

THE HARD TRUTHS OF THE BREZHNEV LEGACY

The death of Leonid Brezhnev is already producing an assortment of favorable reminiscences, as well as hopeful expectations for the course of future U.S.-Soviet relations: we hear Jimmy Carter fondly recalling Brezhnev's fervent desire for world peace and Cyrus Vance stating that Brezhnev's greatest legacy is his arms control efforts.

Do these and other similar generally sympathetic comments about the Brezhnev era reflect the actual Soviet record under Brezhnev? This question is critical, for how it is answered will influence the U.S. approach to dealing with the USSR in the immediate post-Brezhnev era. The U.S. will be ill-served by romanticizing and distorting the Brezhnev legacy.

A pluralistic world was completely unacceptable to Brezhnev. The most dramatic demonstration of this is the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of 1968. Brezhnev used this to justify the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the suppression of Polish liberties in 1981. This is part of the Brezhnev legacy.

The Brezhnev legacy threatens the security of the free world. Just in the past decade, the Soviets have added 733 nuclear-capable missiles (land, sea and air) and have increased their warhead supply by over 4,000. Since SALT I and the start of the so-called detente era, when the strategic equation was supposed to be stabilized, the Soviets have added, among others: several hundred later model SS-11 rockets, over 800 SS-18s, SS-19s and SS-20s; over 50 nuclear subs with about 2,000 nuclear warheads; and over 150 Backfire intercontinental bombers. Despite the well-publicized "Brezhnev freeze," in which he announced in March 1982 that the Soviets would stop further deployment of SS-20s targeted on Western Europe, deployment has continued.

The Soviets and their Warsaw Pact satellites have continued to increase what already was conventional weapon superiority over the West. In all, Brezhnev's Soviet Union is, at his death, spending roughly 40 percent more on military outlays than is the United States. And Moscow is allocating roughly 12 percent to 15 percent of its GNP to military spending; the U.S., even with current spending hikes, is only at about 6 percent of GNP. From 1971 to 1981, the USSR outspent the U.S. militarily by around \$400 billion. During the past decade, Brezhnev added 10,000 new heavy and medium tanks, 8,000 pieces of artillery and 765 combat aircraft. Just since Reagan took office, the Soviets have added 2,000 tanks, 1,350 fighters and fighter-bombers, and 4,500 fighting vehicles. This is an unavoidable hard truth of the Brezhnev legacy.

Not only did Brezhnev snuff budding liberty and pluralism in Eastern Europe, he also provided substantial aid to terrorists trying to disrupt Turkey's pro-democratic and pro-Western government and has continued attempts to exploit Iran's instability. While Americans were being held hostage, Brezhnev continued to fan anti-American fervor in Iran.

In Asia, the Soviets financed and encouraged the North Vietnamese invasion of the South, in violation of the peace agreement of 1973, and also is financially underwriting the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. The Soviets under Brezhnev continued to refuse to discuss the return to Japan of islands seized at the end of World War II; in contrast, the U.S. voluntarily returned Okinawa, won at the cost of bloody fighting, to Japan.

In the Middle East, the Soviets encouraged Nasser's blockade of Israel in 1967, which precipitated the Six-Day War, and subsequently supported the Arabs in the 1973 war. A Soviet-supported coup in 1978 in South Yemen has made that nation a protectorate of the Russians, and the Soviets have transferred large amounts of arms to both sides in the Iran-Iraq war, encouraging instability in that region.

In Africa, the Soviets under Brezhnev have aided the most radical and destabilizing groups, including the African National Congress and SWAPO. Moscow is aiding the Polisario guerrillas fighting against America's ally, Morocco. Further south, the Soviets brought the Cubans into Angola. Closer to the U.S., Brezhnev continually sought to violate the understanding ending the Cuban missile crisis by trying to expand the Soviet submarine base at Cienfuegos.

The Brezhnev legacy is pock-marked by Soviet treaty violations. Experts can cite continuing Soviet violations of the SALT I Treaty--supposedly a symbol of Brezhnev's commitment to arms control. Moscow trains and supports terrorists from the PLO to Libya to the attempted assassin of Pope John Paul II. The Brezhnev legacy is filled with unremitting domestic repression as well.

What then are the hard truths of the Brezhnev legacy? The answer: Unremitting efforts to gain advantage at the expense of the U.S. and the free world and an unyielding hostility to pluralistic societies.

Can the future bring improvements in U.S.-Soviet relations? Perhaps Moscow's new leadership will seek to relax world tensions. U.S. policy, however, cannot be based upon hopes that have often proved illusory in the past.

The hard truths, learned from painful experience, teach that the U.S. should continue to pressure the Soviets, forcing them to make difficult choices in terms of foreign involvements and the allocation of resources. If Moscow decides to move toward genuine peace, Washington will know it soon enough. Unless and until the Soviets alter their course in a meaningful way, such as allowing independent trade unions in Poland, or permitting a genuinely independent government in Afghanistan, conciliatory gestures from the United States are inappropriate. The fundamental fact is that it is the realities of the Soviet Union and not the individuals who develop policies which govern U.S. decisions. The burden must be on Moscow's new leaders to prove that they are not the heirs of the Brezhnev legacy.

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