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A new way to deal with the Kremlin

Every attempt made since 1917 to treat the Soviet Union as another great power concerned exclusively with safeguarding its national security and increasing its international influence has ended in failure.

At Yalta, for example, the United States went out of its way to satisfy what President Roosevelt considered Russia's legitimate national interests. Eastern Europe was acknowledged as Soviet sphere of influence. To ensure its entrance into the war against Japan — which probably nothing short of a United States threat to use atomic bombs could have prevented in any event — the Soviet Union was awarded territories belonging to China and Japan. The Ukraine and Belorussia, constituent units of the U.S.S.R., received double representation in the United Nations General Assembly. None of these extravagant concessions brought about the desired results; their immediate outcome

was unprecedented Soviet expansionism and the Cold War.

This experience, however, taught the "pragmatists" nothing. A quarter of a century later, President Nixon decided to base détente on the very same principle that had served President Roosevelt so badly at Yalta: that Soviet relations were to rest on mutual respect of the parties' "vital interests." Disappointments with détente notwithstanding, the theme resounded again in the speeches of President Carter, who asked the Soviet Union rhetorically whether it was prepared to "promote a more stable international environment in which its own legitimate, peaceful concerns can be pursued."

How does the Soviet Union exploit these false assumptions —

which prevail not only in the State Department but in the foreign policy departments of all the Western countries?

- When business contracts for projects in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern

Europe are signed, preference is given to countries which pursue an accommodating policy toward Moscow and are prepared to "decouple" commercial relations from political ones. Countries which are deemed unfriendly or (because of their resort to sanctions and embargoes), "unreliable," are penalized. Such contracts encourage political accommodation, but they also create a dependence of the countries concerned on the communist client. In Germany alone, some 300,000 jobs are said to be directly or indirectly linked to business with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Since many of these jobs are in so-called "sunset," or declining industries, liable to go under without the benefit of sales to communist countries, aggravating unemployment, an economic dependence is created that no German government, regardless of its political preferences, can ignore.

- The Soviet Union has per-

suaded much of the U.S. business community that if Washington conducted a more "friendly" policy — that is, reconciled itself to the Kremlin's aggressive actions — they would receive lush export orders. The lure of these orders has transformed U.S. business leaders into the most vociferous neutralist lobby in the country.

- In countries with powerful communist trade unions, such as Italy and France, the Soviet Union takes advantage of their presence to threaten industrial unrest to firms that hesitate to enter into commercial agreements with it.

- France's fear of the supremacy of the "Anglo-Saxons" as well as of the Germans on the Continent is played upon to incite Paris to conduct an "independent" foreign policy.

- The Soviet Union interferes in democratic elections abroad by bestowing its blessing on candidates whose stand on international issues happens to suit Moscow's interests. They and their parties are depicted as forces for "peace," whose election will lead to the improvement of relations with Moscow and lower the risk of war.

- The U.S.S.R. pressures the West to enter with it into "mutual security" accords, the most comprehensive of which was signed in Helsinki in 1975. These create the illusion that it shares with the United States responsibility for safeguarding the peace and integrity of the Continent as a whole, thereby undermining NATO and pushing Western Europe towards neutralism.

- Moscow increases or diminishes the flow of Jewish emigres in accord with the status of overall U.S.-Soviet relations as a device for pressuring the American Jewish community to influence its government towards accommodation.

President Reagan notwithstanding, one of the greatest problems the United States faces today is that those most responsible for conducting foreign policy don't understand how to deal with the Kremlin.

The Department of State is the branch of government specifically responsible for diplomacy in all its aspects, and this involves, first and foremost, the peaceful resolution of disagreements and conflicts with other sovereign states. But diplomacy is *not* synonymous with foreign policy. Diplomats have an instinctive aversion to violence and an insurmountable suspicion of ideology; the one is to them evidence of professional failure, the other, a hindrance to accords.

Foreign Service officers have as much taste for ideas and political strategies as trial lawyers have for the philosophy of law. They squirm at the very mention of the words *good* and *evil*, which in their professional capacity they regard as

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meaningless. They are capable of drafting meticulously crafted position papers setting out policy recommendations or options, without ever asking themselves what the ultimate purpose of these policies is to be. Their attitude towards the representative of even the most hostile power is somewhat like that of one attorney to another: they never allow anger, indignation, or any other emotion to enter into their relationship, seeking instead to base it on mutual professional respect, safe in the knowledge that crises come and go, but lawyers stay on.

Essentially, diplomacy is a device for settling disputes out of court. The court, in the case of international conflicts, being the battlefield. It is an irreplaceable method for resolving controversies over such issues as treaties, rescheduling of debts, fishing and water rights, and the myriad of other issues among states that life constantly brings forth. But these issues embrace only a part, and not even necessarily the most important part, of international relations as practiced in the 20th century; the latter include also military power, ideology, and a host of other matters that do not lend themselves to resolution by diplomatic means. As soon as international conflict is shifted to this ground, diplomacy is powerless.

Because totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union do not operate within a narrowly defined concept of foreign policy, the collective record of the world's foreign service in dealing with them has been most unimpressive. By virtue of their professional upbringing, diplomats could never take seriously the ravings of a Lenin, a Hitler or a Mao, and so they dismissed them as rhetoric behind which had to lie concealed the dictator's "real" demands, and concentrated on discovering what those alleged "real" demands were, in order to bring them to the negotiating table. Appeasement, whether to Hitler or of Stalin, so rampant in the foreign offices of their day, was due neither to stupidity nor to treason, but to a *deformation professionnelle* of foreign offices.

It is, therefore, no service to the Department of State or the profession of diplomacy to charge them with the responsibility for problems that they were never meant to cope with.

This being the case, it would be desirable for the United States to create a new institution to monitor

Soviet activities globally. As of now, neither the National Security Council, the Department of State, nor the Central Intelligence Agency has a group of experts who follow from day to day the plans and activities of Soviet policymakers.

One way to remedy this shortcoming would be to appoint a State Department official, at the rank of undersecretary or counselor, to assume responsibility for monitoring East-West relations and Soviet strategy in the broadest sense.

For this to happen, of course, the secretary of state must first persuade himself that unlike the United States, the Soviet Union has a grand strategy that is not only pragmatic but also ideological, and not only regional but also global in scope.

Until the United States develops a more realistic view of the Soviet Union, and the appropriate apparatus for dealing with the Kremlin, the U.S. government will continue to score diplomatic triumphs that are foreign-policy disasters.

This essay is excerpted from a segment of Dr. Richard Pipes's new book Survival Is Not Enough (to be published in early 1985 by Simon and Schuster) published in the summer issue of SURVEY, a journal of East and West studies. He worked recently in the National Security Council and is now a professor of history at Harvard.
