

# Probing Moscow's Outlook

By Paul Marantz

STEPHEN P. GIBERT. *Soviet Images of America*. New York, NY, Crane, Russak and Co., 1977.

ALBERT L. WEEKS. *The Troubled Détente*. New York, NY, New York University Press, 1976.

RICHARD J. BARNET. *The Giants: Russia and America*. New York, NY, Simon and Schuster, 1977.

PAUL HOLLANDER. *Soviet and American Society: A Comparison*.

ASKED ABOUT the widespread American perception that the Soviet Union has taken one-sided advantage of détente to make far-reaching gains throughout Africa and Asia, Georgiy Arbatov—the Soviet Union's most influential expert on the United States—replied, "I can promise you, we don't feel like winners."<sup>1</sup> Since it obviously remains very much in the Soviet Union's interest to soothe the American public opinion and put the best possible face on Soviet actions, Arbatov could conceivably have been dissimulating. Nonetheless, one wonders whether, in this particular instance, he may not have been accurately reflecting the inner

Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1978. *front*

EDY KAUFMAN. *The Superpowers and Their Spheres of Influence: The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. New York, NY, St. Martin's Press, 1976.

THOMAS B. LARSON. *Soviet-American Rivalry*. New York, NY, W. W. Norton and Co., 1978.

WILLIAM E. GRIFFITH, Ed. *The Soviet Empire: Expansion and*

concerns and true anxieties of the Soviet leadership.

It is undeniable that the Soviet Union has made some very significant gains in recent years—notably, the expulsion of the United States from Indochina and the installation of pro-Soviet regimes in Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and South Yemen. The expanded global reach of Soviet military and political power is symbolized by that nation's successful negotiation of treaties of friendship with seven far-flung nations, from Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia in Africa to Iraq, Afghanistan, India, and Vietnam in Asia.

However, the Soviet Union has also experienced some stunning setbacks. In country after country, Soviet hopes of just a few years ago have been cruelly disappointed. The long-awaited death

*Détente*. Lexington, MA, D.C. Heath and Co., 1976.

ROBERT F. BYRNES. *Soviet-American Academic Exchanges, 1958-1975*. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1976.

HERBERT KUPFERBERG. *The Raised Curtain: A Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Soviet-American Scholarly and Cultural Exchanges*. New York, NY, The Twentieth Century Fund, 1977.

of Mao Zedong did not result in an improvement of Sino-Soviet relations. Instead, Sino-Soviet tensions have increased, and Beijing has strengthened its relations with the West (culminating in the establishment of diplomatic ties with the United States) and thereby opened the door to Western economic assistance and military equipment which could make China a vastly more formidable rival to the Soviet Union.

The USSR has fared little better with Japan. Soviet hopes of obtaining massive Japanese economic assistance in the development of Siberia, of resolving the two countries' territorial dispute so that a peace treaty could be signed, of blocking a Sino-Japanese rapprochement, and of weaning Japan from the United States have all come to naught.

1. Joseph Kraft, "Letter From Moscow," *The New Yorker* (New York, NY), Oct. 16, 1978, p. 124.

Soviet-Japanese relations have stagnated while Moscow has been powerless to prevent the growing solidification of a long-dreaded apparition: a Sino-Japanese-American partnership.

In the Middle East, the break with Egypt deprived the Soviet Union of important naval facilities, and American successes in mediating between Egypt and Israel have reduced the Soviet Union to the position of a nervous and frustrated spectator. Elsewhere in the Third World, the Soviet Union has found itself expelled from Somalia and the Sudan, has suffered a humiliating defeat in Chile with the overthrow of Salvador Allende, and has experienced a significant loss of influence in India with the electoral collapse of Indira Gandhi.

In Eastern Europe, Romania and Yugoslavia have continued their independent policies, popular dissatisfaction with poor economic performance can easily trigger unrest (as happened in Poland in 1970 and 1976), and the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act unexpectedly gave rise to increased dissent and calls for human rights rather than to greater acceptance of Soviet domination. In Western Europe, the growth of Eurocommunism is a double-edged sword. While the increased strength of the Communist parties of Western Europe may advance some Soviet interests, such developments as the growing independence of these parties, their willingness to criticize Soviet policies, and the possible establishment of rival models of communism attractive to the peoples of Eastern Europe ("socialism with a human face" all over again) are highly disturbing to the Kremlin.

If all the Soviet foreign policy gains and losses in the 1970's

could be fed into some sort of impartial, objective geostrategic computer, what would the final reckoning be: a Soviet advance, a Soviet decline, or a rough balance between gains and losses for both the Soviet Union and the West? Perhaps even more important is the question: How are these recent events and trends *perceived* and *interpreted* by the Soviet leadership?

The dominant tendency in the West is to assume either that Soviet perceptions are an undistorted mirror of "reality" or that Soviet policymakers are dangerously susceptible to wishful thinking which causes them to exaggerate both the weaknesses of the West and the degree to which the "correlation of forces" is tilting in Moscow's favor. However, there is a third possibility. Various factors (such as historical experiences, ideological influences, and bureaucratic competition over budgetary allocations) may cause Soviet policymakers to make an assessment of the world which errs not on the side of overoptimism, but in the direction of caution, defensiveness, and the overestimation of potential dangers.

Logically, one might expect Western pessimism concerning recent events to go hand in hand with Soviet optimism. But throughout the history of the cold war, there have been frequent periods when feelings of insecurity prevailed simultaneously on both sides, and each felt itself to be confronted by a more powerful opponent who was dealing from "positions of strength." In addition, there are good reasons for surmising that Soviet leaders may be no less inclined toward worst-case analysis than their Western counterparts. We should not forget that feelings of inferiority

and fears of Western "subversion," "ideological contamination," and "encirclement" by anti-Soviet alliances are deeply embedded in Soviet political culture. All the talk in the Soviet press of favorable shifts in the world "correlation of forces" often sounds suspiciously like a brave attempt at whistling in the dark. If in the United States there has been much concern about Cuba, a small nation situated 90 miles from the American coast, imagine the field day that Soviet alarmists can have over China, a nation 100 times as populous as Cuba, sharing with the USSR a common border of more than 4,000 miles, claiming thousands of square miles of Soviet territory, possessing a growing nuclear arsenal, manifesting implacable hostility to the Soviet Union, and seeking massive amounts of economic aid and military equipment from the Soviet Union's major rivals.

Confronted with a disappointing record in its policies *vis-à-vis* each of the major centers of world power—the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and China—does the Soviet leadership derive much satisfaction from its victories in such hubs of global influence as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Angola? In its view, does the road to Paris and Berlin really run through Kabul, Addis Ababa, and Luanda? In short, are Moscow's perspectives on current world trends any more sanguine than those of Washington?

There are, to be sure, many barriers that impede our efforts to ascertain how Soviet policymakers perceive the world and the Soviet-American rivalry in particular. Indeed, the volumes reviewed here provide only bits and pieces of the puzzle. However, by discussing where we can look for evidence of Soviet

perceptions, the pitfalls involved in interpreting the evidence, the systemic factors that underlie and shape perceptions, and the objective circumstance of great-power rivalry, these books do advance our understanding.

THE INTRODUCTORY chapter of Stephen Gibert's *Soviet Images of America* perceptively explores the methodological problems that make it so difficult for a Western observer to reliably and confidently deduce the actual perceptions of Soviet policymakers from their carefully orchestrated public pronouncements. Gibert argues that these pronouncements must be treated in much the same way as the oratory of politicians in other societies, i.e., as statements made, first and foremost, in order to promote specific political objectives. Rather than assuming a one-to-one correspondence between the private views of the leadership and a particular public utterance, we must ask: For what audience is the utterance meant? Is the same thing being said to other audiences? What purposes is it meant to serve (e.g., socialization, mobilization, legitimization, or communication)? Are there differences within the ruling elite on the given question? Have elite perspectives changed over time? In short, Soviet rhetoric should be deciphered through the same kind of hard-nosed political analysis that is customarily applied in interpreting such rhetoric in other political systems. Since "there is no infallible way of discriminating with complete confidence between true perceptions and other pronouncements," Gibert suggests that the best way to get a reliable sense of the thinking of the Soviet leadership on a particular subject is to consider

fully the entire range of authoritative Soviet statements pertaining to it (p. 11).

Had Gibert heeded his own caveats and followed his own guidelines in the subsequent chapters, his study would have made a major contribution to our understanding of Soviet perceptions of world politics. Unfortunately, he covers so much so quickly (e.g., Soviet views of Sino-American relations in three pages, perspectives on "the general crisis of capitalism" in four pages, Soviet discussion of the economic factors influencing détente in one page) that the reader is given little sense of the depth and range of Soviet commentaries on a particular issue.<sup>2</sup>

Even more serious is the author's willingness, on the basis of this limited sampling of public commentary, to draw far-reaching and alarming conclusions. To cite just one example, there is the matter of Soviet assertions that the United States has come to accept peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union because it was "forced" to do so by Soviet power. In his opening chapter, Gibert lists such statements among those which are "apparently intended to serve propagandistic or other purposes and which appear *not* to represent true perceptions" (p. 9, emphasis added). Yet he repeatedly cites such statements and in the final chapter arrives at the ominous judgment that "especially damaging to viable Soviet-American peaceful coexistence is the *firm Soviet*

2. By way of contrast, see the richness and diversity of the materials quoted in Morton Schwartz, *Soviet Perceptions of the United States*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1978; and Franklyn Griffiths, "Images, Politics, and Learning in Soviet Behavior Toward the United States," unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, New York, NY, 1972.

conviction that it was a change in the correlation of forces that compelled the United States to adopt the policy of détente" (p. 142, emphasis added).

Gibert's discussion of this subject gives no hint of the Soviet leadership's awareness of the many complex changes in the policies of several of the world's leading powers (the Soviet Union included) that influenced the shift toward détente at the beginning of the 1970's. Similarly, he fails to explore the explanatory hypothesis that Soviet assertions that the USSR "forced" the United States to accept détente should not be taken at face value, but should be viewed as serving an obvious Soviet need to rebut charges (from the Chinese and others) that it was the USSR—and not the United States—which had altered its policies and that Moscow was muting the international class struggle in order to obtain political and economic concessions. In sum, while usefully assembling many of the authoritative statements that constitute the official Soviet image of the United States and reminding us of the strident anti-Americanism which still remains so depressingly evident in the Soviet press, Gibert's study is of only limited value in helping us gauge the nature of elite views and the extent to which they may or may not have become more realistic and sophisticated in recent years.

If Gibert ignores his own advice to view Soviet public statements in their full political context, Albert Weeks seems to ignore the issue completely and to assume that we can reliably and effortlessly deduce the thinking of the Soviet elite from its public pronouncements. For example, in *The Troubled Détente*, Weeks informs us

that the tract *Marksizm-Leninizm o voyne i armii* (Marxism-Leninism on War and Army)—a manual published by the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Armed Forces (an institution specifically responsible for maintaining ideological rectitude and troop morale)—is “one of the more valuable sources of information on the Kremlin’s present thinking about the use of arms to reach its aims in the thermonuclear age” (p. 22). Furthermore, Weeks considers Soviet publication of such tracts a major threat to the chances of turning détente into “a serious constructive partnership between the largest nations of the world” (p. 163). Without pushing the analogy too far, this is a bit like a Soviet analyst arguing that the thinking of US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and other American policymakers can be deduced from US Army training manuals, and that as long as these manuals seek to rally the forces by speaking of a “Communist threat to the free world,” détente will be impossible. In sum, *The Troubled Détente*, with its hasty generalizations, poor organization, and total absence of footnotes, falls disappointingly short of the high standards of perceptive analysis set by Weeks in his previous work, *The Other Side of Coexistence*.<sup>3</sup>

IF THE STUDIES by Gibert and Weeks illustrate the danger of ignoring similarities in the political processes of the Soviet Union and the United States, Richard Barnett’s *The Giants* goes to the opposite extreme. It is Barnett’s explicit thesis (though one which is categorically and repetitively asserted rather than carefully argued) that the Soviet Union

and the United States are virtually identical. He sees power in each society as concentrated in “half a dozen or so individuals,” “a roomful of men,” “the managers of the two expanding empires,” who are at liberty to do what they will (pp. 9, 10, 15). With constant recourse to a mirror-image view, Barnett contends: “The problem of communication is complicated by the wish of each elite to reveal itself and to remain mysterious at the same time” (p. 74); “. . . it was the image, not the reality that sustained fear on both sides” (p. 13); “The madness of one [military] bureaucracy sustains the other” (p. 173); and “Scholars at Moscow’s Institute of the USA and Canada are in much the same position as scholars studying the Soviet Union at Harvard or Columbia Universities” (pp. 92–93).

In Barnett’s view, to say that the Soviet Union is now a status quo power is “by and large . . . an accurate characterization of the role to which the men in the Kremlin aspired and which, given a chance, they were prepared to play” (p. 28). He ringingly declares that Stalin was a Russian nationalist and that the Soviet Union has constantly been concerned with holding on to the territorial gains it has already made. He seems to have forgotten that fervent nationalism is hardly incompatible with territorial aggrandizement and that a nation’s determination to maintain its recent acquisitions scarcely rules out a desire for further expansion. Whether it be Angola (which Barnett attributes to exceptional circumstances) or the 1962 Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba (a gamble that “was meant as a prelude to a grand negotiation on Berlin and on limiting arms”), there is, in his view, little

for the West to fear (p. 112).

Barnett does not deny all differences between the Soviet and American systems—only those that might cast the United States in a favorable light. Thus we read: “For much of the last generation the United States had clearer and larger ambitions than did the Soviet Union, a *Pax Americana* backed by a preponderance of military might and economic power” (p. 170). Similarly, he claims that “if the Soviet elite has been quite content to wait a long time for a political conversion in the United States, the American elite has been less patient about changes in Russia” (p. 76), and he asserts that in recent years, “the Soviet elite has probably changed more ideas about how the contemporary world works than has the US national security establishment” (pp. 73–74).

Barnett is a master of the succinct phrase and the concise characterization, but this is his undoing. Despite occasional evidence that he really knows better, he cannot resist describing the world in stark “either/or” terms. To be sure, Barnett does effectively criticize some of the imbalance prevalent in Western comparisons of Soviet and Western policies, but his penchant for undifferentiated comparison and sweeping generalization robs *The Giants* of the impact it might otherwise have had on the present debate over détente.

HAPPILY, the three other works of comparative analysis reviewed here (by Paul Hollander, Edy Kaufman, and Thomas Larson) are vastly more successful. Although the reader will inevitably disagree with one part or another of these ambitious and path-breaking works, he will recognize

3. New York, NY, Pitman, 1969.

them as serious, sustained efforts to come to terms with both similarities and differences in the politics of the United States and the Soviet Union. Hollander's far-ranging work, first published in 1973, is a vigorously argued examination of the societies of these two nations. This new edition is a paperback version of the first edition with the addition of an admirable introductory chapter in which the author, in an all too rare example of scholarly humility, shares with the reader his candid thoughts on which of his earlier interpretations have or have not been called into question by subsequent events. While it does not deal with the specifics of Moscow's foreign policy, the work nevertheless offers some insight into the context in which Soviet foreign policy perceptions arise. In particular, Hollander stresses that "both the official image of and the policies toward the United States are colored by hostility, apprehension, suspicion, and caution" combined with the view that American society and policies are based on an "unjust" and "doomed" socioeconomic system (p. 24).

Kaufman's monograph is carefully and systematically focused on a single problem, the rigorous testing of a series of explicit hypotheses dealing with the conduct of the two superpowers in their respective spheres of influence (the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the United States in Latin America). Kaufman finds that the behavior of the two superpowers does differ and in ways that reflect differences in their internal political structure and ideology (p. 195).

Thomas Larson's thought-provoking volume also looks at the differences between Soviet and American societies and seeks

to gauge the consequences of the rivalry between these markedly different systems over the last 30 years not only in international politics, but in armaments, economics, and ideology. Although some of Larson's arguments are more questionable than others (e.g., his discussion of the Soviet-American ideological struggle seems to me to be marred by a double-jointed attempt to bend over backwards to be fair to the Soviet point of view), on the whole *Soviet-American Rivalry* is an impressive and imaginative attempt to grapple with the complexities of Soviet-American interactions. Larson predicts further incremental advances in the Soviet Union's long-term struggle to catch up with its American rival. At the same time, the author notes that such gains may be partially offset (in Moscow's thinking) by the increased threat emanating from China.

If William Griffith, in his introduction to the collection *The Soviet Empire*, attributes a dangerously optimistic outlook to the Soviet leadership, this may reflect the book's publication in 1976, i.e., before a number of the USSR foreign policy setbacks noted above. For the most part, the other contributions to this volume, all originally prepared for the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans, avoid such broad evaluations and instead present solid, focused studies of Soviet foreign policy (region by region) or of aspects of Soviet internal politics (the economy, dissent, and the evolution of the Soviet elite itself) which are increasingly affecting it. This nuts-and-bolts approach clearly contributes to the collection's success. The authors are leading experts in their respective fields, and they have been given ample

space to explore their subjects (some of the articles exceed 50 pages).

THE LAST TWO BOOKS under review (those by Robert Byrnes and Herbert Kupferberg), despite their focus on the seemingly narrow topic of US-Soviet cultural exchanges, provide particularly compelling insight into differences between the two societies and into the particular mind-set with which Soviet policymakers approach international relations. These accounts provide a convincing refutation of Barnett's simplistic equating in mirror-image terms of the "suspicion on both sides that human contact can corrupt and confuse political judgment" (p. 11). Indeed, one finds few parallels between the Soviet system, with its rigid centralization and its rejection of inquiry into sensitive issues by American social scientists participating in academic exchanges, and the American system, with its receptivity to Soviet research into even its most painful social problems and with its pluralistic delegation of broad responsibility for Soviet-American academic exchanges to a nongovernmental body, the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants. Upon reading these illuminating studies, one is left with the thought: If Soviet officialdom manifests in its internal policies a fear of foreign influences, a lack of confidence in the attractive force of Soviet achievements, a dread of a genuine competition of ideas, and such a high degree of general insecurity, how probable is it that the Soviet perception of the outside world is characterized by overconfidence, the minimization of setbacks, the downplaying of potentially hostile alliances,

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<p>the underestimation of Soviet vulnerabilities, and the overestimation of Soviet gains?</p>	<p>the USSR-US rivalry in particular. Nevertheless, on balance they tend to reinforce the reviewer's own impression—shaped by his reading of recent developments—that Moscow may not consider its recent foreign policies to be as</p>	<p>successful as Western observers tend to believe. If this is the case, it could have important ramifications for how the Soviet Union views the costs and benefits of détente and improved relations with the West.</p>
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# Germany and the Origins of the Cold War

By Forrest C. Pogue

DANIEL YERGIN. *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State*. New York, NY, Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

THOMAS G. PATERSON. *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War*. Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins Press, 1974.

RALPH B. LEVERING. *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945*. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1976.

GEORGE C. HERRING. *Aid to Russia, 1941-1946: Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War*. New York, NY, Columbia University Press, 1973.

JOHN H. BACKER. *Priming the German Economy: American Occupational Policies, 1945-1948*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1971.

JOHN H. BACKER. *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1978.

STUDIES OF CONFLICT—whether hot or cold—delve into questions of historical origins, and few such studies have occasioned more dogmatic answers and more consequent revisionism than that of

the origins of the cold war. The first accounts which appeared tended to be of the “white book” variety of official accusations and explanations. More recently, however, a battle of books and articles—much like the debates over the responsibility for Adolf Hitler’s rise and the causes of World War II—has raged on the subject.

For a long time, Poland was viewed as the main focus of East-West hostility in the immediate postwar period, with the composition of the country’s government and the holding of open elections the main points of contention. Later, other roots of conflict and other guilty parties in other countries were found. And in recent years, several writers, including some whose works are under review here, have suggested that Germany may, after all, have been an important source of disagreement.

It would have been difficult to imagine in 1945 or early 1946 that either the Soviet Union or the United States would see Germany as a center of conflict. Since the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, both the Soviet Union and the Western allies had agreed that Germany had to be punished and her recovery restricted in a way to prevent her return to European dominance. Yet within two years after the war’s end, both the Eastern and Western occupying

powers were on the way toward lifting punitive clauses imposed on the Germans, opposing further division of Germany, and looking toward defensive partnerships with their respective occupied zones, in opposition to their former allies. In time, instead of being denied military resources, East and West Germans were urged to assume armed roles in security or containment policies, and instead of having further fines or payments of reparations imposed upon them, they were beneficiaries of economic support from their former enemies.

Historians intrigued with the relative influence of “will” and “fate” in determining national policies may ask if Germany was chosen by one side or the other as the location for an East-West showdown, or conversely, if the friction that arose between the occupying forces led inevitably to a worsening of East-West relations. In the last days of the Third Reich, some German military and political leaders, unwilling to follow Hitler in a suicidal last-ditch fight on two fronts against advancing allied armies, suggested that the Germans surrender in the West, with the hope that the Western powers might use them against the Russians. The British and Americans rejected such proposals, but Stalin knew enough of their existence