

Soviet strategic edge dawns on Westerners

by Rachel Douglas

A mid-November plenum of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee is likely to bring adjustments in the committee's Politburo and Secretariat that will reveal more of the contours of the new leadership emerging as the Kremlin loses its old guard. As this Soviet succession unfolds, a recognition has belatedly gripped some Western monitors of Soviet affairs, that, even with severe economic problems, the Soviet Union is becoming stronger every day, relative to the collapse of the economy in the United States and Western Europe.

One result of this realization, compounded by the news of an upturn in Soviet-Chinese probes for improved mutual relations, is agitation both by Henry Kissinger's wing of the Republican Party and by the aged W. Averell Harriman among Democrats, for a revival of the "managed" confrontation with the U.S.S.R., which they refer to as détente. Both Kissinger and Harriman have exposed their commitment to a global design of "controlled disintegration," as the Council on Foreign Relations' infamous blueprint for the 1980s called it, which requires either Soviet collapse or Soviet agreement to play by the rules of that blueprint.

On Oct. 9, the London *Economist* ventured hopes that former KGB chief Yuri Andropov would become a Soviet party General Secretary with the degree of malleability needed to respond to "economic containment" (trade sanctions, especially on high technology) by scaling back Soviet overseas commitments, instituting economic reform, and spending less on defense. Was the *Economist* not indulging in wishful thinking?

Better-informed people in secret services acknowledge that Andropov, for all the "Hungarian model" market economy reforms and restraint in the Middle East he may seem to promise, is no guarantor of the strategic goals of world "controlled disintegration"—especially when it comes to Soviet military and strategic interests.

The military and the technocrats

Speaking as the guest of Marshall Shulman at Columbia University's Russian Institute Oct. 19, the senior Soviet affairs observer of the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Ernst Kux, pointed to Andropov's efforts to reach out precisely to military men and to some "more modern" heavy industry specialists in the party leadership, in order to bolster his power.

An alliance of military men and technocrats of the younger generation (men in their fifties), under Andropov's political umbrella, would stand a chance of mustering the resources and morale necessary to take the Soviet Union through the succession period, even in the face of economic crisis.

This is the alignment that may be strengthened with the November plenum, which in any case will be dealing with the 1983 economic plan. On Oct. 26, East European diplomats in Moscow began to tell Western contacts that Politburo member and Central Committee Secretary Andrei Kirilenko, one of Leonid Brezhnev's oldest associates, would exit from both posts soon. Even within the coterie of Brezhnev's close allies, Kirilenko has yielded prominence in recent years to Brezhnev's aide, Konstantin Chernenko; this year, the 76-year-old Kirilenko has undertaken fewer and fewer activities, and finally disappeared from public view.

If Kirilenko vacates the Secretariat, among the candidates for the job of senior secretary for economic matters as well as Kirilenko's Politburo seat will be Vladimir Dolgikh, 58, a heavy-industry specialist on the Secretariat since 1976 with a background in the Siberian nickel industry. On Oct. 22, Dolgikh stepped into prominence with a visit to Tula province, where he delivered an aggressive speech endorsing a controversial incentives program to promote labor productivity and calling for a "mass movement" to economize on fuel and resources.

That Dolgikh—or other incoming "modern" industrial manager—would not readily lean toward cutting the defense sector is rather plain to be seen. He, for example, has spent the past decade of Soviet build-up to strategic preeminence in a Central Committee spot where closest coordination with the defense industry's order departments is normal.

At the mid-October convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, in Washington, British and Canadian intelligence specialists, and some Americans, focused on the Soviets' possibilities for carrying out a major economic mobilization without cutting the defense sector. D. R. Jones, a Canadian specialist on the Soviet military, attacked the idea that the Soviet Union can be wrecked by being forced to spend more on the military. He was seconded by a senior official from Britain's Sandhurst Academy, who highlighted the growing campaign by the Soviet military to draw on pre-revolutionary nationalist traditions to mobilize both army and population.

In a debate on détente at that conference, Harriman protege Shulman teamed with William Hyland, who was on Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff, to boost a revival of the kind of negotiations with the Soviets pioneered by Harriman and Kissinger.

Shulman's Russian Institute is soon to be renamed for Averell Harriman, who has just endowed it with \$10 million. Now, after years of cultivating the image of "Russian-handler," in the midst of a succession that may not turn out as geopoliticians calculated, Harriman discerns the need to spend much more on profiling the U.S.S.R.