structured, equipped, and disposed with considerable consistency to meet the above-described missions.

a. As befits a traditionally land-oriented empire, the Army is the dominant service. As indicated by Record, the latter is noteworthy for the unparalleled degree to which it has been organized around the tank and that type of warfare for which armor is best suited, namely, blitzkrieg operations emphasizing surprise, mass, and deep exploitation by rapidly advancing, tank-heavy units to seize vital objectives deep in the enemy rear. Typical forward movement is envisaged as averaging some 70 miles per day.⁷ As Ferguson notes, the ground forces remain overwhelmingly dependent on the railroad as "the principal logistic delivery means down to at least front level and probably down to army level whenever possible."⁸

b. The Soviet ground forces order of battle reflects both the militarized nature of Soviet society and, as described, a functional need to display as impressive a warfighting capacity as possible within given manpower limitations. It is this combination of circumstances that, at least in

part, explains the use of regular troop units to perform ancillary functions such as basic individual training, construction, harvest assistance (something highly resented by military professionals), and railroad operations and the basically modular approach to handling battle losses (i.e., by substituting entire units rather than processing individual fillers and by emphasizing equipment replacement over retrieval and repair⁹). Taken together, the above factors render understandable the unusually large number of individual combat divisions, the high apparent ratio of combat to support forces, and the large and increasing quantities of deployed combat equipment.

c. Soviet ground force dispositions, as can be inferred from Record, reflect not just perceived threat levels but also priorities for offensive image projection; in this respect, it is interesting to contrast the defensively oriented deployment along the Chinese border with the designedly impressive, almost purely offensive, dispositions opposite major avenues of approach into the Federal Republic of Germany and the Benelux states,¹⁰

d. As with the ground forces, the Soviet Navy is tailored to meet, but not exceed, its ostensibly intended use, i.e., principally defense and lines of communication denial--essentially a "spoiling" mission--not command of the seas. The real, underlying rationale, however, of the recent naval build-up and widening deployment would seem to be not so much for the purpose of increasing Soviet ability to project and support substantial combat power overseas (since, as postulated above, actual use of such power is, and has been, perceived as counterproductive) but with the aim of augmenting its capacity to project an image of great power status and influence. Making a virtue of necessity (see the chapter on geography), the Soviet Union has not become dependent on open sea routes for ground forces deployment,

reinforcement, or logistical support.

Section II. Identifying Vulnerabilities,

6. The Problem Revisited,

a. As noted in Chapter 1, there is an ample supply of evidence to suggest that efforts to date by Western analysts to identify and assess Soviet vulnerabilities have left much to be desired. With specific respect to the military--where exploitation of the other side's peculiarities has traditionally been part and parcel of effective tactical-level combat operations--the evidence as to more or less deliberate avoidance of the topic is direct and disturbing.¹¹ But, does this lead us back to a conclusion that such vulnerabilities are not feasibly accessible? The answer would still seem to be in the negative although, as with other areas addressed in this paper, the account set forth below is necessarily less than exhaustive.

b. Because of the special nature of the modern military as an institution, where the decision to employ its capabilities in the environment for which they have been ostensibly designed has become increasingly perceived by the political decisionmakers as a very last resort indeed, the problem of identifying exploitable weaknesses is more than a little complicated. When we say "exploitable military vulnerabilities" do we really mean to limit our examination to time of war or to those ways in which we can adversely influence the Soviet Union's war potential, combat effectiveness, or will to fight--as could be directly inferred from JCS Pub 1? Or, keeping in mind the arguments made in paragraph 3 above, might it not also be entirely appropriate to delve into those aspects that might negatively affect the Soviet military's effectiveness as an offensive tool of Soviet foreign policy?

c. For a variety of reasons it was found necessary to depart

somewhat from the method of vulnerability categorization used in the previous chapters.

Section III. Command and Control.

7. Impact of the Political System,

a. Unquestionably the most serious shortcoming of the Soviet military is an outgrowth of the very nature of the political system, namely, the manner in which the elite and the masses interrelate and the limitations this imposes. Although sharing with other military establishments a rigidly hierarchical structure, the Soviet military is noteworthy for the extent to which power--in the form of decisionmaking--and all of its direct levers are concentrated. This is repeatedly demonstrated in the distrust shown by senior commanders towards their subordinates, who are often bypassed even in routine training. Oversupervision, rigid formalism, hoarding of information, and denial of access to radio nets and tactical maps tend to make all purposeful activity revolve directly around the person of the middle or higher level commander. At the top of the heap lies the Soviet General Staff with its tendency to foster this same type of pattern the rest of the way up the line.

b. Among the direct effects of this is to stifle effectively individual initiative and creative innovation and to instill in junior officers and enlisted personnel alike the habit of rigidly doing only what they are told. Because of this, isolated individual soldiers or even larger units tend to take no action at all in the absence of explicit orders.

c. The strains the above situation engenders are exacerbated by the painful differential in status and treatment of the officer corps and other professionals as compared with that accorded to the conscripts, who make up the vast majority of the active duty military manpower. To this

can also be added the complexities of dealing with a wide mix of national minorities with all their attendant linguistic and cultural incompatibilities.

d. In broader terms, this situation is further compounded by the inherent flaws in intra-Pact relations. Open Great Russian distrust of other nationalities and mutual uneasiness among the other Pact members cannot help but raise doubts as to the likelihood of optimum use of available Warsaw Pact combat power under most, if not all, likely conflict scenarios.¹²

e. Unquestionably the dual system of political watchdogs--one run directly by a department of the Central Committee and the other under the KGB, an apparatus extending all the way down to small unit level--while serving the interests of the power elite inevitably must erode the effectiveness and morale of unit commanders at all levels.

f. Although in logical terms and on paper the close functional integration of the Soviet military into the rest of Soviet society should result in close-knit coordination and a significant strengthening of overall military capabilities, there is evidence to suggest that Soviet bureaucrats and managers tend to resist demands on their assets which they do not see as contributing directly to the accomplishment of their primary responsibilities. Further, the Soviet citizenry has out of necessity become talented at avoiding unpleasant tasks and the unending calls by the regime for sacrifice of their free time. This noncongruence of priorities between the power elite and the rest of the population, then, can be seen as working against the effectiveness of numerous state-imposed programs, whether this be preinduction training, reserve training, earmarking of civilian equipment or facilities for contingency military use, or civil defense.

8. Areas of Elite Concern.

a. Although the amount of supporting evidence is less than desirable, Erickson, for one, has reported doubts on the part of some senior Soviet military leaders both as to the viability of their current military doctrine and as to how well their military establishment, or at least the smaller units, would be able to function in a combat environment.¹³ These same concerns have also been expressed in the Soviet and East European press.

b. Goldhamer has also seen indications of Soviet power elite misgivings as to the situation within the military, noting anxiety over the general disaffection of Soviet youth, leading to hesitant steps to alleviate the strains between the authoritarian military system and the aspirations of those inducted into it; however, the compromises made have been uncomfortable at best. Once in service, the effectiveness of official scare propaganda, designed—at least originally—to increase an appreciation for the defensive role of the military, has led to elite concern over troop reluctance to operate long-range weapons of a high level of destructiveness; apparently, the belief that launching nuclear weapons is to participate in the destruction of society is rather more widespread within the military than the Soviet leadership would prefer.¹⁴

c. Another aspect of the Soviet military about which there is more than a little concern revolves about the simple fact that as an operating institution it has not been tested in its ostensibly primary role—that of active combat—since World War II. Other than operations against its own allies in 1956 and 1968 or in sporadic border clashes with the People's Republic of China, none of which really offered a substantial opportunity to gain genuine combat experience, the Soviet Union has been unable to test either its capabilities or its doctrine against a modern military force, or

even in a Third World environment. This contrasts sharply with countries such as the United States, France, or the United Kingdom, all of whom have a cadre of relatively young, combat-experienced military professionals. Attempts to gain equivalent benefit by proxy (e.g., through Arab employment of Soviet equipment and tactics against Israel) would seem to be of limited utility first, because the validity of such verification efforts begins to drop off sharply as one moves towards the less tangible areas of organization, training, doctrine, and management and second, because such long-distance testing by its very nature cannot generate the experienced judgment that only first-hand involvement nurtures. Because of this lack of recent, valid experience, the Soviet leaders are forced to squeeze every last drop of value--in terms of both technique and prestige--out of the Great Patriotic War (as they call World War II) and to keep on active service as many as possible of its aging reservoir of combat-tested officers, a circumstance that further accentuates the command and control problems described above.

9. Battlefield Management.

a. It is difficult to overstate the effect of command and control inflexibility in the Soviet armed forces. The compulsion to concentrate decisionmaking and initiative at higher levels, reflected by the centralization of control over special military assets such as airborne forces, aviation, and transport, while in theory offering senior commanders a greater degree of flexibility and ability to influence the conduct of battle, carries with it certain costs and risks. As with the political system, the effectiveness of such tight centralization is limited by range of technical competency, span of control capabilities, and ability to collect, process, and analyze data in a timely and accurate manner. Thus by default the Soviet military

is more than ordinarily susceptible to the effects of command communications disruption, deception, and information denial.

b. Judging by the views of senior US officials charged with overall training and doctrinal development, a key problem facing any modern military force is that of effective mastery and integration of all the new capabilities that the present generation of hardware offers.¹⁵ If we assume this to be valid, the question then arises: how well has the Soviet military done its homework in this area? Based on available data, it would appear that the management skills of the average Soviet military leader are less than commonly assumed. For example, there are reports suggesting a less than adequate regard for the importance of coordination and teamwork, whether between adjacent, similar units or among those having complementary functions—a circumstance that suggests a basic weakness in horizontal, as opposed to vertical, relationships. One result of this is waste—of time, resources, and relative unit productivity.

10. Language.

a. Although Russian is the official language of the Soviet armed forces and as such a mandatory subject for those ethnic non-Slavs unable to communicate in it, there are indications that the percentage of Soviet soldiers lacking an adequate command of the official language is increasing, rather than the reverse, a trend resulting from both imbalances in birth rates and nationalist-inspired resistance to acculturation. This is, of course, what forces the Soviet military to have to spend so much time and effort in trying to socialize minority conscripts. Judging by the US experience with certain non-English speaking draftees, it would not be difficult to envisage less-than-motivated minority soldiers taking deliberate,

defensive refuge in an alleged lack of skill in the dominant language. Since some 200 or so different languages or dialects are spoken as mother tongues in the USSR, this could lead to considerable complications, or to simple underutilization of available manpower.

b. Beyond the confines of the Soviet Union proper, the hard fact of life is that, despite decades of political dominance, knowledge of, or willingness to use, Russian is by no means all that widespread among the other Warsaw Pact states. Apparently German serves at least in part as a sort of alliance lingua franca.

Section IV. Geography.

11. The Problems of an Incomplete Buffer System. Despite the existence of a carefully organized and controlled cordon sanitaire to provide additional strategic depth against invasion directed at the heartland of European Russia, the lack of such protection elsewhere—whether against amphibious assault into the soft underbelly of the Ukraine, a vital industrial and agricultural region, or against an attack into Soviet Central Asia, Siberia, or the Far East—must be a security headache of no small magnitude. To this must be added the Soviet nervousness about the loyalty of those political subdivisions along this same border whose populations are not predominantly Great Russian. Soviet fears of having to fight on two or more fronts are not, it would seem, based only on a concern over transportation and other logistical problems. Of these unshielded soft spots probably the most sensitive is the fragile Soviet toehold in the Far East, with a populous, ambitious, and resentful People's Republic of China in a far superior geographic position to regain lost territories should the present situation deteriorate into active warfare. Superior Soviet armaments and equipment in the hands of those

units deployed to protect this region, while able to offset the Chinese positional advantage in the short run, do not appear able to guarantee continued Soviet success in the event of prolonged Sino-Soviet armed conflict.

12. The Effects of Size and Geographical Location.

a. The vast dimensions of the USSR as well as transport deficiencies cannot help but render difficult, if not impossible, effective integration, coordination, and mutual support within and among numerous aspects of its military establishment, the more evident examples being logistics and the Navy.

b. While the severity of the Soviet climate has indeed led to the development of considerable expertise in cold weather operations, it has also exacted a heavy toll in the resources that must be expended to combat such conditions¹⁶ or—when the latter simply cannot be compensated for or otherwise neutralized—in lost time.

c. The geographical situation of the USSR results in fragmentation of its sea power, with all the negative implications this has for reinforcement and command and control. The northern sea route, open at best only a few months of the year, is critically dependent on ice breakers. Canal capacities are limited; also, both waterways and their necessary infrastructure (locks, etc.) are susceptible to interdiction, as are the various fleet egress routes.¹⁷

d. Despite efforts to establish forward base substitutes, such as in various Aegean Sea and other anchorages or in still friendly states like Guinea or Somalia, the USSR cannot really be said to have significantly overcome its dependence on power projection directly from home ports, which with very few exceptions (such as Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka) are still

located within the zone of interdictable waters. This affects both the striking range and sustainability of Soviet air and naval power.

Section V. Functional Vulnerabilities.

13. Doctrine and Tactics.

a. Although there is a fairly close resemblance between Soviet and Western methods for the conduct of conventional military operations, Soviet doctrine for such activities in a nuclear environment, if actually carried out as preached, suggests a number of special problem areas. Certainly the concept of blitzkrieg-type armored thrusts deep into the enemy area to exploit the disruption brought on by nuclear strikes does seem to be a sound enough projection of the effects of modern technological developments onto the experiences of World War II; nevertheless, the obstacles created by the destruction from both nuclear and high intensity conventional warfare on the densely built-up sectors of West Europe would seem likely to prove much more formidable than perhaps has been anticipated. Second, the hazards of loss of communications--whether due to distance, confusion, or the effects of nuclear explosions--coupled with intrinsic land navigation deficiencies and a system that breeds overdependence on instructions from above would suggest harrowing problems in coordinating and wreaking maximum advantage from a highly fluid combat situation. Third, deep spearhead thrusts by definition create long, potentially vulnerable flanks as well as logistical nightmares. Fourth, it would appear that certain of the newer technological developments, such as precision guided munitions, have yet to be taken adequately into account. And finally, because of the very differences between Soviet doctrine for conventional and nuclear operations (e.g., dispersion, frontages, reversion to deep thrust tactics,

etc.), given the lack of flexibility and the overdependence on higher authority already alluded to, there remains the sticky problem of trying to bring about an effective transition from the one to the other style of warfare.

b. Although by no means ignoring the lessons learned from tank employment of the October 1973 war, the main Soviet concern appears to be the implications modern antitank technology has for utilization and survivability of the armored infantry fighting vehicle, the BMP. With this recognition comes a more frequent requirement to dismount the infantry in the advance, thereby significantly slowing down forward movement rates, increasing the vulnerability of both tanks and infantry, and complicating the problem of small unit command and control, which, as already mentioned, is traditionally a weak area. Judging by one article devoted to this topic, it would appear that the Soviets are unsure how best to cope with improved antitank weapons.¹⁸ Another problem arising from the above is the question as to how well Soviet ground forces tacticians understand the impact of all the ramifications of dismounted infantry working in combination with armor.

c. It would appear that topics such as Soviet employment of artillery, management of aviation assets, and airspace control merit further investigation for possible vulnerabilities, particularly in light of recent combat experiences and technological developments.

14. Training. Probably the best single open source analysis of Soviet military training is the study done originally for RAND Corporation by Herbert Goldhamer, from which many of the following comments have been drawn.

a. One of the most striking aspects of Soviet military training is its exploitative character. There is relentless pressure to achieve

multiple goals, each of which is proclaimed as being top priority. The tendency to seek extreme gains engenders extremism in methods and an endless, feverish intemperateness. The result, while by no means ineffective, is inefficient and grossly wasteful of time and energy.

b. The time devoted to political indoctrination is a contentious issue. In functional terms, it could well be argued that by taking away time and effort from more directly mission-oriented training it reduces overall combat effectiveness. On the other hand, judging by elite perceptions in other areas, the necessity for inculcating in the more active citizenry unquestioning acceptance of the political, power, and privilege status quo is a matter of unquestionable urgency. Draftee status is the single, best time the regime has for cementing earlier socialization efforts. Moves on the part of the military leadership to reduce the loss of training time by having mandatory political instruction impinge on the individual soldiers' free time--of which there is precious little anyway--reportedly lead to resistance and evasion.

c. Individual training.

(1) Endless repetition, emphasis on rote-type instruction and parrot-type student feedback, and continuous domination by supervisors produce respectable combat and other skills, but tend to make their employment and effectiveness contingent on receipt of explicit instructions from above.

(2) Due to the restrictive policy governing issue and use of tactical maps, a situation brought on in part by deliberate classification of the latter (as in Turkey), the land navigational skills of the average Soviet soldier, or even junior officer, tend to be marginal at best. One outgrowth of this is the heavy Soviet dependence on the use of road guides.

How this is expected to work in unfamiliar territory such as West Europe, where even the road signs are in a strange, hard-to-read alphabet, is a matter of serious conjecture.

(3) Denial by the nature of the economic system substantial private access to many of the fruits of modern technology, few Soviet soldiers are equipped to deal effectively with sophisticated equipment. Although a variety of training courses have been devised to develop the necessary operational expertise, it has been found necessary to make such courses far longer than their Western counterparts. However, even despite such efforts, usually resulting in substantial, but narrow, skills, there is more than a little evidence of deficiencies in cultural assimilation, demonstrated by patterns of fear, neglect, or misuse of advanced equipment or techniques. Another result of typical narrow specialization and lack of cross-training (there seems to be little awareness even of the need for such) is that it tends to breed even less flexibility or interest in the larger mission.

d. Unit training. Soviet training programs for troop units suffer from an overdependence on simulators and miserly utilization of resources, based on an evident policy of discouraging the use of more than an absolute minimum of expendible supplies or equipment. This "pinchpenny" attitude even applies to such basic areas as live firing of individual and crew-served weapons.

e. Large-scale exercises. Despite wide publicity given to Soviet and Warsaw Pact exercise activity, a case has been made that the actual amount of time spent by the Soviet armed forces in the field, at sea, or in the air is less than for their US counterparts,¹⁹ In any event, questions have been raised as to the effectiveness of the usual large-scale field training exercises

as means either for developing skill at planning and conducting large unit operations or for testing same (this would seem to lead us back once again to the image function of the Soviet military establishment).

f. Training techniques and overall effectiveness.

(1) Relentless use of individual and unit competition as a motivational device, highly characteristic of Soviet training philosophy, would seem to produce a host of undesirable effects. The pressure to achieve and maintain a creditable unit record through receipt of "good marks" forces commanders to oversupervise and leads to a lack of confidence in subordinates, evasion of independent judgment, fear of responsibility, and an unwillingness to innovate. Overwhelmingly the need everywhere is to look good, with actual quality or proficiency being much less important. In terms of training this leads to such abuses as wholesale falsification of records and set demonstrations by the already proficient rather than opportunities for the less skilled to learn through making mistakes.

(2) In assessing the overall significance of this, Goldhamer poses a question of critical import: is this system of deliberate and continuous overload considered desirable as a management technique in the USSR or is it perceived as being the only feasible way to get results? "If, indeed, the Soviet training system must depend on the employment of an exploitative, coercive system, this would suggest its potential fragility, at least at the troop level."²⁰ [emphasis added]. All things considered, this particular observation would seem to be highly deserving of much broader application within the Soviet system.

15. Personnel and Morale.

a. The Soviet system for channeling its young male population through preinduction training, the draft, and military service creates

unavoidable difficulties and negative side-effects. Essentially, military service for the conscript is perceived as undesirable, particularly for those from ethnic minority groups. One especially aggravating circumstance is the fact that less than half of those eligible are actually inducted; what makes this a problem is not the percentage selected or exempted but the manner in which the necessary sorting is accomplished.

b. Due to the higher priority enjoyed by the civilian sector for quality manpower, the Soviet military as an institution suffers both from a shortage of skilled personnel and from an abundance of the less mentally gifted.

c. The huge personnel turnover in Soviet units twice a year as the more experienced soldiers are replaced by green recruits results in drastic, cyclic fluctuations in unit efficiency and overall combat readiness.²¹

d. Due to the advanced age of so many senior Soviet military leaders, it will probably prove necessary to replace them en masse with younger, more vigorous officers in the event of major conflict. Thus the Soviets would be denied the value of their remaining combat-experienced military leaders precisely when they would be most desirous of bringing an incipient conflict to a rapid, successful conclusion. This cannot help but lead to a delay in the attainment of maximum combat effectiveness.

e. Upward mobility within the Soviet military, as elsewhere within the system, depends heavily on factors other than ordinary merit, a circumstance that must have an adverse impact.

f. There is more than a little evidence to suggest that, rather than being simply an accurate reflection of those intra-group structural arrangements natural and necessary within Soviet society, elite-mass relations

within the Soviet military have led to morale problems, especially among junior officers and conscripts. Harsh discipline, brutal abuse of subordinates, spartan living conditions, widespread distrust, enormous pressures to conform, tightly compartmentalized specialization, endlessly repetitive training, lack of human concern--all lead to a life for the Soviet soldier of unrelieved misery. Thus, even though from a society expecting little of the good things of life, the great majority still found themselves "surprised and dissatisfied by service life." The response to this maltreatment has included widespread resentment, a greater resort to alcoholism even than in the civilian sector, suicide, and occasional desertion. It is not entirely by chance that Soviet soldiers stationed in East Europe are treated virtually as prisoners.²¹ The attempted defection of an entire ship's crew from the Baltic Fleet in November 1975 and the case of Lieutenant Belenko are, then, merely more recent and well publicized examples of an outward seepage that has continued to plague the Soviet military. Because of the depth of discontent, Garder, for one, looks on the summer 1941 experience of the Soviet Army not as an exception but as closer to the rule, concluding that "any outside aggression will inevitably produce a very high number of deserters" and that the Soviet military under the chaotic conditions of general warfare can be expected to experience difficulties in maintaining its strength.²² In view of the consistency of treatment accorded the Soviet conscript, it would seem that his observation, made in 1966, still possesses some validity.

Section VI. Logistics.

16. The Problem of Management. Although the Soviet ground forces, for one, have earned wide professional respect for the speed with which they can

mobilize and for their apparent capability--as reflected in their size, organization, doctrine, and equipment--to conduct an updated version of World War II-type blitzkrieg operations, doubts as to the ability of the back-up logistical system to keep pace have been raised. These reservations are based not only on the lack of recent combat experience, "teeth-to-tail" ratio anomalies, or even on functional problems such as transportation; rather they would seem to be an outgrowth of assessments of actual performance. Since the most recent example of this was the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, it would be worthwhile to examine the type and scope of problems encountered there. The following account was drawn principally from the article by Leo Heiman in the August 1969 edition of Military Review.²³

17. Lessons of the 1968 Czech Invasion. As the last known case where Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces were involved in anything resembling large-scale combat operations, the events of August 1968 offer food for thought. Everything, it would seem, was in the Soviet's favor: there was plenty of time to prepare, the forces to be employed had just been involved in extensive combined maneuvers, the country to be invaded was close at hand and possessed a more than adequate transportation network, and--best of all--the invading forces were expected to, and in fact encountered no more than passive resistance. Nevertheless, the accounts of major operational and logistical mishaps should have been, at least for Moscow, a sobering experience.

a. Attacking forces got lost; other columns tended to stay road-bound, leading to the lightly paved road surfaces being quickly torn up by steel tank tracks and to the highway system becoming clogged with military units, supply convoys, and fleeing tourists. Some traffic tie-ups ran for miles.

b. During the first week of the invasion the transportation and supply system effectively broke down, threatening paralysis of the whole operation. By the third day, for example, the initial supply of rations had given out, forcing many units to forage. Unfortunately, since Soviet logistical doctrine assumes that attacking forces will be able to live off the land except for fuel and ammunition, denial for political reasons of authorization to loot placed a heavy, unprogrammed strain on the logistical support system. The severely limited number of cargo vehicles, one major reason for supply shortages experienced within so short a time after the commencement of the operation, would have been completely unable to sustain the loss rates and supply usage had the attack encountered any type of organized resistance.

c. The lack of sufficient fuel tankers forced the Soviet invasion forces to resort to the employment of ordinary cargo vehicles and primitive dispensing means to keep everything moving, further tying up precious transport capacity.

d. There was a significant lack of key support equipment such as mobile headquarters vehicles, climate control for delicate equipment, refrigeration for perishable medical supplies, mobile generators, water purification plants, and prefabricated shelters for administrative needs.

e. Because of the essentially political nature of the invasion, it was urgently necessary to overcome all opposition; however, the Soviets had considerable difficulty in locating and silencing underground radio and even television stations. The signal direction-finding gear brought in took days to set up and even then proved to be ineffective in trying to cope with more modern Czech techniques.

f. The author concluded his article by pointing up a whole series of areas neglected by the Soviet military: food supply, uniforms, office equipment, medical care, troop welfare, and even fuel supply. Only those units able to receive support by air were able to avoid major problems. Out of all of this arises a basic question: how well is the USSR able to handle the truly monumental complexities of modern battlefield logistical support? The point here is not merely adding to the quantity of cargo trucks or relieving by similar means other obvious failures of the operation; rather, the problem becomes one of ascertaining why couldn't more of these basic needs have been forecast by a supposedly first-class military power and, if not, what might this suggest as to the level of doctrinal development and managerial expertise?

18. Equipment.

a. Judging by published material on the much-vaunted MIG-25 aircraft, it would appear that the Soviet reputation for designing and manufacturing superior combat systems might be due for a careful review. This is not to say that they either cannot or do not produce effective equipment, but that the congruence between Soviet equipment design and the probable circumstances of its actual use--a factor affected to no small extent by the nature of opposing forces' gear--may be much less than would appear at first glance.²⁴

b. Despite the appearance of extensive standardization of equipment among the forces of the Warsaw Pact, simultaneous use of several model generations, even in the same unit, as well as the tendency of states like Czechoslovakia to produce their own, improved versions, leads to logistical complications not unlike those of the opposing alliance.

c. The Soviet tendency, judged by Western standards, to cut corners

unnecessarily by failing to provide even important combat systems with complete ancillary equipment--such as communications or range finders--results in a definite degradation in the capabilities of those systems so short-changed. Misplaced thriftiness in other areas, such as refusal to provide air conditioning for temperature- and humidity-sensitive equipment, much less for their operators, leads to significantly increased errors and malfunctioning. Overall, Goldhamer, for one, concludes that the cost of such misinformed penury is substantial.

19. Transportation. As already described in the chapter on geography, the Soviet Union suffers from a number of significant movement, transport, and access handicaps whose applicability to the military is adequately evident. Accordingly, only a few additional comments need to be made.

a. Heavy dependency on railways for logistical support to the exclusion of highway use for long distance movement is not entirely the result of tradition or of relative ton-mile capacity advantage but is also a logical outgrowth of systemic peculiarities (e.g., control is easier if movement is by rail).

b. Because truck transport is centrally controlled, movement of ammunition and other supplies must be delivered by personnel who do not belong to the units being supplied, a circumstance that, when combined with the previously mentioned individual motivation, flexibility, and land navigation deficiencies, suggests a less than ideal setup, particularly in a fast-moving, fluid situation.

c. The well-known avtokolonna system as a means for saving money by "doubling up" the use of common equipment between the military and the civilian economy cannot help but be less than maximally effective due to

inherent conflicts in priorities (what intelligent enterprise manager would be willing to turn over the best, or more than he can help, of his valuable cargo moving or handling equipment to "a bunch of dumb soldiers to abuse," whether during peacetime training, or even in war?). Further, even if and when such a system can be made to function effectively, it would seem less than easy to move all that equipment en masse and still be able to preserve the advantage of surprise.

d. Use of the Friendship Pipeline System interconnecting the Soviet Union and East Europe to transport fuel during a conflict in Europe would appear to be vulnerable to interdiction efforts analogous to the depredations suffered by the US pipeline system in Vietnam,²⁵

e. All in all, Soviet and East European transportation insufficiencies would seem to be of enough magnitude to affect both tactical mobility and continuity of logistical support.

20. Maintenance and Supply.

a. The Soviet policy of minimizing wear and tear on major items of combat equipment issued to troop units, while a means of reducing peacetime replacement rates, results in more than a degradation of training effectiveness. Western experience suggests that extended storage produces a variety of equipment component failures when items are later subjected to prolonged, heavy use, due to dried out seals, etc. Because of this, a larger than normal equipment breakdown rate can be expected in the event of the initiation of large-scale hostilities (the only way to overcome this would be, of course, to involve all this equipment in some sort of preparatory, shake-down maneuvers; however, this would be likely to reduce seriously the probability of maintaining strategic surprise). This

potential problem also cannot help but affect Soviet logistical planning capabilities, which leads to an even more basic question: do Soviet logistical planners have either the experience or the data base to forecast spare parts and equipment replacement levels adequately? Here the combination of a lack of recent involvement in combat and an economic system that persistently downgrades spare parts production suggests a potential for real difficulties. One source has even gone so far as to maintain that because the concept of combat service support above division level is unknown in the USSR, the latter is simply not equipped to field an expeditionary force.²⁶

b. To the extent that the October 1973 war is a valid indicator of equipment attrition and ammunition expenditure rates to be expected under modern battlefield conditions, the strain on the replacement and supply system may well be much heavier than the Soviets themselves expect.

c. Given the doubtful commitment of several of the USSR's allies to anything like an attack against NATO and keeping in mind that these same countries must constitute the communications zone, their potential for interfering seriously with continuity of supply, if so motivated, would seem to be significant.

Section VII. Patterns of Vulnerability and Future Trends.

21. Introduction. Obviously, the Soviet military establishment serves a number of critical roles in the service of the nation's rulers. Thus it can be expected that efforts have been and will continue to be devoted to remedying the various deficiencies they perceive. Because of this, it can safely be assumed, as suggested, that the supply of cargo vehicles has been increased substantially and that other, similar wrinkles have been ironed out. Nevertheless, the Achilles heel in any such corrective program remains the

matter of perceptions and, for a polity like the USSR, those imperatives arising out of the nature of the political system itself. Further, there are the inescapable effects of factors like geography. Therefore, it would seem advisable to try to derive those especially characteristic trends whose correction would seem to lie outside the capabilities of the Soviet system as presently constituted.

22. Systemic Patterns.

a. The political pattern of noncongruence between the interests, goals, and priorities of the elite and those of the masses would seem to carry over directly into the military realm. Despite the evident fact that of all the institutions in the USSR the military has the most numerous and--on the face of it--the tightest controls, the tendency towards noncongruence is not limited only to the conscript majority or, for that matter, only to the non-politicals or the non-KGB types.

b. An exploitative elite-mass relationship is inherently susceptible to intelligent use of psychological warfare. Soviet vulnerabilities in this area include both its own domestic population and that of its allies.

c. The Soviet military at all levels would seem to be especially vulnerable to interruptions in command and control as well as to denial of accurate, detailed, and timely data to those higher levels where effective initiative is exercised. Directly related to this is the impact of organizational and operational rigidity on combat effectiveness as well as on the quality and continuity of logistical support in a highly fluid environment.

d. A logistical system based on an exploitative elite-mass

relationship (i.e., where troop welfare is automatically the lowest priority) cannot help but contain major managerial and functional deficiencies.

e. The USSR, due, among other things, to reasons of command and control, logistics and transportation, and population and alliance reliability, is in a singularly poor position to try to cope with a dual- or multiple-front conflict. Furthermore, its ability to sustain a protracted war in all but a narrow range of scenarios would seem to be open to question.

23. Future Trends.

a. Given the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of both the USSR and its major opponents, Moscow's assessment of the essential counterproductivity of major armed conflict seems unlikely to change. Because of this and due to a lack of alternative means of influence projection, the power image role of the Soviet military will probably remain unchanged for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the Soviet leadership can be expected to continue its present program of image preservation and enhancement, one that virtually precludes risking actual commitment of Soviet forces under anything less than ideal conditions (such as intervention in one of its allies under circumstances where there is little or no likelihood of active resistance and where there can be adequate control over access to information as to how well--or badly--things went).

b. The anomaly in the above is the incompatibility between the political need to display an unblemished (even if blank) record of apparently invincible power and the practical, professional requirement to give the Soviet military adequate opportunity to acquire genuine operational experience, especially under combat conditions. Since the former offers more immediate benefits, unless unforeseeable events preclude such, the Soviet military

seems destined to be the first of the major powers whose armed forces will become entirely denuded of personnel with active combat experience.

c. While continued Soviet structural and doctrinal dependence on the tank would seem to some (e.g., Record) to be an unchangeable given,²⁷ the past pattern of military technological development would not seem to make this a guaranteed matter, although--as with the British military of times past--those with a vested interest in maintenance of the central position of the tank may tend to resist accepting the fact--and cost--of adapting or discarding an enormously expensive inventory of less than useful combat equipment.

d. Barring major changes in the Soviet political system or in elite-mass relations (neither seen as likely), those vulnerabilities which are a direct outgrowth of the latter, such as excessive centralization of decision-making and initiative, seem to be more or less permanent in nature. Other deficiencies, such as those requiring enormous investment (e.g., a major improvement in the transportation situation) or those decreed by geography (such as lack of a complete buffer system or access to the open sea) would seem to be even less tractable in nature.

CHAPTER 6

THE ECONOMY

Section I. Basic Description and Assessment.

1. Introduction. In covering those general aspects of the Soviet Union most conducive to revealing exploitable vulnerabilities, it seems especially fitting to conclude with the economy. Not only is this appropriate as the testing ground wherein the functional efficiency of the system as a whole may be tried--whether this be the validity of its ideological claims, the power of its political organization, or the supportability of its military pretensions--but also, even more critically, there is the matter of the overall priority that the regime and its apologists have consciously chosen to assign. Based on repeated declarations, it must be concluded that the economy is the Soviet leadership's trump suit, that area on whose success they have inextricably staked their national prestige--and that of their ideology. It is in this light, then, that one needs to approach Khrushchev's boasts to surpass the United States by 1980 or the tribulations of the present leadership as they try to square a continued commitment in this direction with the necessity to scale down five-year-plan targets to their current, rather modest level.¹

2. The Influence of History.

a. As with the political sphere, the writings of Karl Marx--or, for that matter, even those of the prerevolutionary Lenin--failed to provide much practical guidance as to what to do once power had actually been seized. The system that evolved, then, can be described as an outgrowth of the perceived circumstances and needs of the new leadership, where maximum emphasis was placed on self-sufficiency, i.e., economic independence of a basically hostile

world, and on rapid acquisition of the necessary strength to survive and then support an evangelical, expansionist foreign policy. This latter necessitated gaining absolute, centralized control over all economic resources and concentrating a disproportionate share of the latter in those areas seen as contributing directly to national power. This basic philosophy, then, is what underlay nationalization, forced collectivization, the system of centralized planning, and the gross imbalances that can be noted within the Soviet economy even today.

b. Because of the above, it would not be out of place to suggest that the Soviet economy, like a number of other institutions of the Soviet system, can be characterized as a hasty assemblage of temporary expedients which all too soon became enshrined in the concrete of "sacred" tradition and bureaucratic inertia.

3. The Economy and the Political System.

a. A fundamental paradox of the Soviet economy is the evident incompatibility between the power elite's commitment to economic success--particularly in terms of a high rate of growth--and its obsessive need to preserve monopolistic control over the levers of power, a classic case of wanting to have one's cake and eat it, too. Nevertheless, it is instructive to note that whenever a choice between the two was unavoidable, economic efficiency and growth have consistently found themselves in second place.

b. The special peculiarities of the political system, to include the problems of leadership and elite-mass relations, are especially applicable in examining the economic sphere, for it is here that the results are most evident.

4. Economic Structure.

a. Given the above, how has the Soviet system organized itself to manage the economy? Campbell identifies as "the central, most distinctive institution of the Soviet economic system" that aggregate of bureaucracy and production facilities he calls the "state production establishment" or SPE. This he sees as "a kind of supercorporation charged with running the economy under unified management for a centrally determined purpose."² Around this concept he constructs the following model (adapted somewhat by the author):

CAMPBELL'S MODEL OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY

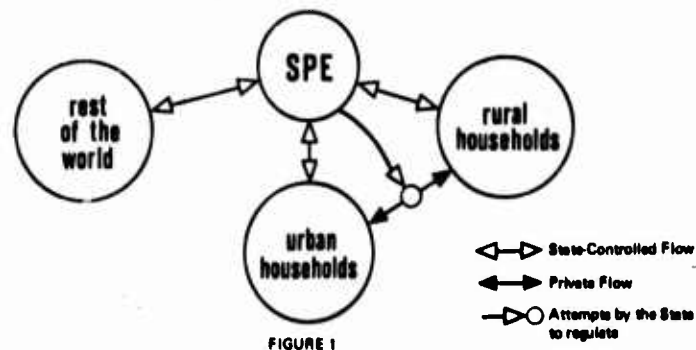


Figure 14

b. While helpful in many respects, particularly when expanding on the exploitative relationship between the SPE and the rural population, Campbell's analytical approach, it seems, is less successful at indicating the full scope of the dual-level nature of the Soviet economy and of its implications, several of which will prove useful in identifying economic vulnerabilities. Consequently, it was felt that the following model more closely met the needs of this paper:

THE "FLOATING OCTOPUS" MODEL

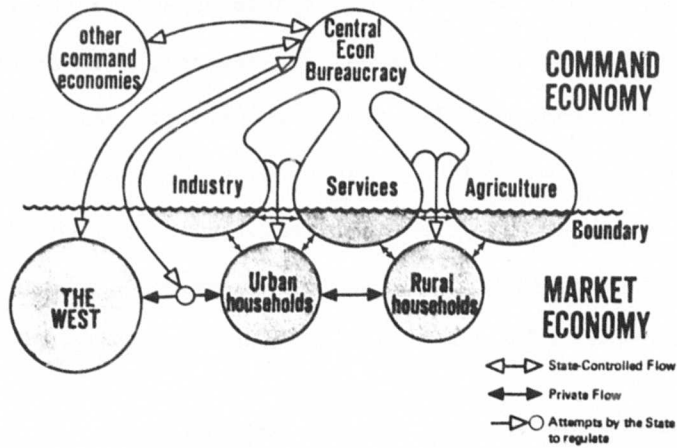


Figure 15

c. What emerges from the above is the spectacle of a rigidly structured command economy wherein the maximum feasible percentage of the nation's production capability is controlled by a central bureaucracy. This "above-the-waterline" superstructure is essentially identical to Campbell's SPE. However, this official framework rests upon, and is kept afloat by, a more or less extensive market sector, with its widespread, flexible network of informal or private relationships. The dimensions of this sub rosa economy are difficult to ascertain, in part because a considerable percentage of it is "illegal" (i.e., it fails to conform to socialist values, methods, and official priorities), and therefore is kept out of sight.

d. Nevertheless, as with agriculture where its relative size (around 4 percent of cultivated land) and output (some 30% of total production) are well known, this shadowy area--so described because it tends to be misunderstood, ignored, or persecuted by the Soviet leadership--is to a significant extent what makes the official command sector function as well as it does. What is also of interest is that the Soviet masses, urban and rural alike, by necessity live to a great extent in terms of market economy relationships, a circumstance brought about not only by the deliberately maintained shortage of consumer goods and services but also by the essentially market-type labor situation.³ In any event, the regime tends to perceive the necessary functioning of the market economy as highly threatening; however, since the ruling elite, despite its power, lacks the machinery as well as the understanding to bring this sector under the desired degree of control, official attempts to integrate it into the centralized command system through elimination, absorption, or regulation are at best sporadic.

e. Finally, as should be obvious, the critical US, West European, and Japanese economies are also primarily of the market type, suggesting significant problems of compatibility between them and the official Soviet economic structure.

Section II. Identifying Vulnerabilities.

5. Introduction. Because of the very magnitude and complexity of the Soviet economy, the vast number of its shortcomings, and the fortunate willingness of specialists to discuss at least some of the latter, the following account has been deliberately pared down to a discussion of some of the more fundamental problems and a few representative examples. However, this is in no way intended to downplay the decisive importance of this sector nor the array of exploitable vulnerabilities it presents.

6. The Problem of Perceptions. Because of the special peculiarities of the Soviet national character and the pretensions of its official ideology, there is a deep, although understandable, chasm between what is said publicly in the USSR about the nature, scope, causes, and significance of their economic problems and what can be found in Western analyses. What the Soviet leaders themselves believe is, for reasons already outlined, a less than easy matter to determine, although there is evidence to suggest that they have not remained unaware of the rising costs of maintaining the structural status quo.⁴ Because of this lack of data, it has proven impracticable to separate perceived from unperceived vulnerabilities.

7. Structure.

a. In looking over the economic problems with which the USSR has had to contend and the methods chosen to deal with them as a totality, it became increasingly evident that a large percentage of these headaches and the regime's difficulties in trying to cope with them could be attributed to a growing incompatibility between the economy itself and the administrative structure that is attempting to manage it. However, instead of rising to meet this challenge, the ruling elite--in classical Marxist terms--has resisted demands to make those institutional changes that would realign "property relations" (i.e., monopoly control by the power elite) with developments in the "system of production."⁵ Thus it is the politico-economic system itself that seems to be the key obstacle to meaningful improvements in the economic situation.

b. One sign of this systemic unhandiness is its almost total lack of mechanisms for making automatic adjustments, whether for discrepancies in planning, unforeseen circumstances, or desired short-term changes. Thus,

for example, the system's inability to react promptly to the 1973 oil price rise left the USSR in the position of exporting a high demand, hard-currency-earning raw material to its East European allies at wastefully low prices--at a time when Soviet trade deficits with the West were climbing steeply.

8. Elite-Mass Relations.

a. Directly related to the above are the consequences arising from the adversary relationship between those who formulate national-level goals, priorities, and plans and the descending hierarchy of plan executors. Some students of the Soviet economic scene attempt to explain this in terms of the planners' inability to devise incentives that will ensure proper alignment of aims up and down the administrative chain. Others hold that these strains are an outgrowth of the leaders' view that the Soviet economy, public propaganda notwithstanding, is still very much in the developing nation stage, and therefore must still be controlled and directed in an authoritarian mode. Then, of course, there is the omniscience problem alluded to earlier, one particularly applicable to the economic sphere because of the special insights Marxism-Leninism is supposed to grant its practitioners.

b. However, all of this sidesteps a central problem, namely the manner in which the elite and the masses interrelate. In this respect, a rather strong case can be made for characterizing elite attitudes as exploitative and "zero-sum-game" in nature, for picturing the rulers as ruthlessly using every means at their disposal to enforce compliance with their arbitrary exactions at the lowest possible cost in terms of return to the producers (i.e., wages, consumer goods to spend them on, etc.). Unquestionably, the coercive, grudging, and stingy aspect to elite treatment of the masses incurs measurable economic costs, such as forcing the producers to divert

considerable effort to defending themselves as well as seeking to meet their neglected needs at the market economy level. Vast waste, hoarding of resources, falsification of statistics, misappropriation of state property, and deliberate underproductivity at all levels are the results.⁶

c. However, to paint such a uniformly bleak picture of interclass hostility would seem overly harsh. The fact remains that there have indeed been some signs of recognition on the part of the ruling elite that a well-fed horse works harder, that public proclamations of superior economic organization are easier to support when the fruits thereof are more visible, and finally, that growing pressures from below as in neighboring Poland (and what they imply with respect to the stability of and conditions for the continuation in power of a Communist leadership) may well be a harbinger of a future with which they will have to contend. Furthermore, it would be unfair to deny that at least some of the leadership believe in at least some of the ideals and goals embodied in the official ideology.

d. In any event, the overall result has been that across-the-board exploitation of the masses has been tempered with a certain degree of pragmatic self-interest and colored with at least a modest admixture of genuine altruistic concern.⁷ Nevertheless, a basic, and very deep distrust remains, as demonstrated by continued efforts to increase the number, type, and complexity of controls to assure popular compliance, measures which have continued to prove burdensome and costly.

e. Finally, the system itself clearly discourages development and application of new technology, whether local or imported, and either reluctantly tolerates or feels impelled to punish as criminal behavior resort to market-economy solutions to local discrepancies between demand and supply.

9. Planning and Prices.

a. The two most striking characteristics of Soviet-type planning, as might be inferred from the above, are first, the fact that every effort is made to keep it tightly centralized and responsive to priorities worked out by, and primarily for the benefit of, the power elite and second, that--for reasons which boil down to a combination of deliberate imposition of strain, greed, impatience, and wishful thinking--the goals set seem invariably to demand a higher level of economic activity than can be sustained. This leads to a chronic sellers' market, inadequate inventories, hoarding, repressed inflation, and a less than desirable concern about quality output or customer satisfaction.

b. The overall lack of congruence between planner, producer, and consumer goals produces a host of other undesirable consequences as well, such as deliberate distortions in product mix, lack of concern for economic consequences (whether to the user, supply of national resources, common services such as transport, or the environment), and what can be termed poor production discipline ("storming," etc.).

c. One of the more important reasons behind planning irrationality has been the inability of either planners or producers to ascertain what anything costs, whether this be inputs such as capital, labor, raw materials, and technology or outputs. Part of this is due to ideologically imposed handicaps and part the result of a deeply embedded system of subsidizing certain industries at the expense of others. Once again, the overall effect is waste and vulnerability to economic exploitation.

10. Growth and Investment. There has been general agreement among recent analyses that--despite public commitment to continued rapid economic growth as justification for ideological imperatives, monopolistic rule by the power elite, and sacrifices on the part of the masses--Soviet economic expansion has been slowing down steadily; moreover, there is every indication that the situation will get worse, not better.⁸ Among the causes cited are population (declining growth, with what population increase there is being of the wrong ethnic stock--from Moscow's point of view--and in the wrong places), natural resources (with the richest and best located sources used up, costs and inconvenience are bound to rise), and investment (the present trend in all sectors is to require an ever-increasing amount just to stay even). Other factors contributing to the net decline include continued extraordinary distortions in overall economic development (with growth of machinery production more than twice that of producer goods, and the latter more than double the rate of consumer goods⁹); wasteful use of productivity, resources, and time; resistance to innovation; and the chronic weakness of agriculture.

11. Agriculture.

a. That the latter is the major soft spot of the productive sector of the Soviet economy appears to be a matter of broad consensus. Causes behind the persistently poor performance in this area most frequently mentioned have been unfavorable geographic location, vagaries in the weather, unproductive manpower, and stubborn resistance to the introduction of new technology.

b. In response to those who claim that investment in agriculture has been neglected in favor of industrialization, there is the sobering fact that agriculture has received a substantial percentage of such key inputs as

labor and investment and is expected to do so in the future.¹⁰ With respect to the weather situation, it ought to be noted that prior to 1914 Russia under the same general weather conditions managed to be the breadbasket of Europe; not only that, the tiny private plots, which continue to be outrageously more productive than the public lands, also endure the same weather.

c. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to conclude that the key variable is organization, a circumstance that leads authors such as Campbell to call collectivization a "colossal blunder," which because of its sheer magnitude acquired some sort of sacred cow status.¹¹

d. In any event, long-haul statistical analysis suggests that the USSR is going to suffer shortfalls in domestic grain production 3-4 years out of every decade and that the seriousness of such imbalances seems destined to grow.¹² A major reason for this latter trend has been popular pressures for more meat in the diet and an increasing recognition of such demands by the ruling elite.

12. The Consumer. Unquestionably, the Soviet leadership is facing what must be termed a massive growth in popular sophistication and in insistence by its long-denied citizenry on sharing the finer things of life enjoyed not just by the Westerner, but, more importantly, by the elite itself. To give teeth to this huge, repressed demand for quality consumer goods and adequate services--despite a deliberate state policy of undercompensation--is an accumulation of liquid assets by the population perceived by the leadership as little short of alarming.¹³ Further, as indicated by both Western observers and recent defectors, popular exposure to Western visitors and ideas has expanded rapidly, especially in the last decade, and has allegedly wrought "enormous changes."¹⁴

13. Intra-Pact Relations. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Soviet leadership places a high value on maintaining what it defines as a proper relationship with its string of East European allies. Given this priority and a perception that excessively frequent resort to military means to preserve this relationship is counterproductive, it follows that Moscow, although preferring to be the net gainer in economic interplay with its neighbors to the west, is willing to pay for continued political stability. This is by no means lost on its allies, more than a few of which have not hesitated to take advantage of the situation.

Section III. Patterns of Vulnerability and the Role of Foreign Trade.

14. Introduction. To the doubter the above recital of Soviet economic woes, while interesting and probably accurate enough, may seem irrelevant to the problem of identifying weaknesses capable of being exploited by an external power. This is a valid point; Berliner and Holzman whose chapter in The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente is dedicated, like the rest of book, to the task of determining what, if anything, US policymakers can do to influence Soviet behavior, seem to be pessimistic about the prospects in this area.¹⁵ Nevertheless, a case can be made that perhaps, like others, these gentlemen may have overlooked certain important factors.

15. Patterns of Economic Vulnerability. All right, then, what patterns can be derived from the foregoing account?

a. The Soviet leadership has publicly committed itself to demonstrating that its ideological formulae and organizational model for the achievement of economic success--especially growth--are patently superior to all others.

b. However, this same leadership seems to find itself unable to take those organizational steps that appear increasingly unavoidable if the

Soviet economy is to regain adequate forward momentum.

c. Other than such a move, the only in-house option for the USSR to regain its former developmental pace--or, in the opinion of some, even to prevent total stagnation--would be to locate and put to use untapped economic potential of major proportions; unfortunately for the Kremlin such potential is no longer there, or not accessible. Expansion by extensive means would require significant additional inputs of labor, investment capital, and new discoveries of easily extracted, high-quality natural resources; unfortunately, these are lacking. Expansion by intensive means would require massive development and application of new technology, improvements in infrastructure such as the transportation network, and discovery of an acceptable means to tap the mammoth reservoir of uncommitted talent, motivation, and productivity that is indeed there; however, the price tag for such drastic change is not one the Soviet leadership seems to find acceptable.¹⁶ Consequently, in terms of indigenous capabilities, the Soviet power elite find themselves in a corner.

d. As if this were not bad enough, this same leadership faces growing pressure from two other directions. First, the cost of its continuing commitment to maintaining its huge military establishment--its solitary contributor to superpower status and world respect--is gradually approaching that point at which a major decision will have to be made between it and further economic growth. This is particularly likely because the military is the single remaining source of economically unproductive investment capital and labor; further, although there are disagreements as to the exact percentage, very few--at least in the West--question the basic fact that the proportion of the Soviet GNP, R&D effort, and quality manpower that is

diverted to military use is wastefully high. Second, as suggested earlier, the Soviet rulers are finding that their former freedom of action in national resource allocation is being steadily eroded from underneath as both popular demand for a better life and allied arm twisting take their less and less avoidable economic toll.

16. Search for a Solution.

a. Thus it is that their attention has turned to the possibilities that exist outside their borders. Because of the leadership's perceptions of the outside world and of the history of their relationship with it, once again they have found themselves on the horns of a dilemma.

b. One possibility, that of obtaining some type of assistance from their East European allies, while offering certain minor benefits such as access to East European know-how and sharing (with East Germany) some of the region's unused labor reserves, clearly has severe limitations. First, thanks to earlier Soviet heavy-handedness, their economic priorities are too much alike to make intra-bloc trade all that beneficial. Second, despite repeated Soviet efforts to encourage some sort of division of labor, nationalist sensitivities have prevented either the USSR or the other COMECON members from deriving optimum benefit from such arrangements. Third, there is the fact that even combined the states of East Europe do not have the resources the USSR needs--whether investment capital, quality technology, or even hard currency (the fact that Soviet imposition of its politico-economic system and controls on this region as well as postwar exploitation may have contributed to this state of affairs is ironic but perhaps not relevant). And finally, there is the unpleasant reality that political exigencies have made it necessary to accept intra-Pact economic arrangements of less than

optimum Soviet advantage.

c. Because of this, the Soviet leadership is faced with two choices: either continue to go it alone and risk drifting into an inextricable mire of economic stagnation or face the equally unhappy prospect of becoming entwined in the capitalist world economy. This latter is seen as undesirable for a host of reasons. First, the Soviet leadership does not want to become dependent on any external power for anything it cannot do without-- for fear of possible attempts to exploit such dependency. Second, capitalism as an economic system is seen not only as decadent but destined to collapse; therefore, it would seem logical to avoid moves that either make one depend on such a dying organism or tend to help keep it alive. Third, broadened contact with capitalism and its proponents increases the threat to the ideological contamination of one's own citizenry, thus driving up the costs of shielding them from such hazards. And fourth, there is the problem of basic structural incompatibility between the two politico-economic systems. This latter problem is rather more serious than it would seem at first glance. Because the dominant sector of the Soviet economy is the command superstructure, operated under centralized control in response to detailed, deliberately over-full plans, there is little or no room for the flexibility and responsiveness needed to cope with a market environment. Allowing the market sector to deal directly with foreign firms à la NEP is simply too distasteful, if not downright embarrassing, ideologically. Finally, and even more discomfoting, there is the hard fact that the imbalance between what the West has that the USSR wants versus what the latter has that the West wants is severe and unlikely to change; if Western consumer goods for the masses were added to the scales, this distortion would be even more one-sided.

d. All things considered, however, the Soviet leadership has had no real option but to choose to expand its involvement with the capitalist market. In doing so it has attempted to take maximum advantage of the special characteristics of the latter, especially the latter's lack of central direction and coordination, while minimizing its likely negative impact on the socio-political order at home. The hope is, of course, that no one in the West will sit down and ask just what are the Soviets up to and is it in our interest to let them do what they are doing in the manner they are and for the overall price tag that can be observed?

17. The USSR and the Capitalist World.

a. Those who are knowledgeable about Soviet economic history are aware, of course, that, despite the ideological and other misgivings described above, the Soviet leadership has repeatedly muted natural distaste and distrust in the interest of deriving economic benefit from the decadent, capitalist West. Foreign investment, technical advisers, even outright import of entire manufacturing plants--whether Ford or Fiat--form a steady pattern of contact with the capitalist world.

b. Thus the decision around 1971 to start borrowing substantially on the international credit market or the steady expansion of Soviet-owned multinational corporations involved with such activities as banking, insurance, equipment leasing, shipping lines, and sales of Soviet raw materials and manufactured products¹⁷ should not come entirely as a surprise.

c. The key questions, however, remain: to what extent is the USSR "stuck" in the international economic market; has this involvement got to a stage where the Soviets have become so dependent on foreign economic ties

that the potential for leverage is there; and finally, is the West so constituted that it is either able or willing to try to concentrate such economic power as it has to try to exploit this situation? As noted earlier, the Berliner and Holzman response to this was negative. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to examine some of the available evidence.

18. Indications as to the Extent of Soviet Economic Dependence on the West.

a. Rabbot claims that it was Brezhnev himself and his supporters who decided that "the economic crisis could be dealt with by aid (credits and technology) from the West, instead of internal reform, which seemed too risky to them." Thus, he argues, trade with the West would "allow them to avoid any alteration in the domestic status quo," to include sustaining "their high level of arms spending."¹⁸

b. Since starting its program of large-scale borrowing on the Western capital market, the USSR has found itself sinking into even deeper indebtedness. Soviet hard currency debts to the West grew in 1975 alone from around \$8 billion to nearly \$12 billion, an increase of some 40-odd percent. Although Moscow is apparently still perceived as an excellent credit risk, the bloom is off and international bankers are no longer willing to offer cut-rate credits or put up with scanty data as to what the USSR plans to do with its borrowed wealth. This latter naturally runs against the grain of the secretive Soviet leaders, who are being forced to decide to what extent they are willing to abide by the rules of the international money market.¹⁹

c. Soviet foreign trade also expanded rapidly starting about 1971, in fact some 2 1/2 times faster than GNP growth; this trend is expected to

continue for the rest of the decade. What is especially revealing in this is first, trade with the West continues to be heavily in favor of the latter (the balance for 1976 was nearly \$3 billion more imports than exports or almost 10 percent of all foreign trade) and second, that for the first time the current five-year plan specifically grants such trade an important role. As a CIA study puts it, "Imports of western technology are necessary to meet some production goals." Further, based on the data provided, it appears that the 30-35 percent growth in foreign trade value planned for is likely to be exceeded substantially.²⁰

d. As suggested in the assessment made of Soviet agriculture, Soviet dependence on grain imports, while sporadic, seems likely to grow rapidly. In fact, it has been suggested that "deliveries of foreign [principally US] grain may be crucial to restore forward momentum in agriculture and consumption."²¹ To add to this, should the forecasts being made regarding an overall cooling trend in world climate be accurate, this would imply that a country whose agriculture already suffers from marginal weather conditions may well find itself with continued and serious production shortfalls.²²

e. As a final note, since the principal Soviet exports to the West are raw materials, it would be appropriate to recall from the chapter on geography that the USSR seems destined to become a net importer of oil sometime during the next decade (see p. 68).

f. Although time and circumstances precluded making a properly exhaustive study of this trend, the above material suggests that while the USSR could back out of its economic ties with the West, the cost of so doing is high and, it would seem, is rapidly approaching a prohibitive level.

Section IV. Future Trends.

19. Economic Success and the Soviet Foreign Image. Given the gloomy prospects alluded to above, it would appear that the Soviet leadership is faced with an image projection mission of growing difficulty. How will it be possible to demonstrate the obvious economic superiority of the Soviet model over capitalism when the rest of the world is gradually becoming aware of how poorly the average Soviet citizen lives, how uncompetitive Soviet manufactured goods--with the solitary exception of arms--are, and how frequently the USSR must look to the "decadent West" for the necessary credits and technology to try to keep up in a rapidly moving world economy? Then, should the unthinkable happen and the Soviet leaders actually be forced by economic pressures to cut back their military establishment, how will the leadership be able to compensate for this?

20. Economic Success and Domestic Policy. What is much more serious to the leadership is the problem of balancing off falling economic growth with rising popular pressures, without letting slip their total grasp on power. If and when a growth "crunch" comes, there may well be no other alternative than to adopt policies aimed at appealing to worker motivation; the problem here is that in view of the imbalance between power elite goals and available resources--especially capital and labor--provision of a better life for many more than the current few seems likely to reduce even further the already tight supply of national resources. Also, the question arises whether a command economy, even given the will, is able to meet consumer-type needs efficiently. Unfortunately, the only other alternative are fraught with hazards. Opening up the vast Soviet market for quality consumer goods to the West, as already implied, seems sure to wreak utter

havoc with an already lopsided balance of trade; bad as this appears, however, the economically wiser choice of allowing the market sector to expand to meet this enormous need would not only seem to be an open admission of ideological failure (despite the implications of the Hungarian and Yugoslav experiences) but would even appear to threaten the power monopoly of the ruling elite.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR US POLICY

Section I. Theory Revisited.

1. A Review of the Bidding. Based on the research done for this particular paper, it is the author's contention that the less than well developed state of vulnerability theory has indeed had a definite, undesirable impact on our ability to isolate, identify, and make use of the exploitable weaknesses of our adversaries, to include the Soviet Union. Of the components that would seem to belong in a comprehensive vulnerability model, Goure's concept of success denial demonstrated the most potential value; unfortunately the dearth of data as to Soviet power elite perceptions--a logical effect of a cultural secretiveness bordering on the paranoid--precluded as wide an application as would have been preferred. Nevertheless, a case would seem to have been more than adequately established that Soviet weaknesses of a wide variety of types can indeed be identified. Two aspects of vulnerability analysis, namely, the power conversion process and practical recommendations for exploitation--this latter being by definition that element capable of transmitting a weakness into a genuine vulnerability--have been omitted thus far from discussion because it was found necessary to treat them at a later stage.

Section II. Summation of Vulnerabilities by Functional Area.

2. Introduction. For quick reference purposes the vulnerabilities described in detail in the earlier chapters have been summarized below.

3. Ideology.

a. Perceived Vulnerabilities.

- (1) Lack of confidence in own competitiveness.
- (2) Crisis of faith (does anyone really believe anymore).
- (3) Difficulty in competing with political apathy, national variants in orthodox philosophy, to include Eurocommunism, and, most of all, with Western consumerism.

b. Other Vulnerabilities.

- (1) Avoidable problems arising out of absolutist claims of ideology (e.g., heresy, situations forcing USSR to act where benefit to Soviet state is doubtful at best).

- (2) Avoidable problems arising out of applying concepts of Marxism-Leninism to itself or to present situation (e.g., the state and party failing to "wither away," questionable supportability of power elite revising tenets of official doctrine to suit immediate convenience, assumption of eternal progress as a universal good).

4. Political System.

a. Domestic Politics.

- (1) Leadership insecurity.
- (2) Hierarchical constipation.
- (3) Price tag of arrogated omniscience.
- (4) Susceptibility of leadership to data distortion or denial.
- (5) Mandatory aping of power elite blind spots.
- (6) Difficulty in instituting change, narrow choice range of rulers, and unavoidable neglect leading to leadership doubts as to system efficiency.

(7) Exploitative elite attitude reflected back by masses.

(8) Problem of non-Great Russian nationalism.

b. Intra-Pact Relations.

(1) Inability to foster genuine loyalty to USSR or to Soviet goals; Soviet distrust generating resentment.

(2) Neither alliance membership nor common ideology successful at eradicating nationalism, traditional hatreds.

(3) Failure at getting Soviet values, ideology to "take" among East European masses, especially within the northern tier states.

c. Other Foreign Relations.

(1) Perceived vulnerabilities.

(a) Soviets unable to cope with phenomena that do not conform to their official ideology.

(b) Persistent sense of inferiority to the United States, frustration over US unwillingness to fit preconceived Soviet notions.

(c) Soviet problems in understanding the nature and motives of other nation states.

(2) Other vulnerabilities.

(a) Selfish, limited foreign policy; the USSR unable to conduct a policy of enlightened self-interest or bear responsibility.

(b) The Soviets better at fomenting disorder than promoting national development.

(c) The USSR a deformed superpower.

(d) Soviet difficulties in understanding, dealing effectively with other cultures.

(e) Potential fragility of heavy Soviet reliance on their monopoly of spare parts and maintenance support for Soviet military hardware as key element of foreign policy.

d. Patterns of Vulnerability.

(1) The ability of the power elite to maintain the Soviet system and their position in it depends on the willingness of the others in the system to accept the structural status quo. This willingness and those factors that contribute to it serve as the foundation for Soviet power and cohesiveness and potentially as its greatest vulnerability.

(2) This willingness is based to a great extent on false or distorted information.

5. Geography.

a. Perceived Vulnerabilities.

(1) Deep emotional scars due to history, especially of defeats, humiliations, and suffering.

(2) Highly defensive about current extent of territory (especially the more recent ill-gotten gains), fearful of "Pandora's box" effect of yielding even the tiniest piece of territory, worry about hostile or potentially hostile neighbors.

(3) Perception of sea frontiers, contiguous waters as especially vulnerable areas.

(4) Sensitivities over borders, neighbors greatly heightens worry about own national minorities clustered along frontiers.

b. Other Vulnerabilities.

(1) Distortions in population and industry distribution, leading to extreme concentrations around key cities, centers and to a dangerous lack of depth in Siberia and the Far East.

(2) Natural resource limitations: oil, natural rubber, bauxite, alumina, tantalum, tin, tungsten, and fluorospar; possibly uranium, copper, and vanadium.

c. Vulnerabilities of Access and Movement.

(1) Very poor water transport situation: unusable sea-coast, interdictable egress routes, climatic limitations (freezing), vulnerable inner waterway infrastructure, inability to manage mixed mode transport effectively.

(2) Lack of comprehensive highway net; roads unusable for most of the year (mud, snow).

(3) Near total dependence on rail systems; latter subject to near saturation use, interdictable. World War II experience not valid.

(4) Transport limitations raise cost of population, energy, and resource maldistribution, dilute combat power of military.

6. The Military.

a. Command and Control.

(1) Excessive concentration of power and initiative at the top, distrust of subordinate leaders, oversupervision, rigidity, hoarding of information and communications means.

(2) Stifled initiative, innovation; junior commanders and enlisted personnel move, act only when, where, and how ordered.

(3) Strains produced by mistreatment of conscripts (75 percent of armed forces), problem of minority members.

(4) Soviet distrust of Warsaw Pact allies raises questions as to likelihood of optimum use of latter.

(5) Negative effects on military effectiveness of Party, KGB watchdog systems.

(6) Widespread reluctance within civilian sector to give to military support (materials, manhours) when latter interferes with their primary responsibilities or personal preferences.

b. Elite Concerns.

(1) Viability of current military doctrine questioned.

(2) Misgivings over disaffection of Soviet youth; general defeatist attitude of own population about nuclear war seen as affecting nuclear launch forces.

(3) Soviet military untested; World War II combat-experienced personnel dying off.

c. Battlefield Management.

(1) Severe problem of command and control inflexibility.

(2) Questionable ability to manage, integrate new technology effectively.

d. Language Problem: steadily growing worse.

e. Geography.

(1) Lack of complete buffer system (Ukraine, Central Asia, Siberia, Far East), fear of two-front conflict, superiority of Soviet forces in Far East insufficient to offset Chinese terrain advantage.

(2) Large size of USSR seriously affects ability to integrate, coordinate, and reinforce (e.g., logistical support, navy).

(3) Climate, cold weather costs.

(4) Fragmentation of seapower.

(5) USSR must project power overseas directly from home ports, almost all of which are interdictable.

f. Doctrine and Tactics.

(1) Problems of trying to make blitzkrieg work: effect of densely built-up areas, communications and land navigation philosophies, new technology (e.g., precision guided munitions).

(2) Concern over NATO antitank technology, impact on Soviet doctrine for use of armored infantry.

(3) Deficiencies in artillery employment, aviation management.

g. Training.

(1) Exploitative character makes training inefficient, wasteful.

(2) Impact of heavy doses of political indoctrination.

(3) Doctrine reinforces reluctance to take initiative.

(4) Land navigation problems.

(5) Problems in cultural assimilation of new technology.

(6) Stingy approach to unit training.

(7) Questionable value of training exercises.

(8) Undesirable effects of overstress on competition, deliberate overload.

h. Personnel and Morale.

(1) Abuses in draft system harm morale.

(2) Military suffers from shortage of skilled personnel, quality manpower, cyclic turnover, aged senior officers, promotion system based on factors other than merit.

(3) Maltreatment of subordinates resented, leads to alcoholism, suicide, desertion; early World War II experience may be rule not exception.

i. Logistics.

(1) Lessons of Czech invasion: mismanagement, serious transport problems, lack of important types of equipment. Key questions: why couldn't more of these needs be forecast and, if not, what does this suggest as to military effectiveness?

(2) Equipment problems: lack of standardization, necessary ancillary equipment, overall misplaced thriftiness.

(3) Transport problems: overdependence on rail system; basic flaw in avtokolonna system: conflicting priorities between permanent civilian owners and temporary military users.

(3) Pipelines vulnerable to interdiction.

j. Maintenance and Supply.

(1) Storage of bulk of equipment to save wear and tear leads to operations, supply, and maintenance experience deficiencies.

(2) Modern war may be far more attritive than Soviet planners envisage.

(3) Location of allies of doubtful commitment in Soviet COMZ offers potential threat to continuity of supply.

7. The Economy.

a. Problem Areas.

(1) Growing incompatibility between economy itself and administrative structure attempting to manage it; lack of mechanisms for making automatic adjustments.

(2) Adversary relationship between planners and plan executors, leading to vast waste, hoarding, falsification, theft, and deliberate underproductivity.

(3) Planning problems: attempt to keep under tight, centralized control; deliberately excessive goals strain system, create chronic sellers' market, lack of concern by producers.

(4) Inability to know what anything costs.

(5) Steady decline in growth an ineluctable trend.

(6) Chronic weakness of agriculture primarily an organizational matter.

(7) Growing consumer demand.

(8) Soviet political vulnerability to economic pressure from WP allies.

b. Patterns of Vulnerability.

(1) Leadership committed to achieving economic goals that cannot be met by extensive means; intensive means cannot be used effectively due to unacceptable political cost.

(2) Approaching "crunch point" between need to maintain large military establishment and need to achieve economic goals.

c. Role of Foreign Trade.

(1) Despite inherent distastefulness, dangers, import of credits, technology from the West the only acceptable means for leadership to try to get out of economic impasse.

(2) Extent of Soviet dependence on foreign economic ties open to argument; signs of such extent: admission by top leadership,

growing indebtedness, rapid expansion of foreign trade, sporadic but growing dependence on imports of US grain, imminent loss of Soviet position as net oil exporter.

Section III. General Patterns of Vulnerability.

8. Introduction. In sifting through the material summarized above, it became evident that many different types of patterns could be elicited, depending on the angle of approach and the variables selected. The following, then, are at most a representative sampling of what in-depth analysis should be able to reveal.

9. Claims, Perceptions, and Reality. Although far too little is known, there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest not only that there is distance between what the Soviet leadership claims to be universal truth and value as reflected in reality as they proclaim it and reality itself but, more importantly, that this difference is both significant and apparently so recognized by the leadership itself. Obviously, this relates to such problems as that of perceived system legitimacy and the degree of need to control mass access to information, value systems, and value judgments. Also, it has a bearing on the dichotomy between official protestations of systemic superiority, whether in economic terms or comparative lifestyles, and actual performance.

10. Systemic Strains. Again, despite our less than desirable understanding of the situation, there are more than a few indications that the Soviet system--to include both fundamental philosophy of organization and interpersonal relations and the manner in which both are currently being carried out in practice--is suffering from flaws

whose impact on overall systemic effectiveness has deepened over time to the point where goal accomplishment is being seriously held back. Examples of this are widespread, being noticeable not only in the domestic politico-economic situation but also in the area of foreign relations.

a. On the domestic front this is reflected in what must be identified as excessively proprietary attitudes and conduct on the part of the elite towards the masses, with the latter in effect being told: "Do what you're instructed and how you have been instructed to do it, and don't bother to ask for anything, since we are the ones who decide what, if anything, you are to get." In the long history of human society there have, of course, been numerous occasions when the leadership of a polity or other group has called upon its members to sacrifice immediate rewards while striving for more distant goals, the achievement of which was promised to bring substantial, long-term benefit to everyone; unfortunately, a frequent fly in the ointment has been whether this same leadership has itself practiced what has been preached. There is more than a little evidence that the Soviet power elite has not done well in this respect. As Hedrick Smith puts it, however, realization of this has led in some areas not so much to individual resentment and desire for possible political change as to a personal wish for an exception to be made whereby the individual, too, can be let in on a little of the action.¹

b. In economic terms this can be seen in the growing incompatibility between the economy and its manner of administration,

whether this be overcentralization of power and initiative or the conflict between elite attempts to overload and mass resort to deception and underproductivity.

c. In foreign policy this tendency has revealed itself, especially of late, in a growing awareness by present and former Soviet client states of the real limitations of Soviet understanding, capabilities, and usefulness to them.² Obviously, however, there are differences between the latitude open to, say, Rumania in this respect and that of Somalia to take action based on such awareness.

d. The special peculiarities of the Soviet ideological outlook, ambitions, problems in interpersonal relations, and economy combine to limit, sometimes severely, Soviet options and flexibility when dealing with the outside world, especially non-Communist states. Properly understood, these limitations offer a most fruitful area for identifying and exploiting vulnerabilities.

Section IV. Implications for US Policy.

11. Introduction. It is now time to pick up the discussion initiated in paragraph 5 of the first chapter (see p. 9), namely, the problem of making practical use of the various Soviet vulnerabilities thus far identified.

12. The Nature of the Conflict.

a. However basic it may appear, it would seem beneficial as a prelude to any national effort to seek out and utilize Soviet vulnerabilities to ensure that we are adequately cognizant of the full scope of the conflict which circumstances and Soviet ambitions have

thrust upon us. As indicated in the chapter on the political system (para 3-4, p. 30), Soviet goals reflect far more than a normal desire for one's place in the sun; it is this fact plus observable Soviet behavior that led the author to characterize cold war, detente, or whatever other new term emerges to depict Soviet-US relations as he did (see p. 42). Thus, to the degree that the leadership can manage it--and in compliance with some sort of system of priorities--every available means, from international fora, news media, and cultural exchanges to the world of sport are consciously prepared for and committed to unremitting battle. For, whether or not we choose to follow suit, the Soviet leadership clearly understands where and how raw strength--or, in its absence, the appearance thereof--is converted into power, into the ability to affect others' perceptions and behavior.

b. In evident recognition of the reality that its military establishment is its only claim to superpower status, the Soviet leadership has taken considerable care in structuring, deploying, and manipulating the latter to produce the maximum psychological--and thus political--effect with a minimum expenditure of resources. Thus it seems entirely natural for Moscow to take such special care to preserve in pristine form the reputation its military earned a generation ago on the battlefields of Europe. This has been quite a feat, especially in view of the amount and extent of technological and other changes that have taken place since that time (see the chapter on the military for more details).

13. The Problem of Exploitation.

a. Once having satisfied ourselves that we fully understand the nature and scope of the conflict to which the Soviet leadership

has committed itself and of the battlefield where this struggle is being waged (given our record with respect to the Vietnam war, such an assumption, it would seem, should not be made too lightly), we should then turn our attention to the problem of the US response. It is here that the US national leadership takes over.

b. The first question that must be addressed at this stage is to relate the materials gathered and opportunities for exploitation revealed to the US national interest. It goes without saying that mere identification of an exploitable vulnerability does not automatically mean a decision to make use of same. Instead, it must undergo a complicated refining process to include timeframe, space, and scenario dependency calculations; estimation of risks and unintended consequences; and the net balancing of the whole business against US national goals, priorities, and spectrum of acceptable means.

c. It would seem evident that the establishment of priorities and allocation of resources towards the development and maintenance of US means to accomplish national goals, be they offensive or defensive, should be based on more than an assessment of the capabilities of potential adversaries. The structuring of such US means--covering the entire spectrum--should, it would seem, logically be aimed both at opposing strength with strength (essentially the achievement of defensive symmetry) and at acquiring other strength specially tailored to exploit adversary weaknesses (i.e., the deliberate creation of offensive asymmetry). Only thus can we best optimize our ability to deal effectively with such an adversary across the full range of conflict

scenarios³--again keeping in mind his perceptions of the nature and scope of the conflict.

14. Conclusions.

a. The Soviet Union as a nation state and as an ongoing experiment in social, political, and economic organization has numerous, chronic flaws, many of which look exploitable.

b. Our knowledge, understanding, and past record of use of such vulnerabilities leave much to be desired. In fact, the whole concept of vulnerabilities, both theory and practical details, cries out to be more deliberately and thoroughly explored. Possession of a comprehensive, functionally integrated compilation of such exploitable weaknesses should be of direct and immediate value to those charged with national-level strategy formulation.

c. The existing US governmental institutions appear to be capable of filling most of this knowledge gap. The necessary expertise as well as much raw or processed data that could be applied toward this goal are already available. What is not being done is any sort of concerted effort to think in terms of vulnerabilities, and then to organize to produce results in that direction.

d. The central problem, then, seems to be one of policymaker perceptions: is it in the best interests of the individual party, agency, or institution in question that specific, accurate information be gathered, analyzed, and disseminated which would restore balance to the widespread image of enormous, threatening Soviet power? This is a matter whose significance far transcends the frequently cited

rationalization of Congress and the defense budget; what is at stake is the whole business of the perceptions of Soviet versus US power, not only in the eyes of the Soviet leadership but also as understood throughout the world. (Although of itself insufficient as evidence, the author has been repeatedly exposed to indications that this battle for hearts and minds is serious, even among our own allies, and that all is not going well.) To this Administration, which seems bent on restoring a greater degree of US initiative to intra-superpower relations--something long overdue--a thorough grasp of Soviet problem areas, both real and as perceived by them, would seem to be an especially important requirement.⁴ However, the lack of correspondence between Soviet abilities to orchestrate a full panoply of attitudes, means, and relationships and the wildly pluralistic US approach cannot help but seriously handicap any US administration's efforts to get a better handle on the situation. Fortunately, this latter problem has not altogether gone unnoticed, witness the recent establishment of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on US-Soviet Affairs under the aegis of the Department of State.⁵

15. Suggestions for Policy.

a. Filling the Knowledge Gap. The US intelligence community should be specifically tasked through appropriate channels to expand their present comprehensive coverage of Soviet capabilities to incorporate an equal, complementary degree of attention to Soviet vulnerabilities.

b. Getting Our Act in Order. Formation of the previously mentioned coordinating committee seems unquestionably to be a valuable

first step, that of trying to achieve a semblance of consistency of approach within the executive branch. However, such coordination efforts need to be broadened still further. The limiting factor in all of this lies, of course, in the very nature of our political philosophy: can we really get ourselves sufficiently organized to be more competitive? Do we even want to?

c. Preparing for Contingencies. Although certain types of Soviet vulnerabilities may appear to be unacceptable targets for exploitation at the present time, continuation of such self-imposed limitations may not be desirable or even feasible during, say, periods of crisis or armed conflict--of whatever scale. Accordingly, it would seem practical to ensure that current national plans allow for such changes, and that the needed skills and resources--especially those which take time to acquire--are available in the quantity and quality necessary.

d. Organizing for Combat in the Intellectual Arena. Since many exploitable Soviet weaknesses do not fall comfortably within the purview of existing governmental institutions either for identification and analysis purposes or for exploitation and since no such entity apparently exists elsewhere, much practical benefit could accrue to US national level policymakers from the establishment of a government-sponsored research institute analogous to the Moscow-based Institute for the study of the USA and Canada. Staffed by top quality specialists in the USSR, this prestigious organization would be tasked with in-depth study of all aspects of our superpower rival, from ideology to

geography. In addition to supporting governmental needs, the Institute would have the specific mission of researching, publishing, and disseminating to the international academic world, the communications media, governmental bureaucracies, and the world at large information, analyses, and views that the Soviet leadership would much prefer were left unsaid (e.g., the history of Russian and Soviet colonialism). Thus it would serve to fill a sizeable--and, to some extent, deliberately created--gap in the perceptions of a highly influential segment of world society, one which often claims but much less frequently tries to achieve objective balance.

e. The World of Ideas.

(1) Judging by some of the fallout from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)--something the Soviet leadership fought long and hard to bring about--a case could be made that the Kremlin has been hoist by its own petard; i.e., it cannot at one and the same time proclaim to all the superiority of Marxism-Leninism and yet openly demonstrate that the latter and popular faith therein must be protected in order to survive. The very vehemence of Soviet sensitivity to such matters as human rights, the activities of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, and the dissent problem clearly suggest a need for further exploration.

(2) Although it has apparently not been attempted, in part due to national distaste and in part because of the absence of an appropriate institutional vehicle, it might well prove more than a little beneficial to take on the Soviets directly in the field of ideological

theory and practice, whether this be a critical analysis of their official philosophy and how it is carried out or comparisons between it and other value systems. As brought out in the chapter concerned, Marxism-Leninism-- however dull, obsolescent, or seemingly irrelevant--is the basis for whatever legitimacy the Soviet system and the power position of the present leadership have. The latter give every evidence of a high degree of awareness of the threadbare spots in their ideological blanket and must gaze with more than a sigh of relief at the general obliviousness with which their Western rivals treat such matters. Life would indeed be complete if only the Chinese and, perhaps, the Yugoslavs would follow suit. Should a decision be made to take positive action in this area, the proposed institute would be a natural means, certainly a more appropriate one than, say, the US Information Agency in its capacity as an official organ of the government.

f. Operation Winnebago. Capitalizing on "basket three" of CSCE and the growing Soviet need for hard currency, it might be in the US interest to vastly improve our coverage of the Soviet Union simply by subsidizing tourist visits, letting average Americans, their cars, campers and life styles speak for themselves. The camper approach would be especially insidious first, because such things are practically unknown in the Soviet sphere and second, because self-contained travel to a great extent complicates the KGB task of insulating the local population from possible foreign contamination. Worse still, we might even have the foresight to insist that the recipients of such travel subsidies attend appropriately designed courses on the fundamentals of their own and the

Soviet political philosophy prior to their departure. Since all this would be done innocently in the name of promoting detente and world peace in accordance with the CSCE agreements, the Soviet leadership might well feel itself over a barrel, especially if the need for hard currency became urgent enough.

g. Economics. The case would seem to have been adequately established that for various reasons the Soviet leadership has painted itself into a corner, one from which it is either unable or unwilling to extricate itself without external assistance. Furthermore, the identifiable trends all point to a steady worsening of the situation and this to a continued growth in need for foreign--primarily US--aid. The key question is, of course, has the USSR gotten itself into such a position that it has become dependent on US help? Although no one argues over Soviet distaste for such dependence, there is much less agreement as to the exact extent of such reliance or as to the willingness or ability of the Soviet leaders to absorb the cost of refusing all aid rather than pay a political price for it that the United States might want to impose. Although insufficient work was done in the course of writing this paper to totally refute Berliner and Holzman (see the chapter on the economy, p. 123), the evidence presented seems to be adequate enough to suggest that there is a real potential for US leverage in this area. In any event, the whole topic deserves additional study.

h. The Military and Foreign Policy.

(1) Given the scope of Soviet ambitions; the limitations of their ability to understand, deal with, and be of practical use to other nations; and the deformed nature of their power base; it becomes evident that preservation of their reputation for military prowess and the leverage deriving from their military assistance program ought to be prime concerns of the Soviet leadership.

(2) Based on the evidence presented in this paper, a case can be made that these two foundations for Soviet power abroad not only are of major, perhaps even critical, importance but are apparently irreplaceable.

(3) A further case can be made that neither of these positions are invulnerable. What is less clear in all of the above is the degree to which these factors are so understood by the Soviet leadership.

(4) At any rate, it would seem a matter of considerable practical importance to look into measures that can be taken to ensure that the reputation of the Soviet military is reduced to that level it truly merits and which serves the best interests of the United States, not the Soviet Union. In addition, a serious investigation should be conducted into means whereby the USSR can be deprived of the fruits of its present monopoly of spare parts and maintenance assistance for Soviet-source military hardware. The prospects for the latter are numerous, there should be no problem in making the project more than pay for itself, and it would seem to be entirely possible to design it

so as to keep the United States either totally out of the picture or able to maintain a very low profile. The key is to find one or more third parties whose level of economic development, international position, and private preferences make it both possible and desirable to flout Soviet interests so profoundly--by deliberately going into the business of manufacturing these same spare parts and providing this same maintenance support in direct competition with their original source. Judging by the experiences of Sadat's Egypt and the predilections of Syria, the Sudan, and Somalia, there would be many who would rejoice at having an alternative to having to truckle before an arrogant and demanding Moscow. Among the parties who would be both capable and interested could be included Yugoslavia, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Israel, and Egypt. The latter would seem to have the most practical potential first, because of the depth of Egyptian dislike for the Soviets, second, because the Egyptian military themselves are in such serious, large-scale need for the output of such a program, third, because Saudi Arabia would appear to be both able and desirous of providing the capital needed, and fourth, because there is evidence that the Saudis and the Egyptians have already taken some steps in this direction, namely, by establishing some sort of arms manufacturing consortium. The critical point, however, is not Egyptian or other Third World nation self-sufficiency in arms but of providing an alternative source to current, former, and desiring-to-be-former Soviet client states.

(5) And finally, both in preparation for the unlikely circumstance of armed conflict between the two superpowers and their

alliance systems and in support of the image adjustment program alluded to above, it would be profitable to assure that US military doctrine, force structuring, troop deployment, RDT&E, and contingency plans take full account of the peculiarities and exploitable weaknesses of the Soviet military establishment, whether this be vulnerability to interruptions in command and control, overdependence on the tank, or incongruities between tactical and logistical doctrine.

ENDNOTES

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3. Interview with Donald Lewis, RAND Corporation, by telephone, December 23, 1976.
4. See, for example, "Power," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968, Vol. 12, pp. 405-415; K. J. Holsti, International Politics, p. 155; and Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations; The Struggle for Power and Peace, p. 28.
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6. Ibid., p. 158.
7. Ibid., p. 160.
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9. Holsti, p. 166.
10. Interview with Leon Goure, Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, by telephone, January 6, 1977.
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12. Hedrick Smith, The Russians, p. 17.

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3. Gustav Wetter, "Some Reflections on the Future of East-West Relations," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, pp. 152-153.
4. Pravda, 8 June 1969; A. Sovetov, "The Present Stage in the Struggle Between Socialism and Imperialism," International Affairs, November 1968, pp. 3-9 as cited in R. Judson Mitchell, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Ideology," Current History, October 1975, p. 138.
5. "Document: Soviet Union, Letter to L. I. Brezhnev from Yu. F. Orlov," Survey, Spring/Summer 1974, pp. 244-245.
6. See, for instance, Klaus Mehnert, "The Future of East-West Relations," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 111; Martin Esslin, "East-West Polarities," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 52; and Richard Pipes, "Prospects for East-West Relations," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 119.
7. Andrei Amal'rik, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984? p. 38 et passim; "Ideologies in Soviet Society," Survey, Spring 1976, pp. 1-11; and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Letter to the Soviet Leaders, pp. 41-49.
8. Orlov, pp. 241-245.
9. Smith, pp. 25-52.
10. Amal'rik, "Ideologies in Soviet Society," p. 4.
11. Morton A. Kaplan, "Birth Pangs of a New World Order," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 86 and Peter Wiles, "Leninism and Weltinnenpolitik," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 160.
12. Kaplan, p. 86.
13. Neil McInnes, "East-West Relations Within the Communist Movement," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 103.
14. See Smith; Robert J. Kaiser, Russia: The People and the Power; and George Feifer, Moscow Farewell.
15. Mitchell, p. 139.
16. See Herbert Goldhamer, The Soviet Soldier: Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level, Chapters IX and X.
17. Laird, pp. 46-48; Orlov, pp. 241-2.
18. See Mitchell article,
19. Laird, p. 79.

20. William E. Griffith, "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: An Overview," The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Détente, p. 4.

21. Wiles, p. 161.

22. Laird, pp. 200-201.

23. "The New Philosophers: A Coterie of Young Writers Attacks Marxism as Evil," Time, September 12, 1977, pp. 29-30.

Chapter 3. Political System.

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2. See Strategic Survey 1976, p. 36.

3. It is, to say the least, highly interesting that the never particularly reticent Chinese news media have chosen on occasion to use just this term with reference to the Soviet power elite; see New China News Agency, 6 August 1976, FBIS #154, 9 August 1976, p. A5, as cited in Joseph S. Curran, Jr., Trends in China's "Cold War" -- after Mao and the "Gang of Four", p. 9.

4. Richard Pipes, "Detente: Moscow's View," Soviet Strategy in Europe, pp. 7-8.

5. Orlov, p. 244.

6. See again Curran, pp. 11-12; Orlov, pp. 243-245.

7. Milovan Djilas, "The Need for a New Analysis of East-West Relations," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 50.

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12. Sel'skoe Khozyaistvo, 10 April 1957, pp. 1-2, cited in Laird, p. 112.

13. See A. Pravdin and Mervyn Matthews, "Inside the CPSU Central Committee," Survey, Autumn 1974, p. 97.

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18. See again Goldhamer, Chapters IX and X.
19. Seweryn Bialer, "The Soviet Political Elite and Internal Developments in the USSR," Survey, Summer/Autumn 1976, p. 44.
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21. Shanor, p. 201.
22. Robin A. Remington, The Warsaw Pact: Case Studies in Communist Conflict Resolution, pp. 165-187.
23. Shanor, p. 222.
24. Interview, Erickson, March 22, 1977.
25. Shanor, pp. 220-221.
26. Griffith, "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Recommendations for United States Policy," The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente, p. 407.
27. See repeated implications of this in Richard B. Foster, et al. US/USSR Strategic and Economic Issues: SRI/SSC-IMEMO and IUSAC Joint Symposia.
28. Pipes, p. 9.
29. Among the scholars participating in the symposium were Robert H. Legvold, Herbert S. Levine, Richard Pipes, Harriet Fast Scott, Marshall D. Schulman, and Thomas W. Wolfe.
30. Thomas W. Wolfe, "Appendix X: Trip Report," US/USSR Strategic and Economic Issues: SRI/SSC-IMEMO and IUSAC Joint Symposia, p. 217.
31. "90 Soviet Advisers Ousted from Sudan," Washington Post, May 19, 1977.
32. Pipes, pp. 3-4, 10-12.

33. Strategic Survey 1976, p. 3; see also William E. Griffith, "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Recommendations for United States Policy," The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente, p. 407.

34. See Victor Lasky, The Ugly Russian; Pipes, p. 10; and R. P. Clayberg, "Non-US Security Assistance Programs," Reports of the Sixth Security Assistance Symposium.

35. Richard B. Foster, "Appendix L: Trip Report," US/USSR Strategic and Economic Issues: SRI/SSC-IMEMO and IUSAC Joint Symposia, p. 119 et passim.

36. See Solzhenitsyn, Letter to the Soviet Leaders.

37. Hough, p. 16.

38. Laird, p. 208, 211.

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40. Hough, pp. 13-17.

41. "The New US Challenge to Russia," US News and World Report, May 30, 1977 (an exclusive interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski).

42. See Pipes, "Detente: Moscow's View," Soviet Strategy in Europe.

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3. Lydolph, pp. 477, 498.

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7. Lydolph, pp. 373-391.

8. Central Intelligence Agency, National Basic Intelligence Factbook, January 1977, p. 211, and Eugene K. Keefe et al., Area Handbook for the Soviet Union, pp. 12, 624, 732.

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11. Harry F. Ferguson, An Analysis of the Present Day Military Significance and Strategic Vulnerability of the Soviet Railway System in 1975.

12. Lydolph, pp. 553-555; Hunter, Soviet Transport Experience, pp. 11-12.

13. Lydolph, p. 557; Hunter, Soviet Transport Experience, p. 91.

14. Transport i Sviaz SSR, Statisticheskii Sbornik, 1972 as cited in Ferguson, p. 4.

15. Lydolph, p. 560.

16. Ferguson, pp. 15-27.

17. Hunter, Soviet Transportation Policy, pp. 89-109.

18. Ibid.

19. Gunther Blumentritt, The Fatal Decisions, p. 50 as cited in Ferguson, p. 3 (General Blumentritt served as Chief of Staff in the Wehrmacht Fourth Army, which conducted the main attack towards Moscow).

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Chapter 5. The Military

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5. John Erickson, Soviet-Warsaw Pact Force Levels, p. 17.
6. Goldhamer, p. 331.
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10. Ibid., pp. 18-20.
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4. Boris Rabbot, "Detente; The Struggle Within the Kremlin," Washington Post, July 10, 1977.

5. Campbell, pp. 242, 236.

6. Ibid., pp. 45-47.

7. Kevin Klose, "Soviet Leaders Advance Plan to Improve Lot of Consumer," Washington Post, July 20, 1977.

8. See Joseph S. Berliner and Franklin D. Holzman, "The Soviet Economy: Domestic and International Issues," The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente, p. 86; Campbell, p. 97; Soviet Economy in a New Perspective, p. ix.

9. Campbell, p. 97.

10. Ibid., p. 101.

11. Ibid., p. 75.

12. See "Plenty of Russian Grain," The Economist, January 8, 1977, p. 77.

13. Soviet Economy in a New Perspective, p. xxviii.
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15. Berliner and Holzman, p. 125.
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17. Herbert E. Meyer, "This Communist Internationale Has a Capitalist Accent," Fortune, February 1977, p. 134.
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20. CIA, Soviet Economic Plans, p. 29.
21. Ibid.
22. CIA, Potential Implications of Trends in World Population, Food Production and Climate, pp. 30-31.

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2. Joseph C. Harsch, "Grip on upper Africa: Soviets' Sand Castle," Christian Science Monitor, July 29, 1977.
3. Interview with Dr. Keith Dunn, SSI, Carlisle Barracks, July 28, 1977.
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5. "Administration Sets Up New Soviet Policy Group," Washington Post, July 20, 1977.

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APPENDIX

ANALYZING THE SOVIET SYSTEM FOR EXPLOITATION PURPOSES

1. Getting at Internal Vulnerabilities.

a. The purpose of Figure 16 is to assist analysts and policy-makers in evaluating where and how best to approach the Soviet system for the purpose of examining identified vulnerabilities for exploitability. As with all such descriptive diagrams much has had to be simplified, nor does the author intend to claim more for it than as a device to aid in achieving an orderly examination.

b. If the target is the Soviet power elite, then the critical cluster is C-F-G, with F being that area where the West seems best able to exert meaningful influence. The most immediately available levers for this purpose are represented by numbers 3, 17, and 10 on the perceptual level and 9 on the material level.

c. If the target is the Soviet masses, then the immediate goal is to affect M, with the ultimate aim being to get at 0. One problem here is how best to get around I and to coordinate 9 so that the probability of achieving the desired results is optimized.

2. Affecting Soviet Relations with the Outside World.

a. In Figure 17 some of these same concepts have been carried over to the area of Soviet foreign policy. Once again the critical cluster is C-F-G. In R we see the practical goal towards which the West has been trying to move through the various approaches and means that have been applied since the Soviet state first came into existence. In applying

THE SOVIET ELITE AND THE WEST

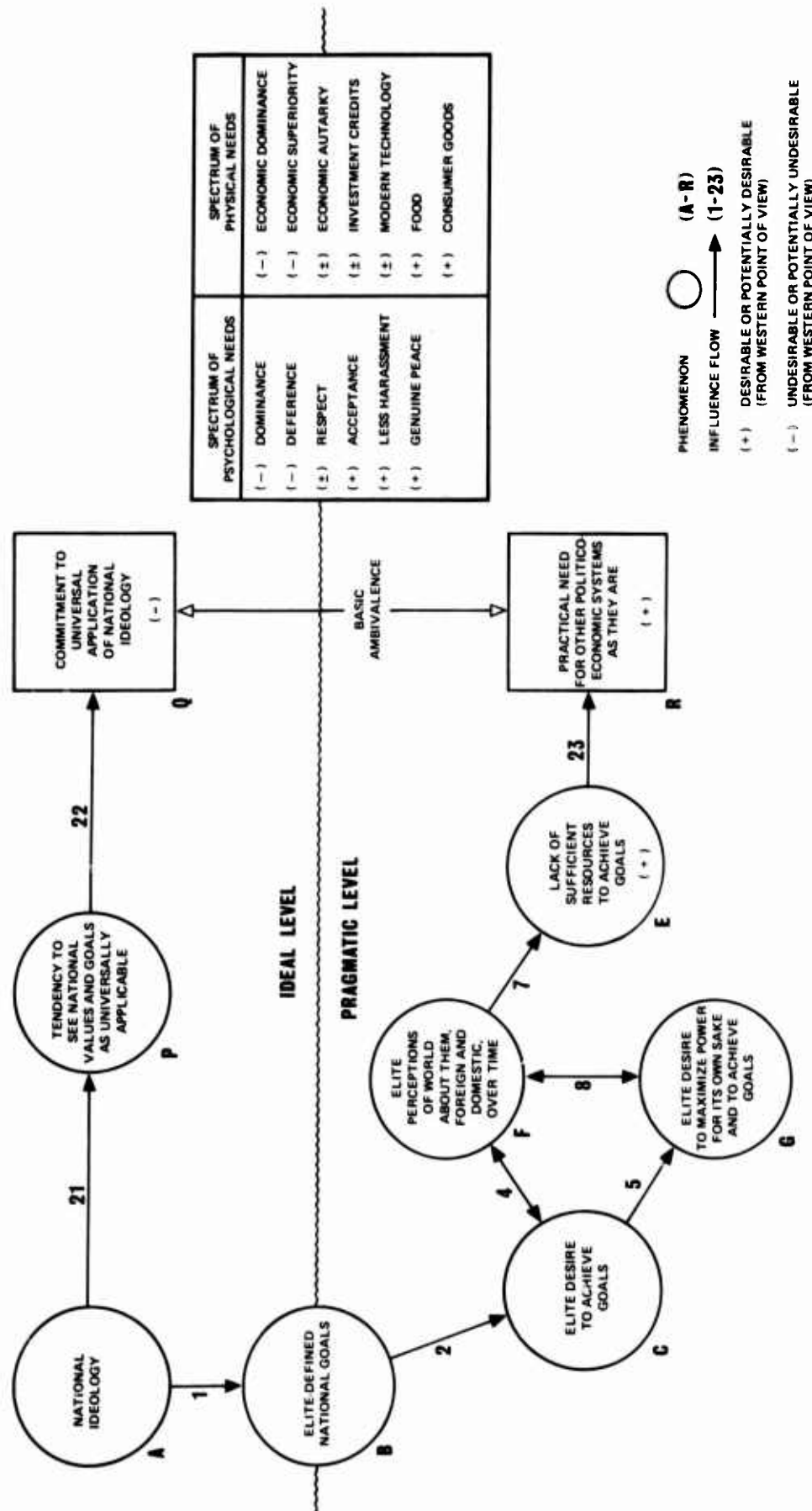


Figure 17

3, 17, 10, and 9 (see again Figure 16) our goals have been to meet those needs of the Soviet elite, psychological and physical, perceived by us as desirable--or at least neutral.

b. As should be evident, however, continued concentration on the pragmatic level to the exclusion of the ideal level, i.e., the realm of ideology, would seem to deny the West any possibility of overcoming the basic ambivalence identified in the figure (i.e., between Q and R) or of attempting to render less counterproductive to Western goals and values those needs seen as undesirable.

3. Creative Possibilities.

a. However, perhaps to state the above is to belabor the obvious. Because of the less than well developed state of the art, at least in the West, of thinking in terms of vulnerabilities, every effort, it would seem, ought to be made to break out of customary categories and self-imposed limitations and to look at the whole problem of the Soviet system and our relations with it with fresh eyes. It may well be, for example, that F is not the only entry point for us to get at the Soviet power elite and that means other than 3, 10, and 9 are available, or can be made available, for the West to employ.

b. It may be that L needs to be greatly expanded, that I can be sidestepped, neutralized, or otherwise rendered significantly less effective. There might well be other and better means for getting at M, N, or even O.

c. If we are willing to enter the ideological game seriously (such as, for instance, by setting up the proposed institute), it may

prove feasible to affect the system elsewhere, such as at B, G, P, or Q. As elsewhere, the purpose of this paper is not to provide all the answers but to stimulate thought.

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This study is apparently the first-known attempt to examine the vulnerabilities of the Soviet Union on an "across-the-board" basis. Commencing with an examination of the nature of vulnerability itself, it then takes a specific look in succession at Soviet ideology, domestic and foreign affairs, geography, the military, and the economy. In each of these chapters there is a brief discussion of those more salient characteristics which give rise to areas seen as subject to outside exploitation; a substantial description, explanation, and evaluation of the more important vulnerabilities; and--where feasible--construction of patterns of vulnerability, i.e., where separate, exploitable weaknesses can be seen to combine into related, even synergistic, groups. The study concludes with a number of specific, practical suggestions as to what US policy-makers might do to make best use of the Soviet vulnerabilities described.

Because of the sheer enormity of the overall task of searching out, identifying, and preparing to exploit the vulnerabilities of the Soviet system, this study makes no pretense of being definitive. Instead it is aimed at sensitizing those who should be concerned as to what can and should be done about the matter.

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