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CLOSING THE U.S. - SOVIET DIPLOMATIC GAP

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union has pulled ahead of the U.S. not only in missiles and other strategic weapons. The Soviets continue to overpower the U.S. on the critically important diplomatic front. On it there is no balance of forces. According to FBI estimates, the number of Soviet employees in the U.S. today totals about 980. In dismal contrast, the number of U.S. government employees in the Soviet Union is a mere 320. Some 270 of the Soviets are employed by the United Nations and thus have special status. Of the remaining 710 Soviet civilians--including typists and secretaries--nearly half are identified by the FBI as KGB agents of espionage, subversion, and disinformation. The Reagan Administration should act to close the diplomacy gap which Moscow exploits so well. Washington should demand that at least 100 Soviet officials leave the U.S.

The disparity is not only in numbers. It extends to freedom of movement, living accommodations, and working facilities. In the U.S., Soviet diplomats travel nearly everywhere, and Soviet employees at the U.N. Secretariat do so without any official restrictions at all. In the USSR, by contrast, Americans are barred access to more than 90 percent of the physically accessible parts of the country either by official proscription or by bureaucratic obstacles.

The Foreign Missions Act of August 24, 1982 (P.L. 97-241, Title II) was supposed to begin remedying the situation. It was a congressional mandate to the President insisting on diplomatic parity, especially where national security considerations are at stake. It has been supplemented by Amendment 2197 to the Department of State Authorization Act, which is due for final Senate action later this month. The issue then will go to conference with the House; the House version of the bill currently

contains no similar provision. Amendment 2197, introduced by Senator Walter Huddleston (D-KY), was passed by the Senate on September 22, 1983. The Amendment urges the President to enact as soon as possible, and consistent with the interests of the U.S., significant measures of diplomatic reciprocity with the USSR. Senator Steven Symms (R-Idaho) argues: "It is the Soviet KGB that we are condoning when we allow the Soviets to have more diplomats, so-called, than the United States."¹

SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE U.S.--THE REAL STATISTICS

The FBI statistics on Soviet official presence, as of August 1, 1983, show about 980 employees (excluding the seven Aeroflot employees ousted after the Soviets downed the Korean airliner). The Soviets are based in:

New York City: About 520 employees connected with the U.N. (about 270 in the Secretariat and 250 in the Missions); 41 assigned to Amtorg Trading Corporation; 27 at other commercial establishments, such as the Soviet Trade and Economic Council, Belarus Machinery (a government purchasing outfit), and Intourist (the USSR government-controlled travel bureau); and 22 "journalists" for such outlets as Tass and the USSR Radio and TV State Committee.

Washington: 194 at the Soviet embassy; 17 at the Soviet Trade Representative's office; 23 in the Soviet Information Department; 3 at the Soviet Maritime Office; 4 in the Soviet Fisheries Affairs Office; 34 at the Soviet Consular Office; 16 at the Construction Office; 21 at the Military Office; 3 in the Agriculture Office; and 12 journalists.

Elsewhere in the U.S.: 30 at the San Francisco consulate and 2 journalists in San Francisco; 2 at the U.S.-USSR Marine Resources Company in Seattle; 3 at Belarus Machinery in Milwaukee.

The FBI statistics include accredited diplomats and all Soviet government employees. They exclude nonworking spouses and non-Soviet, communist bloc employees in the U.S. The total number of Soviet bloc official personnel in the U.S. is now staggering, having jumped from 1,715 in October 1979 to 2,131 in January 1982 to about 3,000 today.²

Apparently, little can be done about the 270 Soviets who ostensibly work for the U.N. The U.N. Headquarters' Agreement allows free travel privileges to all U.N. Secretariat employees.

¹ Congressional Record-Senate, September 22, 1983, S 12723.

² U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation 1983 Appropriation Request, pp. 40-41. In addition, the FBI counterintelligence program is burdened by the great increase of official presence from the People's Republic of China--over and above Soviet bloc personnel.

The Agreement is unlikely to be renegotiated in the foreseeable future. Yet Washington can deal with the remaining 710 Soviet government employees. Even if the status of the 36 Soviet journalists is unchanged, there is still room to curtail the others who engage in extensive subversive activities in the U.S. Examples: acquisition of high technology, especially in the Silicon Valley; approaches to U.S. government employees and their staff for recruitment purposes and obtaining classified information; contacts with "illegals" (communist bloc citizens living in the U.S. under false identities); and "active measures" operations in general, such as forgeries and disinformation.³ Travel and living accommodations of Soviets in the U.S. are vastly different from the constrained, constantly watched situation of Americans in the USSR. The Soviets, moreover, bring their own drivers, secretaries, clerks, and other support personnel to the U.S. rather than hire Americans to do these jobs. Yet most of this non-diplomatic staff, according to the FBI, are KGB agents.

U.S. PRESENCE IN THE USSR

The Americans in the Soviet Union hire Soviets for support jobs. Though no legal ceiling is placed on the number of U.S. personnel in the USSR, the evidence indicates that a practical limit is imposed by the dire living conditions. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) was shocked by what he saw during a visit to the Soviet Union. He complained: "Our people are jammed into overcrowded, dilapidated, appalling inadequate quarters." He reported that "we do not see any kind of reciprocation" in living conditions and concluded that: "Even if we wanted to send more people, we could not until new facilities are available."⁴ No such facilities are anywhere near in sight.

Travel restrictions on Americans also are appalling. To the many officially forbidden areas are added enormous bureaucratic obstacles--all diplomatic travel requests being handled by the inefficient state travel bureau--and the physical impossibility of reaching much of the USSR.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST REDUCING SOVIET PERSONNEL IN THE U.S.

The State Department seems opposed to any reduction of official Soviet presence in the U.S. It argues that the Soviets would obtain

³ For examples of tactics used in Soviet bloc high-technology espionage, see U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Hearings, 97th Congress, 2d Session, November 15, 1982 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), Report No. 97-664. For an analysis of Soviet "active measures" see Hearings Before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2d Session, July 13, 14, 1982. On general KGB tactics, see John Barron, KGB Today: The Hidden Hand (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1983).

⁴ Congressional Record-Senate, September 15, 1983, S 12325.

most of the information it currently gathers in the U.S. even with fewer individuals, given the great degree of freedom in this country and the use of such Soviet non-diplomats as tour groups, trade missions, and scholars. The U.S., on the other hand, stresses the State Department, presumably needs every individual it has in the Soviet Union. Hence any retaliation by the Soviets, which involved reduction of U.S. diplomatic personnel in the USSR, would harm the U.S. disproportionately compared with whatever advantages might be reaped from expelling Soviets from the U.S.

It is argued by some--notably Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY)--that instead of decreasing Soviet diplomatic presence in the U.S., American presence in the Soviet Union should be increased. American academics also oppose reduction of Soviet presence in the U.S., arguing that "dialogue" with Soviets is of long range advantage.

ADVANTAGES OF REDUCING SOVIET PERSONNEL IN THE U.S.

The principal impediments to expanding U.S. personnel in the USSR are practical. Experts in Congress indicate that greater financial inducements are needed to convince American support staff--such as clerks, cooks, and drivers--to subject themselves to Soviet living conditions. Those funds are not currently available.

Another complicating factor is political harassment of Americans by Soviet authorities. In the USSR, there are no safeguards against violations of civil liberties. Not many U.S. citizens are willing to take chances with Soviet curtailments of individual freedom and the constant surveillance by the Soviet secret police.

In addition, the benefits of American presence in the Soviet Union are quite limited. According to a high level White House official, U.S. diplomats are hardly ever briefed by the Soviet government, while covert information is often of questionable value.

There is reason to doubt, moreover, that Moscow would expel U.S. diplomatic personnel in response to U.S. moves to achieve greater numerical reciprocity if the U.S. curtailed only non-diplomatic personnel. As Senator Huddleston has argued, official Soviet presence could indeed be cut by at least 100 individuals--such as trade representatives and support personnel--without touching diplomats or journalists. Even Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Charles Percy (R-IL) has voiced no objections to such a move, provided it involved "substantial equivalence consistent with the interests of the United States."⁶

⁵ Barron, KGB Today, p. 421.

⁶ Congressional Record-Senate, September 22, 1983, S 12723.

Finally, the Huddleston Amendment recommends that the travel accommodations and facilities of officers and employees of the Soviet government should be more in line with those of Americans in the USSR. To that end, a State Department travel bureau has been proposed to process and scrutinize more closely the travel requests of Soviet officials.

CONCLUSION

The FBI estimates that some 40 percent of Soviet official personnel in the U.S. are trained professional intelligence officers of the KGB and the Soviet military intelligence, the GPU. Because the USSR has nearly 1,000 government employees in the U.S., compared to 320 American government employees in the USSR, living and working in dramatically disparate conditions, it is time that President Reagan took measures to achieve greater official reciprocity. There is no reason why the U.S. should suffer from diplomatic disparity with the USSR.

Juliana Geran Pilon, Ph.D.
Policy Analyst

