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# Soviet Setbacks

## And the New Red Scare

MOSCOW—Ordinarily a plenary session of the Soviet Congress, which now meets only every five years, is viewed as an occasion for the leadership to give an accounting of its performance.

When the Congress convenes next week, it won't be necessary for Chairman Leonid Brezhnev and other top members of the ruling Politburo to blow their own horn on their conduct of foreign policy, for President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former U.N. Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan, among others, have blown it for them.

After hearing U.S. leaders describe how a supposedly rampant Russia is making gains around the world while the American Congress has wretchedly reduced the United States to a paper tiger, why should the Soviet Congress raise any questions about the Politburo's record abroad?

No doubt the leaders here would like to believe their performance has been up to their U.S. billing, but, as hard-headed realists, they cannot afford to delude themselves. They are well aware that in real life their worldwide position has deteriorated, with little prospect of regaining the degree of hegemony they enjoyed in the bygone days of monolithic communism.

There is nothing new about this. It has been downhill for 20 years or more. The world's largest country, Communist China, used to be Russia's greatest ally. Today it is its worst enemy. The Soviets have deployed 45 divisions on the vast, inflammable Sino-Soviet border, knowing that every year China's nuclear arsenal continues to grow.

Furthermore, Russia is confronted with restless satellites who have revolted before and at the first opportunity (a Sino-Soviet conflict, say) would declare their independence, as Yugoslavia and Romania already have. In Western Europe, the Communist Parties in France and Italy that once took their orders from Moscow are now cutting their Russia ties, as they abandon Soviet communism for democratic socialism.

One of the worst Russian setbacks has been their losing gamble on Egypt as the key to Soviet hegemony in the Middle East. For 20 years the Russians have poured men, money and huge military supplies into Egypt, only to see President Sadat throw them out bodily and then brush off his multibillion dollar debt to Moscow.

That's only part of the African story, for the Russians have also lost most of their influence in Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Mozambique, Uganda and the

Congo (Zaire), with few compensating gains except for Somalia and, possibly, Angola. Even in Angola the Russian-backed MPLA government is already making overtures to the democratic West. Despite this discouraging record, Moynihan excitedly warns that the Russians are hell-bent on "recolonizing" Africa.

In Asia, such old Russian dependencies as North Korea and North Vietnam are also going their own way. Bangladesh has cut its ties, too. Not many years ago the Soviets were so entrenched in Indonesia that they equipped that large nation's entire army, but when the Communists attempted a total takeover the coup backfired and Communist influence was stamped out. In the process, more than 500,000 Communists and Communist sympathizers were slaughtered.

Russia has spent billions in Cuba as a stepping-stone to penetrating Latin America, but Cuba, having made its peace with the Organization of American States, has abandoned its efforts to infiltrate the continent.

Regardless of the two superpowers, most of the Third World nations show no inclination to embrace either imperial communism or imperial capitalism. Like the big powers, the emerging nations are first of all nationalistic; they want to run their own shows. Thus it can be concluded that in time both Russia and the United States will have to move back from their forward positions and start minding their own business.

What puzzles Moscow's veteran Kremlin-watchers is why, in the face of Russia's obviously receding influence, the Ford administration keeps on magnifying it. The Russians would be less puzzled if they were more versed in the exigencies of American domestic policy.

At this stage of the presidential campaign, just before the New Hampshire primary, Mr. Ford cannot afford to let Ronald Reagan top him as a Communist alarmist if he wants to win the vote of conservative Republicans. And then there are Mr. Ford's record military expenditures. How can the first \$100 billion Pentagon budget be justified without a good old-fashioned Red scare?

It may turn out that this is shortsighted politics, and dead-end diplomacy as well, but meanwhile it stirs up needless public alarm. With peace, Russia should have a bright future as a nationalist power, but worldwide Communist hegemony, presided over by Moscow, is the wave of the past.

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