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SOVIETS SET LIMITS ON DEALING WITH THE WEST

In three speeches last week, Brezhnev used strong language to warn his listeners at home and in the other Communist states to be vigilant against Western ideas. He reiterated the party's determination to hold the line against "ideological subversion" from the West, to guard the cohesion of the "socialist camp," and to maintain the Soviet Union's stature as a great power.

Brezhnev confirmed party approval of further negotiations with Western powers on arms limitations, but sternly warned against traffic with the "rotting, degenerating capitalist society" in the world of ideas. His equally stern warning against the dangers of "nationalism" seemed designed not only to maintain Soviet pressure against the Czechoslovak movement for "democratization" but also to ensure that the recently announced Soviet readiness to negotiate with the US on strategic missiles would not be misread by Eastern Europe as permission to seek agreements with the "capitalists" on other subjects.

The call for "vigilance" against "hostile bourgeois" ideas has been a staple in Soviet propaganda for several years. At the central committee plenum last April it emerged as a dominant theme--a latter-day replacement for Stalin's warnings of "capitalist encirclement"--

designed to raise a psychological barrier against the "enemy" without limiting the Soviet Union's freedom of action in any given situation. Its concept of two antagonistic worlds is characteristic of the generally tough foreign and domestic policy of the current leadership, and apparently represents the majority view in the 11-man coalition in the politburo. This concept does not, however, preclude the possibility of negotiation between the two worlds in areas which are judged to be of compelling importance to Soviet interests.

The obviously difficult decision to open talks with the US on strategic missiles was undoubtedly more palatable to some members of the politburo than to others, involving as it did a complex of political, economic, military and technical considerations, presumably too sensitive for public airing. In the end the decision was presented to the Soviet public as evidence of the Soviet Union's "peace-loving" foreign policy.

Brezhnev's subsequent reaffirmation of the vigilance theme was intended, however, to dispel any thoughts of a fundamental change in outlook. It also served to refocus public attention on the role of the party and its chief as the principal policy maker and defender of the system.

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