
Against the "Lesser Evil" Thesis: Soviet Preparations for World War 3

by Mike Ely

No one argues that the Soviet Union is not an active participant in the intense rivalry between blocs, or that the Soviets have not constructed a massive and expanding military. However, an influential argument has been raised that we are passing through a "new cold war" which has been one-sidedly instigated by the West, and perhaps by the United States alone. The Soviet Union is portrayed as being dragged into confrontation by aggressive Western provocations and by its own, more understandable, instincts for security and self-defense. Specifically, the very notion that the Soviet Union might, like the Western powers, have global and imperial ambitions is denounced as the cynical fabrication of American policy makers.

This is, in fact, the position of the rulers of the Soviet Union. Leonid Brezhnev insisted at the 24th Congress of the CPSU:

"Whenever imperialists want to cover up an aggressive scheme, they try to revive the lie of a Soviet threat. They seek evidence of this threat in the depths of the Indian Ocean and on the peaks of the Cordilleras. And, of course, if seen through NATO field-glasses the plains of Europe are teeming with Soviet divisions poised for a leap against the West.

"But the peoples will not be deceived by any attempt to ascribe to the Soviet Union intentions which are alien to it. We declare with all emphasis: we have no territorial claims on anyone, we threaten no one, and we have no intention of attacking anyone, we stand for the free and independent development of all nations. But let no one try and talk to us in terms of ultimatums and from positions of strength.

"We have all the requisites — a genuine peace policy, military might, and the unity of Soviet people

– to ensure the inviolability of our borders against any encroachments, and to defend the gains of socialism."¹

Parallel to such intergovernmental polemics over the cause of war tensions, a debate has broken out among a variety of political forces – including many genuine opponents of the West's accelerating war preparations – over the purpose and character of the Soviet military. Here there are political figures, some professing a radical distaste for the Soviet system, who nonetheless argue, for a number of reasons, that the Soviet leadership is accurate in claiming that *its* armed forces are essentially *defensive*, and exist to serve an overall "peace policy" by leveling a restraining threat against the West.

Fred Halliday, for example, writes in an essay in *Exterminism and Cold War*:

"If we look at the historical character of the Soviet Union and the United States as societies, or at the respective roles they play in the world at large, there is not so much an isomorphism as an asymmetry of internal structure and international consequence.

"The record of the past decade is, in this respect, clear enough. The two world powers do not have an equal responsibility for the current Cold War, or for the arms race that is accompanying it. The deterioration in the international climate in the latter part of the 1970s has been essentially precipitated by changes in the global posture of one state, namely the USA. No such change can be detected in the USSR: it has not engaged in a sudden expansion of its military forces, it has not seen a quite new leadership emerge after a ferocious internal political debate, and it has not introduced new conditions into US-Soviet negotiations, let alone abandoned the explicit pursuit of detente. This is not to say, as we have stressed, that the USSR bears no responsibility for bringing the present crisis upon us. In a longer-term sense its political involution [i.e., its political degeneration into a corrupt bureaucracy – *M.E.*] has helped to render it possible at all. But this responsibility is different in kind from that of the USA."²

Similarly, Roy and Zhores Medvedev wield their prestige as *the* "Marxist Soviet dissidents" to contend:

"In the interests of a realistic understanding of the current crisis and the tasks facing the peace movement, we cannot accept the notion of a functional equivalence between the 'deep structures of the cold war' within both blocs.

"Such ideas obscure, in our opinion, major differences in the bipolar confrontation – whether we consider the institutional role of military spending, official attitudes toward the usage of nuclear weapons, the history of previous attempts at arms

limitations, popular perceptions of nuclear policy, the problem of proliferation or the ultimate logics of strategic rivalry."³

Others, such as Fred Kaplan in his book *Dubious Specter, A Skeptical Look at the Soviet Nuclear Threat*, and Andrew Cockburn in *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine*, draw somewhat similar conclusions concerning the "Soviet danger" through analysis of various weaknesses and limitations of Soviet military power. It is significant that even someone like E.P. Thompson, famous for his "plague on both your houses" approach to the two superpowers (and for his corresponding "softness" on the nature and role of his "own" European bourgeoisie) differentiates between the driving forces within the two blocs by describing an "incremental thrust in profit-taking (in the West) and in action-reaction (in the East)."⁴

If the argument being made by proponents of a theory of "asymmetry" were simply that revolutionary or antiwar forces in the Western bloc should principally target and expose their "own" imperialists' war preparations, we would have little argument. Certainly the current Western drum beating about the "Soviet Menace" is bloodsoaked with hypocrisy, and serves to obscure and justify the real content of Western imperialist preparations for global warfare behind numbing nonsense about American inferiority, the "defense of the Free World," and so on. But in fact, this theory of Soviet defensiveness forms a cornerstone in a whole analysis of present international dynamics which is not only wrong, but quite dangerous to revolutionary preparations if left unchallenged. In essence, the theory implies that there are no objective, deeply rooted, *interimperialist* conflicts of interest between the Eastern and Western blocs. The current tensions are portrayed either as a justification for increased American arms profiteering, as a cover for stepped-up U.S. strangling of smaller nations, or even as irrational "anti-Sovietism" of the political right-wing. Interbloc tensions are presented as unrelated (or even as antagonistic) to the basic national interests of U.S. imperialism. In short, the theory that the Soviet Union is somehow peaceful and their military preparations "defensive" not only constitutes an apology for the war preparations of the Soviet bloc, it also seriously underestimates the actual danger of a global nuclear war – which would be a *hot* war, not a "new cold war." This assessment directly sustains the reformist strategy which assumes that mass pressure within the NATO countries, linked with external peace pressure (read: the restraining might of Soviet peace missiles), can deflect U.S. aggression short of either world war or revolution.

The "Soviet defensiveness" thesis posits that in several crucial respects the Soviet approach to war and peace is qualitatively different than that of the U.S. bloc. First, it is argued, there are important differences in their deployment of forces: as opposed to the U.S., the Soviet Union concentrates its troops and missiles overwhelmingly within its own borders, not in a web of bases stretching over the globe. In contrast to the record of innumerable invasions and "police

actions" by the U.S. and its allies, the periodic Soviet invasions have been confined to erring allies and neighbors, where the rationale of Soviet national defense seems a bit more plausible, at least to some observers. A second major argument is made out of the fact that the U.S. has generally taken the lead in the arms race, introducing most new weapons systems, and remains ahead in most military technologies today. And third, the Soviet leadership, we are told, exhibits a sincere appreciation of the tremendous danger of nuclear war, labeling it "suicidal" and "unwinnable," whereas American political leaders have talked openly about the possibility of "limited" nuclear wars, and "prevailing" in protracted nuclear conflict. A sharp contrast is drawn between the current brusque American attitude toward arms negotiations, and the Soviet Union's stream of more "serious and sincere" proposals covering a whole range of arms control and disarmament issues.

In short, a selective checklist of differences between the blocs has been marshaled in an attempt to document a qualitative difference in their respective roles in the world today, their military preparations in particular. Clearly such perceptions of asymmetry are not simply the result of clever Soviet propaganda; there are major material differences between the two rival camps in the world today. But as we shall discuss in this article, such differences, while real, flow from the particular history, geography, and economic and political development of the Soviet bloc; they say nothing about the fundamental character of Soviet society and the profound contradictions inherent to it that are propelling it on a collision course with the imperialist West. Of course this method of drawing up checklists of various secondary characteristics in order to determine which imperialist power is the main source of war and which is the "lesser evil" on a world scale has been used in one form or another in previous world wars. Whatever the intent of those making this argument then, or now, it objectively justifies enlisting with one imperialist against another, and covers up the deepest contradictions of the world imperialist system which are the actual source of such wars. The only thing that has changed in the interim is which characteristics count as "peaceful," and which denote "warmongering."

In this article, we will first criticize this approach in its own right. Then on that basis, we will try to piece together a starkly different picture of reality, based on an examination of Soviet military doctrine, force posture, and military preparations. Such an examination does not reveal an "inward looking," "reactive," "defensive" power concerned only with protecting its own borders, much less a revolutionary socialist state striving to advance the world proletarian revolution. Instead, the picture that emerges is of an imperialist power, in the Leninist sense — albeit with particular strengths and weaknesses and a particular political and geographical position in the world — that is calculatingly building up its armed forces for the purpose of confronting and defeating a rival imperialist bloc in global warfare, of seizing key areas of the world, and on that basis — through unparalleled bloodshed, devastation, and suffering — forging

a new imperialist division of the world.

An all-sided proof of the imperialist character of Soviet society, of its rivalry with the U.S.-led bloc, or even of current Soviet military preparations cannot, of course, be extracted from study of the military sphere alone. "With reference to wars, the main thesis of dialectics . . . is that 'war is simply the continuation of politics by other [i.e., violent] means.' . . . [A]ny war [is] the continuation of the politics of the powers concerned — and the various classes within these countries — in a definite period."⁵ Hence, the character of any country's armed forces and military preparations, and the wars it wages, are fundamentally determined by the nature of that society, as determined by its production and class relations. This point is important because confusion about the character of Soviet society has fueled this mistaken and dangerous notion that the Soviet Union is not co-equally responsible for the growing danger of world war. Such an all-sided analysis of the nature of Soviet society has been taken up elsewhere, and readers are urged to study it.⁶ At the same time, however, because war and military matters are an extension of politics, they bear the indelible imprint of the politics they serve; in fact at certain times, particularly during wartime, military policy is a concentration of the politics of a given society. Thus, an examination of the doctrine and structure of the Soviet military does reveal much about its purpose and character, as well as contribute to the larger debate on the nature of Soviet society and the contention between the U.S.- and Soviet-led blocs.

We cannot fully elaborate Soviet military strategy and doctrine, or even its force posture; we are not privy to the Kremlin's closely guarded war plans and stratagems, and beyond that, plans and strategies are fluid and change with objective developments. However, on the basis of studying the military doctrine articulated by the Soviet leadership, and the kind of military they have constructed, it is possible to paint a general picture of just what these "peaceful" troops and weapons are designed to do.

Any critical examination of the Soviet Union inevitably provokes howls from the banshees of revisionism that Maoists are either objectively or consciously serving the interests of U.S. imperialism by confirming the ravings of the Pentagon and the "extreme right" on the "Soviet menace." Fine, let them howl! The hard reality of the present world is that each bloc does, in fact, menace the most vital "national interests" of its rivals; each poses a definite military threat to its enemy. We are not reformists who pretend that it is possible to prevent American war preparations while upholding the very "national interests" that call them into being; nor do we hold that to oppose the war preparations of one bloc, one must prettify or support the equally reactionary and blood-soaked war preparations of its rival. Let us simply say, for clarity, that while this article focuses on Soviet social-imperialism, nothing here should be mistaken for an argument that the Soviet Union is somehow "the main source of war." On the contrary, the whole point here is that the war presently shaping up does not arise from the "aggressive" politics of one bloc or the other, but from the imperialist rivalry between them.

What Disparities Do and Don't Reveal

One admittedly provocative way to open fire on the method of using "asymmetries" to uncover "lesser evils" is to imagine a hypothetical article which applies some of the same arguments used to apologize for the USSR to the differences between the imperialist powers prior to World War 2. It might go something like this:

Clearly the German Reich is defensive. This is a Germany that was encircled and occupied by enemies repeatedly within the memory of living men and women, and where the horrors of the previous wars have given rise to an almost irrational craving for national defense, for military strength, and for stable, secure border regions.

Those who ascribe expansionist motives to Germany have to deal with numerous hard facts. Germany does not possess colonies. It has not exported appreciable capital outside its borders since the last war, and has shown a remarkable capacity to absorb its surpluses internally. Unlike Britain, not a single German soldier has been used to suppress a colonial revolution or spar for imperialist influence in the colonial world since World War 1. Admittedly Germany has constructed vast modern armed forces, but they are gathered within her own borders. And in the recent wars of the late '30s, Germany has used those troops either to reclaim traditionally German territory, to gather ethnic Germans under one national roof, or to occupy strategic strips essential for a credible defense against the belligerent powers which everyone admits surround the Third Reich.

Such wars are waged by a Germany unquestionably inferior to the combined military strength of its rivals and enemies in every respect: in the size of its armies, navies, and air forces; in the size of its strategic reserves and industrial war-making capacity, in the size of available manpower....

And so on....

The point is not to draw the parallel "Soviet Union now, equals Germany then," but the fact that such arguments are outrageously false when applied to Nazi Germany says something about the methodological error of equating superficial differences between antagonists with some underlying difference in military-political purpose.

Consider the oft-cited contrast between the technical and economic bases of the two blocs today. In 1979, after decades of real economic expansion in the Soviet Union, the size of the U.S. GNP remained almost twice as large as the Soviet. The ratio of NATO's GNP to that of Warsaw Pact countries is even more imbalanced: approximately 284:100. And if we include other significant economies on either side (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan for

the U.S.; Cuba, Mongolia, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos for the Soviets; leaving India and China aside for simplicity), the economic gap becomes 347:100.⁷

This contrast has thrown up difficulties for the Soviet Union throughout the current prewar spiral. Although it is relatively self-sufficient in raw materials, it has far less wealth to work with and is less developed technologically than the West, and hence has had difficulty in keeping up in the "arms race," particularly in qualitative terms. Halliday, in an essay dedicated to revealing "The Sources of the New Cold War," spends pages on strategic "bean counting," documenting innumerable areas in which the Soviets remain weaker (or at least smaller) than the West. He attempts to show that "The mythology of an apparent Soviet advantage distorts what is in fact no more than a diminution of a previous U.S. superiority," and implies that the Soviets have pursued their arms build-up reluctantly.⁸

But what does proving, in a rather mechanical fashion, that there are military and economic asymmetries between the two blocs really show, beyond puncturing some of the more transparent American ravings about being behind the Soviets in the arms race? Do these distinctions really illuminate anything about the "sources" of the current international situation, a Soviet reluctance to wage war, or the character of their military buildup?

Our purpose here is not to assess which side is stronger than the other — frankly, we hope both sides are "weaker." An analysis that relies on counting numbers of weapons and troops and comparing GNP's doesn't even tell much about the military balance. To actually wage and try to win war, it is not particularly relevant whether the Soviets match the West in every category of weapons or reserves. War differs from chess in that the prewar maps are not an even, checkered board and the rivals are not issued identical pieces before the fighting is allowed to commence.

Because each imperialist bloc is "dealt a different set of cards" by geography, economic development, and history, their corresponding military strategies and force postures will naturally be quite different — to some extent even converses of each other — while each pursues the shared goal of victory. The costs of empire are different for each, making meaningful comparisons of who spends more difficult at best. Finally, and most importantly, such "bean counting" doesn't take into account the multitude of political factors that affect the course of war and can upset the imperialists' best laid plans: for example, the morale of the troops (which is more important than numbers of weapons), the relative social coherence of belligerents, or the possibility of revolutionary outbreaks in either or both blocs before, or in the course of, a world war.

But more to the point, the fact that there are real differences in the various strengths and weaknesses of the rival blocs tells us nothing about their political character or the nature of their military preparations. Lenin noted that uneven development was an essential feature of imperialism: "[T]he strength of these participants in the division [of the world] does not change to an equal degree, for the even

development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism.⁹ But from this Lenin did not draw the conclusion that some powers had more necessity, much less more justification, for waging imperialist war! In fact, uneven development is simply a reflection of the anarchy of capitalist production, which propels all the world's imperialist powers on an "expand or die" collision course with their rivals.

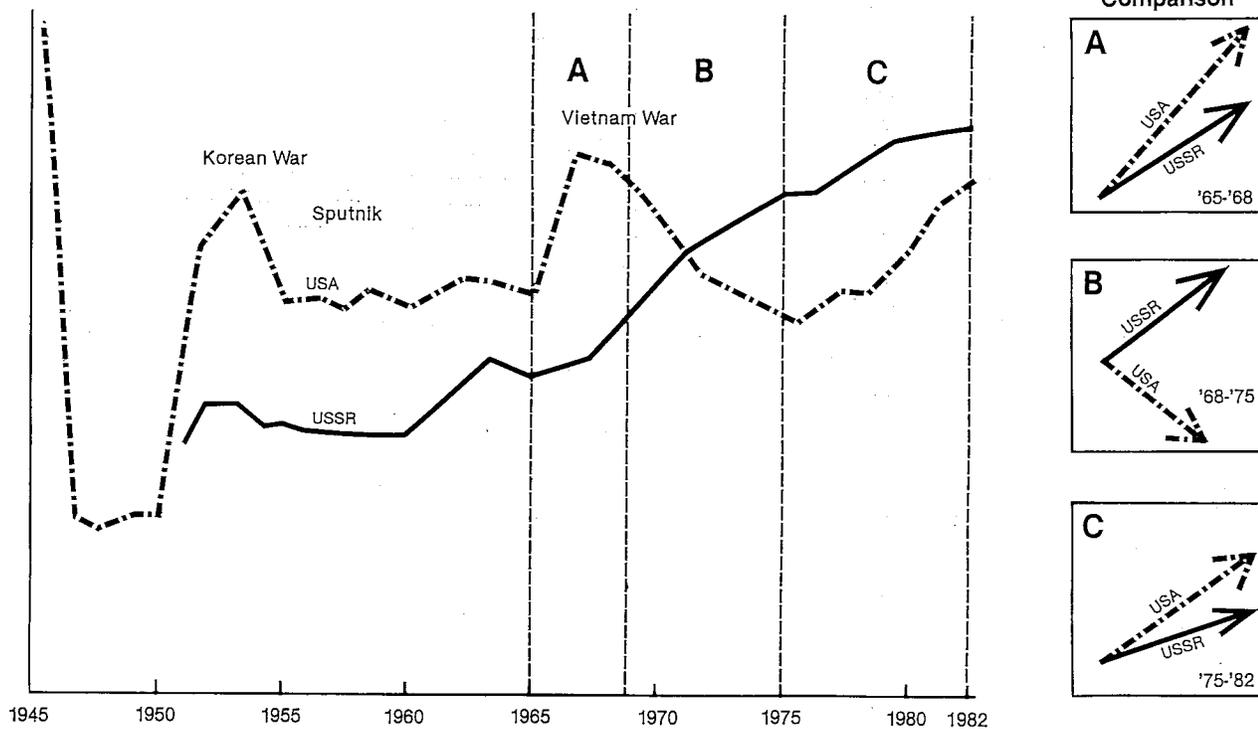
Yet Halliday is simply one more in an unfortunately long line of theorists who have ended up twisting the reality of uneven development into a rationalization for the imperialist politics of one side or the other.

For example, Halliday places great weight on the fact that "in the later part of the 1970s" the USSR "has not engaged in a sudden expansion of its military forces." True enough, especially when compared to the United States. In the last years of the Carter administration, the U.S. bourgeoisie launched an unprecedented arms buildup, crystallized in Reagan's five-year, \$1.5 trillion military budget proposal. By contrast, even a number of official Western reports note that while Soviet military expenditures increased, it was nothing like the American spurt. NATO recently estimated that, "since 1976, Moscow's defense outlays have grown at less than 2.5 percent a year after inflation, compared with 4 to 5 percent in the early seventies."¹⁰

However, to create (as Halliday does) a one-way causal link between this accelerated U.S. arms buildup and the momentum toward war, obscures the overall dynamics of the contention between the U.S. and Soviet blocs, and betrays a curious, double-edged logic as well. Examine Figure 1. A picture is given of the relative trends of expenditure. (The absolute figures represented by the vertical axis are admittedly controversial but irrelevant to the discussion here). What emerges is the fact that during the late '60s, through the mid-'70s, the amount of U.S. military spending decreased while that of the Soviet Union steadily increased, with U.S. military spending rising again after 1975.

What does this reflect? Basically that during the 1968-75 period the U.S., battered by its defeat in Vietnam and increasingly challenged by the USSR, was forced to retreat from Southeast Asia and regroup and reorient its forces and alliances to confront the Soviets; and that following this, driven by the intensification of the crisis of imperialism and their rivalry with the Soviets, they have been forced to greatly step up their preparations for war with the Soviets in the latter '70s and into the '80s. On the other hand, the Soviet bloc, having thoroughly restored capitalism by the 1960s, was compelled to expand and challenge the U.S. empire, and was given something of an opening to do so by the protracted U.S. aggression and ultimate defeat in Vietnam. A central

Figure 1¹¹



component of its stepping out was a sustained military buildup — of strategic nuclear weapons in particular — a buildup it has basically sustained from the late 1950s to the present.

Applying Halliday's logic to these developments, one might assume that while the U.S. alone was "the main source of war" in the late '60s, but that from 1968 until 1975 the *Soviet Union* emerged as the "main danger" hounding an exhausted, defeated U.S.! Who does not know that some forces on the left rode exactly this logic from anti-imperialism to open American chauvinism? We are curious how Halliday settled on the *late 1970s* as the focus of his example. With his logic, an earlier year might have led him to support a different bloc!

If anything, the very ways the Soviet Union has dealt with its relative economic weakness says much about how both sides must try to minimize their weaknesses and build their own strength to match that of their rivals. Rather than a "reluctance" to engage in the arms race, we see here evidence of a compelling necessity and a deep determination to prepare to confront the U.S. bloc militarily. The *Basic Principles For the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and For the Line of the International Communist Movement* (a draft position paper for discussion prepared by leaders of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile and the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA) sums up the situation:

"The Soviet Union has for a number of years invited in capital from the U.S. bloc to jointly exploit the peoples of the USSR and piled debt upon debt to the countries of this bloc, including the U.S. itself — by 1980 Soviet bloc indebtedness to its rival bloc had reached 68 billion dollars! This demonstrates not that the Soviet Union is in danger of being reduced to a status of neo-colonial dependency on the U.S. bloc but that its rulers have a calculated plan for world war against this bloc. Put simply, they are luring the rival imperialists with the prospect of fat profits and borrowing heavily from them not only or mainly with the purpose of encouraging some U.S. allies to 'switch sides' or 'remain neutral,' but most of all in order to strengthen the technical base of the Soviet bloc war machine. . . . In sum, they are counting on the fact that debts can be cancelled, whole new terms dictated to the 'other side' and contradictions within their own bloc handled by fighting and emerging victorious in world war.

"This is linked directly with the fact that the Soviet social-imperialists have devoted a very large percentage of their resources to building up their conventional and nuclear arsenals and getting their forces combat-ready. Such a tremendous military expenditure, on the same level as the U.S. but on a far weaker productive base than the U.S., has greatly heightened the parasitism and serious problems in the Soviet economy. . . . But, again, the Soviet social-imperialists are counting on dealing with this by

using the military might they have thus built up to bring under their control and reorganize according to their interests a large part of the capital and productive forces in Western Europe and Japan and to seize a far greater part of the dependent and backward countries as sources of superprofits — through world war."¹²

On the much discussed technological front in particular, Soviet inability to forge ahead of the U.S. in some areas should not for a moment be confused with a lack of willingness to do so. The Soviets have been making tremendous efforts to catch up technologically, and according to some assessments have considerably narrowed the gap between themselves and the West.¹³ In addition, the Soviets have tried to compensate for this technological lag by stressing the numbers and reliability of their weapons. And let us not forget that it was, after all, the Soviet Union which took the early lead in the development of ICBMs and was the first to test ABM systems. Before being overtaken in these fields by the U.S., Khrushchev boasted, "Naturally we will do everything to use the time we have gained in the development of rocket weapons and to keep our lead in this field until an international agreement on disarmament is reached."¹⁴

Finally, to try to prove a defensive and reactive posture for the Soviets on the basis of certain military or economic inferiorities, is to make the totally false assumption that countries and blocs somehow "choose" to provoke major wars against lethal adversaries on the basis of their respective military dominance. It may seem ironic that the United States didn't initiate war with the USSR when it was unmistakably superior, and might be forced to when it no longer is. But the approach of war does not rest in arbitrary choice or seizure of military opportunity; it results from the maturation of antagonism over colliding interests, rooted in economics but developing a significant dynamic in the political-military rivalry between states. As Raymond Lotta writes in *America in Decline*:

"More specifically, the intensification of contradictions in a particular spiral reaches a point past which a major strategic gain by either side can no longer occur without rupturing the whole framework. Any change of such magnitude in the international equation might embolden the immediate beneficiary to launch a bid for decisive advantage and supremacy or precipitate a massive, preemptive response from the other."¹⁵

In other words, there is a real compulsion on both sides that leads them to ultimately take the mortal risk that world war entails for all ruling classes, and it is a compulsion which gives no guarantees that it will only arise under conditions of parity, or within a power enjoying superiority.

Does Geography Determine Political Character?

A second leg of the "lesser evil" thesis rests on the particularities of geography and the post-World War 2 division of the world. The Soviet Union does not presently have bases spanning the globe the same way the West does. Nor does it send armadas across vast seas for Vietnam-style invasions. (Instead, the Soviets prefer to invade over land!) Somehow in the minds of Soviet apologists this implies less compulsion to contend for spheres of influence and less need to wage world war. This ignores two facts.

First, one of the underlying conflicts between the Soviet Union and its rivals is exactly that the USSR is presently cut off from access to vast parts of the world by the political arrangements made coming out of WW2 at Yalta, and by the subsequent policies of containment carried out by U.S. imperialism. Being contained is not disproof of their imperialism; it is the present, intolerable restraints these imperialists confront – and are preparing to burst through by going to war.

Second, the Soviet Union already possesses a considerable sphere of influence, which from the Brezhnev Doctrine to the invasion of Afghanistan is hardly ruled with a benevolent hand. To suggest that these are somehow "border regions" and that therefore Soviet invasions there are less an indication of imperialism is a strange argument. The very people who raise it would correctly bristle if someone used such logic to justify an American invasion of Central America, or say, Mexico!

The United States, Britain, and Japan are imperialist powers surrounded by water. Their acquisition and defense of spheres for exploitation requires "power projection" far from their borders over oceans – and their military posture reflects that. The Soviet Union is in a far different position. It straddles the entire northern tier of the largest land mass on earth, with a 20,000 kilometer land border directly touching vast, heavily populated parts of the globe.

One pro-Soviet arms expert shot herself in the foot with a useful insight. Describing the difference between the Soviet and U.S. ability to project power, which she found politically significant, she pointed out that Soviet troop-transport planes had a maximum range of 1,500 miles. Quite true! However, unlike the situation for any of the Western imperialists, 85 percent of the world's people and most of the key strategic areas of the world are precisely within 1,500 miles of a Soviet border!

Such geographic distinctions have much to do with how specific imperialist empires are structured, defended, and expanded. In war, such differences have historically led to quite different activities in combat itself, where the military necessities facing any particular bloc (and the strategies which flow from them) are far from identical to those of their rivals. The fact that continental powers like Germany have sought to carve their "place in the sun" largely over land, while oceanic powers like the U.S. have relied more heavily on the projection of power across the seas, does not in the slightest disprove the equally imperialist compulsions at

work on each, and the equally reactionary character of their colonial enterprises. This misreading of geography is used to substantiate the theory that the Soviet Union is somehow inherently a "defensive" power, and that its military posture somehow reflects that.

There is, of course, a genuinely defensive component to Soviet military preparations. After all, if war erupts, the Western alliance will try to destroy the Soviet military capacity, flatten its strategic industry, shatter the morale of the Soviet population, decapitate its political structure, and dismantle the Soviet bloc (and perhaps the Soviet Union itself) by force. So, naturally the Soviet Union has trained and deployed sections of its own forces to defensively frustrate exactly those Western goals. It has massive land armies straddling the traditional invasion routes leading into Soviet territory. (Note, however, that those same routes also lead out of Soviet territory, and Soviet troops, like their adversaries, are also well versed in deep offense.) Similarly, the Soviet Union has an arsenal of missiles to "defensively" destroy Western weapons on their launchpads, and systems to destroy forces that manage to enter Soviet airspace. However, who can deny that the Western bloc, too, has exactly such defensive components to its war preparations? Its forces are set to "defend" its shipping lanes, or its ICBMs, and Western Europe. In this light, the line between "defense" and "offense" becomes a little blurred. Which is exactly the point – defense forms a unity of opposites with offense in the conduct of all wars, and reflects the fact that in major conflicts belligerents are genuinely threatened by their opponents. Merely documenting strategically defensive preparations on the part of either bloc says nothing, literally nothing, about the *political* character of the war that is being prepared for. And genuine Marxists have always insisted that political purpose is *the* cardinal question in evaluating any war. Lenin, for example, declared that:

"By 'defensive' war Socialists have always meant a 'just' war. . . .

"But picture to yourself a slave-owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave-owner who owned 200 slaves for a more 'just' distribution of slaves. Clearly, the application of the term 'defensive' war, or war 'for the defense of the fatherland' in such a case would be historically false, and in practice would be sheer deception of the common people, of philistines, of ignorant people.

And further:

"The character of the war (whether it is reactionary or revolutionary) does not depend on who the attacker was, or in whose country the 'enemy' is stationed; it depends on what class is waging the war, and on what politics this war is a continuation of."¹⁶

The assumption that defensive preparations themselves imply preparation for a just war is rooted in the thoroughly

bourgeois notion that there is something inherently justified in the defense of your nation, its territory, and by extension, something inherently justified about retaliating for attacks on its troops, its allies, etc. But defense is never abstract; it can only mean the specific defense of the *social* relations characterizing any state or bloc. France waged World War I almost entirely on its own territory against a German invasion – was its war then just? Hardly. It remained, in essence, a defense of French imperialist power in the world, and a defense of its right to exploit its colonies and expand that exploitation into German colonies. We have to ask: just what is progressive today about “defending” the Soviet Union, an oppressive, nonrevolutionary, in fact imperialist, overlord of its own empire? To argue that such defensive preparations are justified, and worthy of support, ignores that they are a subordinate part of the fight for the global strategic interests of the Soviet ruling class, for which war (even war on Soviet territory itself) is to be waged.

Our apologists, confused by geography, absorbed with missile counts, befuddled by the significance of offense and defense, and most importantly, blind to the compulsions driving both blocs toward war, seem incapable of comprehending either the kind of war that is shaping up today or the significance of the Soviet military buildup taking place within this context.

No, the Soviet Union has not built a military aimed at wresting the neocolonies piecemeal out of the grasp of its rivals, launching Vietnam-style invasions on every continent, or matching that of the U.S. bloc in every category. What it has constructed, however, is a military force geared to the exigencies that confront the Soviets in waging and winning an imperialist world war: taking on and defeating the military forces of the imperialist powers arrayed against it, and, flowing from and related to that, seizing areas of the globe vital to establishing a new division of the world in the interests of Soviet imperialism.

Nuclear Strategy

At the heart of both Soviet military doctrine and its actual military forces are strategic nuclear weapons. The best place to start for an overview of Soviet military writings is the work of the late Marshal V.D. Sokolovskiy. In the wake of Khrushchev's seizure of power, a wave of counterrevolution swept through society and as part of this Joseph Stalin's line on military affairs was overthrown. Although Stalin's views on military matters, as in other spheres, were marred by muddle and mechanical thinking, the new Soviet rulers had to repudiate two key tenets which he had, in the main, correctly defended; first, that the long-range and determining factors in warfare were in the rear strength of the combatants, i.e., in the political cohesion and class nature of their societies and in their economic strength; and second, on that basis, the necessity and the possibility of resisting American nuclear blackmail, rather than abandoning crucial revolutionary prin-

ciples. Central to the new revisionist military doctrine was an elevation of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, above the masses of people as the principal factor in modern warfare.

This counterrevolution in military affairs was crystallized in the collective study *Military Affairs*, first published in 1962 and written under the direction of the revisionist Marshal Sokolovskiy. While Soviet doctrine has developed in the ensuing years – something we shall discuss further – Sokolovskiy's appraisal of the essential form and nature of modern warfare has been repeatedly upheld and restated in the doctrine of the social-imperialists. New editions of his work appeared in 1963 and 1968, and the further development of Soviet doctrine rested upon his basic theses.

Sokolovskiy wrote:

“From the point of view of the means of armed combat, a third world war will be first of all a *nuclear rocket war*. The mass use of nuclear – particularly thermonuclear – weapons will impart to the war an unprecedented destructive and devastating nature. The main means of attaining the goals of the war and for solving the main strategic and operational problems will be rockets with nuclear charges. Consequently, the leading service of the [Soviet] Armed Forces will be the Strategic Rocket Forces, while the role and purpose of the other services will be essentially changed. At the same time, final victory will be attained only as a result of the mutual efforts of all services of the Armed Forces.

“The basic method of waging war will be massed nuclear rocket attacks inflicted for the purpose of destroying the aggressor's means of nuclear attack and for the simultaneous mass destruction and devastation of the vitally important objectives comprising the enemy's military, political and economic might, for crushing his will to resist and for achieving victory within the shortest period of time.

“*The center of gravity of the entire armed combat under these conditions is transferred from the zone of combat between the adversaries as was the case in past wars, into the depth of the enemy's location, including the most remote regions. As a result the war will require an unprecedented spatial scope.*

“Since modern means of combat make it possible to achieve exceptionally great strategic results in the briefest time, *decisive importance for the outcome of the entire war will be given to its initial period*, and also to methods of frustrating the aggressive designs of the enemy by the timely infliction of a shattering attack upon him.”¹⁷

Sokolovskiy's emphasis on the primacy of weapons informs all facets of Soviet military doctrine and has shaped the armed forces they have created. This in itself is an exposure of the profoundly reactionary character of the Soviet military. Mao Tsetung was the first Marxist-Leninist to synthesize and develop a comprehensive Marxist understanding and line on

military affairs. The linchpin of his thinking was reliance on the masses of people. Bob Avakian wrote in *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*:

"Mao's military line was rooted in the basic fact that revolutionary war depends on the masses of people and can only succeed on the basis that it enjoys their support and enlists them actively in the struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces. In other words, as Mao said, a people's war is a war of the masses. This has important application not only in countries like China but universally for the revolutionary struggle in all countries."¹⁸

This is not some humanitarian credo or pragmatic maxim for choosing the "most effective" military tactics. Revolutionary warfare must be a war of the masses because in a fundamental sense only the masses can emancipate themselves; hence, any military strategy serving the cause of proletarian revolution must be infused with and guided by this cardinal principle. The rulers of the Soviet Union, like all reactionary ruling classes, may draw millions into motion — as pawns in their designs — when forced to, but only to the extent pressed on them by necessity, and all the while straining to ride herd over them. How could any imperialist army fundamentally base itself upon the arousal and mobilization of the masses, when its whole *raison d'être* is, in the final analysis, their enslavement.

It can certainly at times be necessary and correct for socialist states, when they do exist, to render direct military support to revolutionary struggles in other countries. Yet such aid hardly negates or supercedes the principle that the masses are the makers of history; rather, if it is genuinely internationalist, it will be predicated upon and guided by precisely that principle.

Where are the calls to the people of the world to rise in revolution against imperialism and its preparations for a third world war, which would certainly be an essential ingredient in the strategy of any revolutionary state in today's international situation? Try as one might, however, one will never find such calls in the mountains of "peace" propaganda churned out by the "socialist camp." But then Soviet strategy isn't exactly based upon the revolutionary masses: instead the incineration of scores of millions through nuclear strikes, or the use of other millions as cannonfodder in the field, is what is seen as decisive by Soviet strategists, and is, in fact, what corresponds to the Soviet goal — a rearranged *imperialist* order.

Ironically, the Soviets have elaborated a doctrine and built a military machine around thousands of nuclear weapons, while castigating Mao as a madman who was oblivious to the horror of nuclear conflict and bent on instigating nuclear war; this, while Mao consistently upheld revolutionary principle, including relying on the masses in warfare and struggling for the complete and thorough abolition of nuclear weapons through overthrowing imperialism.

The point here is not that weapons are insignificant: "weapons are an important factor in war," Mao wrote, "but not

the decisive factor; it is people, not things that are decisive."¹⁹ Nor is it the case that socialist states should never possess nuclear weapons. In a world where such countries are threatened by nuclear-armed imperialist states, nuclear weapons would be a necessity. The question is the politics that are guiding the use of any weapons as reflected in military doctrine and posture. In no sense are the Soviet armed forces, guided by a weapons-first doctrine and built around thousands of nuclear warheads a tool for the liberation of humanity. In fact, this doctrine alone is almost reason enough to condemn the Soviet military as imperialist.

Sokolovskiy's statement above, and more importantly the entire body of Soviet military writing, makes it clear that all the revisionists' declarations that nuclear war is "unthinkable," "suicidal," or "madness" are cynical and calculated attempts at deception; and further, whatever their public posture, the Soviets have never embraced the view that nuclear weapons exist solely to deter an opponent's attack by threatening massive retaliation. Rather they have consistently viewed nuclear arms as weapons with various and specific military missions, in particular, "destroying the aggressor's means of nuclear attack" and the mass destruction of "vitaly important objectives comprising the enemy's military, political and economic might, for crushing his will to resist."

Instead of making war "unthinkable," the Soviets have reformulated their whole strategic doctrine and force posture to incorporate the qualitative changes they contend have been wrought by the development of nuclear weapons. For instance, one of Sokolovskiy's key conclusions was that any future war must take place under conditions in which the USSR had eliminated American dominance in nuclear weapons. This was the basis for the Soviet decision to funnel massive national resources into building up its strategic nuclear arsenal. As Sokolovskiy noted: "The ability of a nation's economy to engage in mass production of military equipment, especially nuclear rocket weapons, to create a superiority over the enemy in modern means of armed combat determines the material prerequisites of victory."²⁰

The Soviets also stress the fact that for the first time in history an army can destroy its enemy's strategic reserves, command centers, and key industries without hacking piecemeal through protecting rings of fortifications and ground troops. In military terms this means a tremendous erosion in the distinction between frontlines and rear areas.²¹

Such statements shed light on how the Soviet Union plans to be able to overcome its particular weaknesses and neutralize U.S. strengths in order to prevail in a global war. Nuclear weapons can act as an unprecedented leveler of economic and strategic inequalities, with the capacity to lop off strategic advantages — for instance the economic might of the U.S. bloc — before they can be brought into play as military factors. Thus great stress is placed by the Soviets on amassing — *and using* — greater forces at the outset of war.²² It is also clear from doctrine and from their conventional and theater deployments, that the Soviets are banking on being able to bring their geographic proximity to key theaters into full play in the aftermath of deep nuclear strikes — when the

U.S. could well be crippled economically and cut off from much of the world.

The Link Between Doctrine and War Plans

A number of writers downplay the significance of doctrinal statements by the Soviet military, partly in response to how certain U.S. military analysts have interpreted and used such statements. In the late '70s bourgeois figures such as Richard Pipes, Paul Nitze, and others grouped around the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), invoked Soviet military writings as proof of Soviet malevolence and aggressiveness: they demonstrated that the Soviets were "Clausewitzians" who viewed war, including nuclear war, as the continuation of politics rather than as simply unthinkable (as U.S. theorists supposedly did). And flowing from this, they argued, Soviet nuclear doctrine was geared to fighting and winning wars (while NATO strategy was supposedly based solely on deterrence).

In *Dubious Specter*, Fred Kaplan derides the arguments of the CPD. "The published ideas of a particular group of military officers, in any country, do not necessarily reflect the actual convictions of the political leaders," he writes, adding that Soviet leaders have long declared their aversion to any kind of nuclear war. Further, Kaplan argues that the Soviet view of war as an extension of politics is simply a recognition of reality, not a sign of evil intent, which should, in fact, be "somewhat reassuring." After all, what political object could warrant risking the destruction of the Soviet homeland? In this light Kaplan contends that Soviet views concerning the relationship between fighting and deterring war aren't so different from those of the U.S. Defense Department: "According to Soviet philosophy deterrence resides in the ability to fight a war if need be." This position has, Kaplan correctly notes, been echoed by various Secretaries of Defense, who have conceded that the U.S. has had plans for waging (and winning) nuclear war should one occur since the invention of the bomb, which have included plans for targeting key military and strategic objectives in the Soviet Union.²³

Kaplan is certainly correct to hit at the hypocrisy of Pipes, et al.: U.S. nuclear strategy, like Soviet strategy, has always been a continuation of politics and has never been defined simply by the desire to avoid war. Yet the fact that this U.S. gang of "war-fighters" are hypocrites, and thus have no right to speak on the evils of Soviet nuclear doctrine and strategy, doesn't automatically make all their charges against the Soviets totally false. Each side sometimes reveals aspects of the truth — when denouncing the evils of the other!

More fundamentally, while Kaplan seems to agree that war is the continuation of politics, he not only ducks the question of the politics underlying Soviet military preparations, he dismisses the corollary that a state's military doctrine does not merely reflect the views of some warmongering generals, but reflects that state's class character, is formulated in concert with the political leadership, and will be implemented by

them, along with the military leadership, when conditions demand.

Insofar as Kaplan does discuss the politics guiding Soviet military strategy, he assumes these political goals are at bottom the preservation of the Soviet motherland. However, as we shall discuss shortly, preventing a nuclear attack on Soviet soil is not the alpha and omega of Soviet strategy. Undeniably, deterrence has been a component part of Soviet and U.S. military doctrine. Each side wants to preserve and protect its vital interests and spheres of influence, which demand military power. And at a time when war was not immediately on the horizon, in the 1960s and much of the '70s, the politics guiding the military strategies of both blocs (which reflect the underlying exigencies of imperialist politics and economics) were mainly those of contending for influence without resorting to war to restructure world relations. Thus deterrence was a prime function of the nuclear strategies and arsenals of each. However, as Sokolovskiy and company make clear, the Soviet imperialists have never assumed that this state of mutual deterrence would last forever; at some point war could erupt and in that situation the Soviet military had to be prepared to wage and win a world war, on an imperialist basis, against the U.S. and its allies. And these changes in the world situation are likewise reflected in the evolution of the military doctrines and strategies of each side — which are increasingly geared to waging, not deterring, world war. (In fact, one of the main aims of the Committee on the Present Danger was to jolt U.S. nuclear doctrine out of the "detente" framework and to pave the way for the U.S.'s present nuclear buildup.)

But the most telling refutation of Kaplan's argument lies in examining what the Soviets have actually done. In the early 1960s, when Sokolovskiy's doctrines were embraced, the Soviet Union embarked upon an intense and sustained buildup of their strategic nuclear forces. Since that time they have built up their nuclear arsenal from 472 ICBMs, bombers and submarine-launched missiles to one that today contains nearly 1,400 ICBMs, 950 submarine-launched missiles, and 150 strategic bombers capable of delivering between 7,000 and 8,000 warheads with a destructive power equivalent to 100,000 Hiroshimas. And like their U.S. counterparts, the Soviets have emphasized the development of accurate missiles, such as the SS-18 and the SS-20, capable of fulfilling specific military missions, in particular strikes against U.S. nuclear weapons and command and control.²⁴

How else is one to explain the vast numbers of nuclear weapons possessed by each side except that Soviet (and U.S.) statements of war-fighting doctrine are deadly serious? Many opponents of the nuclear arms race have argued that it is "senseless" and "irrational" for the U.S. and the Soviet Union to have so many nuclear weapons, since each has enough to destroy the other many times over. However, there is an imperialist logic to this criminal madness: having many thousands of nuclear weapons makes perfect sense — in fact it's absolutely essential — if military strategy is based on the practical use of a whole range of nuclear weapons in an assortment of flexible "options" against a host of specific military, economic, and political targets; and on having enough nuclear weapons to

survive an attack with nuclear reserves.²⁵

Within a framework of relying upon massive numbers of nuclear weapons, and especially ones designed for counterforce warfare, the various superficial differences in doctrine and forces that some seize upon to argue that one side or the other is less responsible for the nuclear peril fade in significance. ("Counterforce" refers to attacks aimed at military and command targets in which the threat of massive direct strikes against cities is to a certain extent held in reserve to deter the enemy from launching such attacks on population centers. "Countervalue" is the name of the nuclear strategy of directly targeting cities.) Soviet doctrine has its counterpart in U.S. strategy, which calls upon U.S. nuclear forces to be able to assure the destruction of an enemy's "nuclear and conventional military forces and industry critical to military power." And like the Soviets, the U.S. imperialists are feverishly building their forces to carry out such a strategy, including developing a whole new generation of counterforce weapons such as the MX, the cruise missile, and the Trident D-5; deploying Pershing II missiles close to Soviet borders, and implementing a program designed to add 30,000 nuclear warheads to the U.S. arsenal over the next ten years, including 14,000 hard-target counterforce weapons.²⁶

For their part, the Soviets are striving to increase their capabilities to wage counterforce war and to match any perceived U.S. superiority. Soviet submarines are stationed near the coasts of the U.S. and cold-launchable, solid-fuel SS-20 missiles are targeted against European NATO powers, giving the Soviets a quick striking force. While the Soviets have made great strides in improving the accuracy of their missiles, they also rely on heavier missiles with more MIRVed warheads of greater megatonnage in order to guarantee their counterforce capabilities. It is mind-boggling indeed that some can argue, in light of all this, that somehow the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal is qualitatively different, and its purpose distinct, from that of the U.S.

The Compulsion to Strike First

Given the parallel decisions of both blocs to build massive nuclear arsenals as the backbones of their war-fighting capabilities, the logic of preparing to strike first forces itself on both of them. In a sense this is inherent in the very notion of counterforce targeting: why aim at missile silos if you aren't going to strike while the missiles are still there? And if events indicate that war is imminent or has already begun, why wait until the bulk of the enemy's missiles have battered down on your head before launching your own salvo?

The pressures compelling both sides to adopt first-strike strategies and capabilities are doubly reinforced by the vulnerabilities of command and control. One U.S. analyst wrote in the magazine *Foreign Policy*:

"...[B]y eliminating central coordination [a first decapitating strike] sharply reduces the military effec-

tiveness of opposing strategic forces; second, it offers some small chance that complete decapitation will occur and no retaliation will follow. The latter possibility, however slight, is probably the only imaginable route to decisive victory in nuclear war."²⁷

The significance of striking first is underscored by the limitations of a "launch on warning" strategy, designed as a response to surprise attack. With "launch on warning" in effect, a country would launch its ICBMs at the first sign of an enemy missile attack, rather than waiting until the enemy's missiles had landed and presumably taken out much of its ICBM force. Yet some bourgeois analysts argue that even a "launch on warning" posture would not fully compensate for the ill effects of receiving a first blow; and the country on the receiving end would have great difficulty executing a successful counterattack (that is against enemy military installations), particularly if the attacker made an effort to disrupt command and control — which is almost a certainty. Thus whoever struck first would gain an important and perhaps decisive advantage.²⁸

The Soviet imperialists, while publicly declaring that they will not be first to use nuclear weapons (a declaration we will explore later), have historically emphasized surprise and preemption in their statements of doctrine, including from their very first counterrevolutionary reevaluations of nuclear strategy. One article from the 1950s declared:

"Surprise attack with the massive employment of new weapons can cause the rapid collapse of a government whose capacity to resist is low as a consequence of radical faults in its social and economic structure and also as a consequence of an unfavorable geographic position. . . .

"[T]he duty of the Soviet Armed Forces is not to permit an enemy surprise attack on our country and, in the event of an attempt to accomplish one, not only to repel the attack successfully but also to deal the enemy counterblows, or even pre-emptive (uprezhadayushchie) surprise blows, of terrible destructive force."²⁹

Major General Vasily I. Zemskov, in a statement representative of Soviet doctrine in the late 1960s, made the same point more circumspectly:

"In a nuclear war, if one breaks out, the combatants will use from the very beginning all the available forces and means at their disposal, above all strategic nuclear means. . . . The decisive act of a nuclear war in all conditions is the infliction of a strike by strategic nuclear means, in the course of which both sides will obviously use the main portion of the most powerful nuclear weapons. The moment of infliction of this strike will be the culminating point of the strategic effort, which can virtually be combined with the beginning of a war. This was not the case in any of the past wars."³⁰

Some argue that the threat of a Soviet first strike is simply a myth invented by the Reagan crowd to justify the U.S.'s current nuclear arms buildup. The argument is that while the Soviets may have the theoretical ability to destroy about 90 percent of U.S. ICBMs,³¹ the Soviets would never chance it because, for a variety of technical reasons, it is uncertain whether or not they could successfully pull off such a strike; and second, even if they did, they would still face retaliation from U.S. submarines and bombers.

The point is, however, that neither side anticipates being able to successfully complete a "totally decapitating first strike" which would literally destroy *all* the strategic weapons of their rivals. And both recognize that it is unlikely that their side will completely avoid having to "absorb" some kind of nuclear strike, even if they attack first. Their strategy (expressed in imperialist nukespeak) is to "degrade the whole spectrum of the enemy's response" by hitting as many missiles as possible, and especially by disrupting command and control. Even if the Soviet force could not destroy all U.S. land-based missiles, there is an obvious advantage to destroying as many as they can once it became clear that the decisive conflict was going down, especially since the Soviet missile force, being much more concentrated in land-based missiles, is more vulnerable to surprise attack than the U.S. force.

The argument that "first strike" would be madness unless it could completely destroy all opposing nukes is related to the assumption that neither power could ever launch war because of the danger of domestic destruction — in other words, it assumes that nuclear war really *is* unthinkable.

The Soviets have actually tested their ability to coordinate a "preemptive" strike. In June 1982, in an unprecedented many-faceted nuclear military maneuver, SS-11s were launched from widely separated silos in western and central Siberia, representing a test of the key ICBM centers. Concurrently, a medium-range SS-20 was also fired — of the type that would be needed to take out U.S. Pershing IIs in Western Europe and similar NATO forces. And at the same time the Soviets also launched an SS-N-8 from a submarine in the White Sea, plus two antiballistic missiles and an anti-satellite missile (of the type designed to "blind" U.S. early warning systems).³²

We are not arguing that the Soviets have planned ahead of time to "shoot first" and therefore single-handedly deserve the mantle of "aggressors." Certainly the United States has the same necessity acting on it. History is yet unwritten; it is by no means certain who will end up striking first, and who will therefore be reduced to a "second strike" against reserves, or even if either imperialist bloc will bank on a preemptive strike — certainly their nuclear doctrine doesn't reduce itself to that.

What is clear however, is that no matter who strikes first, both blocs have participated equally in a criminal enterprise, elevating their national interests above humanity, threatening millions of people and possibly the survival of humanity.

Limited and Protracted Nuclear War

Apologists tout the Soviets' public refusal to countenance Western notions of "limited," "controlled," or "protracted" nuclear warfare. Soviet officials have called these scenarios "a demagogic trap designed to lull public opinion and to make the prospect of nuclear war more acceptable or, if you like, more digestible..."³³ The Soviets' contention that no nuclear war could remain limited, but would inevitably escalate to an all-out conflagration, has been interpreted as a more sober and cautious approach to the use of nuclear weapons. Roy and Zhores Medvedev argue:

"In official Western discussion about the new generation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems one can discern a profoundly troubling change of attitude. If in the past nuclear weapons were considered almost entirely as deterrents, now there are suggestions about the practicality of so-called 'theatre nuclear weapons' and certain *rules* of nuclear warfare. This discussion of 'limited' or 'flexible' nuclear war has only occurred within NATO. The Soviet official attitude remains the old-fashioned belief that nuclear war is unthinkable, criminal and unwinnable."³⁴

A couple of points need be made on this question. For one, the Soviets' opposition to limited or controlled nuclear war does not stem from a refusal on their part to grapple with the "rules" of nuclear warfare, as the voluminous Soviet writing on nuclear warfare makes quite evident. Nor does it flow from horror over the fact that any "limited" nuclear war would cause millions of casualties; they have their own plans for launching massive nuclear strikes.³⁵ No, the problem that the Soviet Union has with theories of limited or controlled nuclear escalation is that such strategies play to the strengths of their enemies and into their own weaknesses, running counter to their own strategies for waging World War 3!³⁶

The doctrine of limited nuclear war, or "flexible response," was first articulated in the 1960s, largely as a means of using the U.S.'s nuclear superiority to overcome NATO's conventional weaknesses vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc. While the concept of "flexible response" has since been subsumed by new U.S. doctrines of protracted and controlled nuclear war, the Soviets continue to object to Western doctrines of limited nuclear war for a number of reasons.

A war in which the use of nuclear weapons was "limited" to Europe would involve nuclear strikes against areas of the Soviet Union and could neutralize the Soviets' conventional advantages. It would leave the U.S. unscathed and still fully able to churn out war matériel for the front — clearly an intolerable situation for the Soviet Union, and contrary to their overall war doctrine. Soviet admonitions against the concept of a "limited" nuclear war are a statement and a warning that the Soviets are not going to "play by U.S. rules," that they are going to do everything in their power to frustrate U.S. designs, and that they aren't going to concede anything in the

strategically vital European theater. In other words, they reject ahead of time any nuclear scenario that would leave them devastated and would leave their main rival, the U.S., outside the arena of combat.

But here, we would like to step back a little and point to a blind spot afflicting Soviet apologists. On the one hand, we are presented with the U.S. and its allies who toy with the grotesque notions of "limited" nuclear war and are seeking ways to use nuclear arsenals against their rivals most effectively [i.e., surgically], while limiting damage to their own imperialist homelands. And on the other hand, we are given the Soviets, who announce they will not play by such rules and insist that *their* preparations are to meet *any* nuclear exchanges with all-out and general nuclear bombardments of the planet. We would like to ask the defenders of Soviet "peacefulness": where in *this* collision of strategies do you see a basis for concluding that the *Soviet* approach is somehow more humane? Your reasoning escapes us!

Controlled War? The Question Is "Controlled By Whom?"

Soviet public statements on the "unthinkability" of limited nuclear war, and their rejection of certain strategies debated in the West, however, doesn't mean that the Soviets don't countenance any form of nuclear warfare other than massive, all-out strategic exchanges. Their doctrine instead comprehends forms of protracted and controlled nuclear warfare more advantageous to their geopolitical position.

The goal of Soviet military strategy, including their nuclear strategy, is not to totally destroy or "colonize" the West; rather it is to militarily defeat the U.S. bloc in order to force it to submit to a qualitative recasting of world political and economic relations in favor of Soviet social-imperialism. These overriding political goals shape Soviet strategy. As Clausewitz put it, "Policy will therefore permeate the whole action of war and exercise a continuous influence upon it... for the political design is the object, while war is the means, and the means can never be thought apart from the object."³⁷

This approach is implicit in the Soviets' emphasis on counterforce targeting, which, of course, is a form of limited war. Col. M. Shirokov, a major Soviet strategist, declared:

"[T]he objective is not to turn the large economic and industrial regions into a heap of ruins (although great destruction apparently is unavoidable), but to deliver strikes which will destroy strategic combat means, paralyze enemy military production, making it incapable of satisfying the priority needs of the front and rear areas and sharply reduce the enemy capacity to conduct strikes."³⁸

And certainly to contemplate the capitulation of an enemy in the context of nuclear war is obviously to contemplate the

"limitation" of nuclear exchanges at some point short of simple exhaustion of nuclear reserves.

The Soviets have also devoted considerable attention to the relationships between strategic and theater warfare, and between nuclear and conventional forms of warfare, and have over the last decade come to the view that a third world war would in all likelihood be a protracted war on a number of fronts, employing a whole spectrum of weapons. Although the Soviet leadership, including Marshal Ogarkov, insists — mainly for political reasons — that any nuclear war would be "all-out," Ogarkov did write in the 1982 edition of the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*: "The possibility cannot be excluded that the war could also be protracted."³⁹ What meaning can this possibility of protracted war have, short of some control over exchanges within the context of war?

Whether these various imperialist schemes for "controlling" nuclear warfare — which amount to nothing less than coldly calculating how many millions of people they can and must incinerate, and how much of the world they must lay to waste in order to grab a bigger share of the plunder — can be carried out, or whether a nuclear war would spiral out of their control, is another question entirely.

What is really at issue in the most recent *public* declarations of the Soviets are the *NATO* scenarios of limiting war (or portions of a more protracted war) to *Europe*. In entering *this* public debate, the Soviets are seeking to intensify the contradictions within the Western alliance. By stating ahead of time their refusal to allow a nuclear war limited to the continent, the Soviets forcefully make it a question within *NATO* whether the U.S. would "risk New York for Paris." It is this prewar maneuvering, aimed at creating more favorable political conditions for Soviet victory, rather than some genuine horror at Western thinking about nuclear war, that most fully explains the Soviet noise about recent *NATO* utterances.

Do the Social-Imperialists View Nuclear War As Suicidal?

A central element in the argument that the Soviet Union would never seriously contemplate nuclear war is that Soviet leaders realize nuclear war would be suicidal madness which could only result in the destruction of the USSR. This thesis underlies much of the tendency to take Soviet declarations on limited war at face value and to believe their assertions that their nuclear arsenal exists solely for deterrence.

Fred Kaplan writes:

"Yet nobody — including those who dwell on Clausewitz and his lineage of contemporary Soviet warplanners — has conceived of a credible scenario in which the Soviet leadership would risk a chance of nuclear attack on the Motherland; no one has thought of a political goal whose gain would be worth the

sacrifice of possible American nuclear retaliation."⁴⁰

In somewhat the same vein, Roy and Zhores Medvedev declare:

"In the Soviet Union . . . there are no illusions about the rationality of nuclear war. Despite periodic claims by NATO spokesmen, there is no planning in the USSR for mass survival in a nuclear conflict: shelters are non-existent in the new Moscow housing districts, while civil defense training in the provinces is confined to perfunctory bus trips into the forests. Likewise, no serious official statement has ever envisaged the USSR winning such a war."⁴¹

These observations are true in two respects. First, they mirror the official face of Soviet policy, particularly post-1977. When President Reagan commented in October 1981 that the "Soviet Union has made it very plain that among themselves they believe [a nuclear war] is winnable," Brezhnev responded that starting a nuclear war in the expectation of victory would be tantamount to suicide. Marshal Ogarkov, echoed those sentiments, writing that in a new world war "many hundreds of millions of people would be caught up in its maelstrom. In the bitterness and scale of possible destruction it could not be compared with any wars of the past. The very character of modern weapons has become such that, if they are set in motion the future of all mankind will be at stake."⁴² We will be forgiven, however, if we don't take such Soviet statements at face value. Certainly the identical protestations from the American bourgeoisie (yes, including Reagan!⁴³) is training enough that such things are easy enough to say. There are valuable political benefits to be gained by appearing benign. Second, the above statements do reflect the truth that the imperialists of both blocs are acutely aware of the grave dangers that nuclear conflict poses for their continued reign.

But what is ignored is that the ruling classes confront grave dangers to their continued existence if they *don't* go to war and successfully redivide the globe. The view that the imperialists can and will avoid a nuclear war because of its evident destructiveness negates the exigencies of imperialism and the all-sided rivalry that it calls forth which are propelling them toward the desperate gamble of global warfare. It assumes that the imperialists can simply live forever with the present status quo.

Bob Avakian succinctly summed up the situation the imperialists confront, and their outlook in the face of it. While speaking of the West, his comments apply equally to the Soviet social-imperialists:

"But whether they really want [war] in whatever they have instead of a heart of hearts is not really the decisive question. The question should be phrased another way and people have to think deeply about it. In fact, the question to be put directly to these imperialists and their spokesmen: don't they in fact prefer nuclear war to seeing the U.S. and the Western bloc

and Western Civilization (as they often call it) reduced to a second rate power in the world, and still worse seeing it overthrown by revolution? And I think if you put the question that way, and that's the way the question is going to be posing itself in the real world, then they will answer in practice, yes."⁴⁴

The argument that the imperialists would not dare risk war because of the destruction it would wreak is nothing new. Before the First World War Karl Kautsky argued that "The urge of capital to expand . . . can be best promoted, not by the violent means of imperialism, but by peaceful democracy." And one A. Neymarck: "After calculating the thousands of millions of francs representing 'international' securities, exclaimed in 1912: 'Is it possible to believe that peace may be disturbed . . . that, in the face of these enormous figures, anyone would risk starting a war?'" Lenin castigated both: "Instead of an analysis of imperialism and an exposure of the depths of its contradictions, we have nothing but a reformist 'pious wish' to wave them aside, to evade them."⁴⁵ History, as well, has rendered its verdict on such idealist prognostications.

There is no question that nuclear weapons are qualitatively more destructive than those used in past wars. But how *do* the Soviets (or the U.S., for that matter) attempt to deal with the profound destructiveness and inherent danger posed by the war that looms today? Not by renouncing war at all costs, nor by saying that war today can only be an extension of madness rather than politics. This is shown both by their military preparations and by the frequent declarations of both blocs that they would use nuclear weapons if their vital interests were threatened. Rather, these contradictory concerns are incorporated into their overall strategic preparations, including their military strategy. Ultimately it is a risk they are forced to take, and which they seek to minimize in the course of war by grabbing for decisive victory. Mao Tsetung, in summing up the laws of war, wrote:

"The object of war is specifically to preserve oneself and destroy the enemy (to destroy the enemy means to disarm him or 'deprive him of the power to resist,' and does not mean to destroy every member of his forces physically). . . . Attack is the chief means of destroying the enemy, but defense cannot be dispensed with. In attack the immediate object is to destroy the enemy, but at the same time it is self-preservation, because if the enemy is not destroyed, you will be destroyed."⁴⁶

This dialectic is reflected in the discussions in both blocs on the feasibility of mainly targeting the military forces of the other side, in particular wiping out enemy nuclear weapons before they can be used; of "controlling" nuclear warfare by withholding massive, all-encompassing assaults on each other's cities; and of making their own military forces less vulnerable to attack.

The Soviet position has been graphically demonstrated by

the ridicule heaped upon the "war is an extension of madness" position in Soviet military debates. One example is the decisive repudiation of one General Nikolai Talensky who, once retired in 1965, developed a disturbing habit of elaborating the following thesis:

"In our days there can be no more dangerous illusion than the idea that thermonuclear war can still serve as an instrument of politics, that it is possible to achieve political aims by using nuclear weapons and still survive."

This brought immediate and vehement criticism, by name, in the press from active military commanders. One such attack, written by General K. Bochkarev, deputy commandant of the General Staff Academy, stated that if these ideas took hold:

"[T]he armed forces of the socialist states . . . will not be able to set for themselves the goal of defeating imperialism and the global nuclear war which it unleashes and the mission of attaining victory in it, and our military science should not even work out a strategy for the conduct of war since the latter has lost its meaning and its significance. . . . In this case, the very call to raise the combat readiness of our armed forces and improve their capability to defeat any aggressor is senseless."

The dominant perspective of the Soviet leadership is summed up by the Soviet General A.S. Milovoidov in 1974:

"There is a profound error and harm in the disorienting claims of bourgeois ideologues that there will be no victors in a nuclear war."⁴⁷

The Soviets are also counting on the "advantages of their social and state order" (Marshal Ogarkov's words), as well as geography, to see them through to survival. Khrushchev, for all his whining in the face of U.S. nuclear weapons, was also quite willing to crow (once he had some nuclear missiles of his own to wave around):

"It is perfectly clear to all sober-minded people that atomic and hydrogen weapons are particularly dangerous to the countries that are densely populated. Of course, all countries will suffer in one way or another in the event of a new world war. We, too, shall suffer much, shall sustain great losses, but we shall survive. Our territory is immense and our population less concentrated in large industrial centers than is the case in many other countries. The West will suffer incomparably more."⁴⁸

The Medvedevs' illusion that this could not be the intention of the Soviet leadership because there was not a plan to **save the masses** in case of attack is almost touching.

Without getting into all the ins and outs of the current

debate over just what the Soviets have and haven't done on the civil defense front, the fact of the matter is that the Soviets have a serious and significant plan to preserve first and foremost their military command, communications, and control and at least the core of Soviet society from nuclear destruction. Given the reality of all class societies, their plan starts with the leadership and filters down. The Soviet civil defense system actively employs 100,000 militarized operatives directing a three-tier system: the first involves the preservation of the top leadership and their ability to continue to direct hostilities; the second is an elaborate system of shelters and other facilities designed to save government and party cadre down to the *oblast* (county) level; and finally there are major, but obviously less effective, plans for the evacuation of urban millions to remote rural areas (which explains why there are no fallout shelters in mass apartments in Moscow, where they would be useless in any case!). One thing that impedes the imperialists (and this applies both East and West) from openly stepping up their *mass* civil defense preparations — and might prevent them almost entirely — is that such open preparations would cause widespread political unrest, and could fuel a serious political crisis.⁴⁹

Another illusion is the oft-repeated tale that even speculation on "accepting" millions of casualties is unthinkable in the Soviet Union because of the trauma of World War 2. Unfortunately, ruling classes have never taken such deeply felt aversions of the masses into account when they planned or launched wars. If they did the world would truly be a different place. In fact, part of the counterrevolution in military affairs in the late 1950s focused heavily on how to sum up the experience of the beginning of World War 2 — their conclusion, which has more contemporary relevance than historical truth, was: *Never again!* Never again were Soviet forces going to be caught unawares, and never again was an enemy to be allowed to wage war on *Soviet* soil. The second conclusion from the experience of World War 2, which the Soviet ruling class (if not the masses) has drawn and which they have publicly thrown out as a challenge to the West, is that the Soviet Union can absorb massive destruction and casualties and "bounce back" within decades to challenge even far less damaged powers.

In short, the question posed openly by conservatives in the U.S. — "How many millions dead is it worth to decisively crush our long-time rival?" — is asked in Moscow as well.

Theater and Conventional Warfare

Alongside its strategic nuclear forces, now massed in rough equivalence with the U.S., there has been an enormous growth in Soviet theater and conventional capabilities in the past 30 years, including the development of modern theater nuclear forces, the creation of a deep-water navy, and the expansion and modernization of Soviet ground and air forces in

Europe, the Far East, and Southwest Asia.

These changes, which apologists for the Soviet Union are even less eager to discuss than the Soviets' nuclear posture, raise some obvious questions. If massive regional conflicts with theater nuclear weapons will "inexorably" lead to suicidal general nuclear war, as the Soviet leadership has so often claimed, just what is the point of the vast array of Soviet theater nuclear weapons, particularly those aimed against countries like China with no comparable forces? If, as Marshal Ogarkov, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, says, "[T]he Soviet armed forces are no threat to anyone. They have never been used to capture foreign territory or to enslave the peoples of other countries,"⁵⁰ then why are thirty Soviet divisions permanently stationed on their southern frontier and in Afghanistan (which, to our knowledge, is not part of the Soviet Union) facing a Southwest Asia devoid of massed Western imperialist forces? And what purpose is served by transforming the former U.S. entrance to Vietnam, Cam Ranh Bay, into a major Soviet naval base patrolling the lifelines to Japan? Nothin' here but deterrence and defense? Hardly.

While Soviet literature discusses waging war to victory, few documents define the content of said victory. Like other imperialist powers, the Soviet Union does not publicly spell out its particular war aims. However, an examination of the forces the Soviets have built up and deployed, and their missions as discussed in Soviet military publications, shows that they have been designed to take on and defeat the armed forces of the U.S. bloc in all key theaters, and on that basis be able to seize, hold, or otherwise dominate those regions pivotal to the creation of a new postwar imperialist alignment (including Europe, the Persian Gulf, China, and Japan).

Theater Doctrine

In contrast to official pronouncements that the lights would simply go out after a strategic nuclear exchange, Soviet doctrine envisions fierce battles erupting before, during, and after strategic nuclear strikes, in a variety of theaters, employing a broad spectrum of forces — from theater nuclear weapons to a full range of conventional forces. Soviet doctrine stresses that nuclear and nonnuclear forces are complementary, not mutually exclusive. As Sokolovskiy put it, in the quote cited earlier, ". . . final victory will be attained only as a result of the mutual efforts of all services of the armed forces."

An article written by General Major Vasily I. Zemskov, shortly before he became editor of the official journal *Military Thought*, illustrates Soviet thinking on these questions. While noting that strategic nuclear strikes are the backbone of Soviet strategy, Zemskov writes that subsequent to them, "great importance can also be attached to operations and combat operations of armed forces in completing the defeat of the remaining groupings of the opposing side." Zemskov goes on to state that "an extremely active nuclear conflict in the theaters of military operations" and "highly-maneuverable offensive and defensive battles of

ground troops, as well as operations of fleets at sea and in the oceans will now unfold. In these conditions, the role of conventional means of destruction will increase." He also stresses that the unfolding of war, in a situation in which much of the armed forces of both sides would be wiped out, could be complex and protracted: "Both offensive and defensive operations of various scales are possible here. The initiative can switch several times from one to another. In military operations in individual zones, as well as in theaters on the whole, lengthy operational intervals are not excluded. Active combat operations in particular regions might decrease and then break out anew."⁵¹

The Soviets, like the Western imperialists, are striving for the maximum flexibility and power at all levels of conflict, no matter how war jumps off or unfolds. While Khrushchev argued in the early '60s that nuclear weapons had made other forms of warfare obsolete, and therefore the other armed forces should be cut by one-third, the Soviet hierarchy quickly rejected this approach. Under Brezhnev's tenure the Soviet Union vastly built up its conventional and theater forces, increasing the size of its armed forces by 1.5 million men to approximately 4.9 million, the tonnage of ordnance that tactical Soviet airpower could deliver by ninefold, and the number of tanks by 66 percent.⁵²

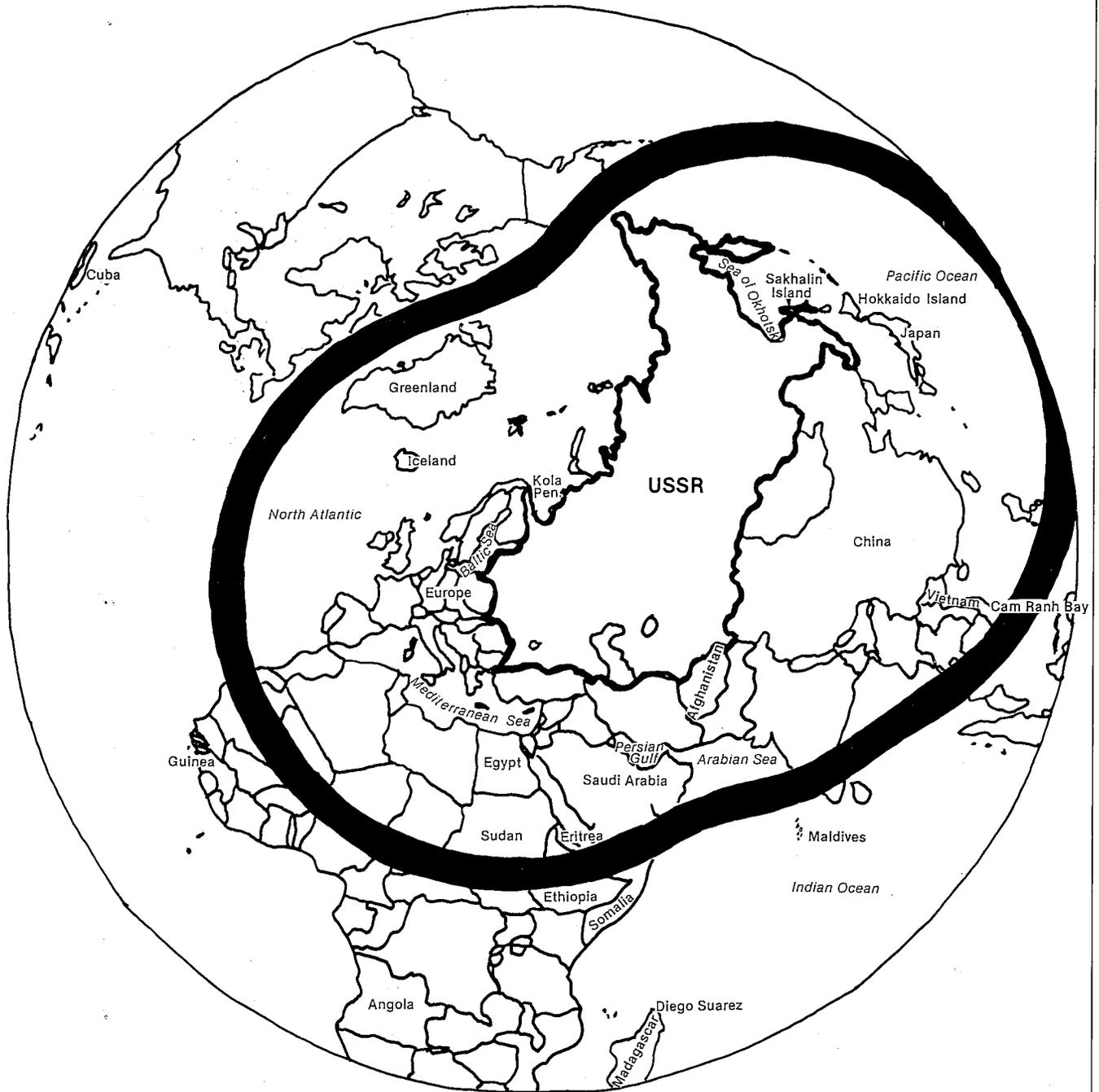
It is important to note in this regard, that while the Soviets hold that any war between the U.S. and Soviet blocs would probably rapidly escalate to strategic nuclear exchanges, there have been increasing if cautious discussions of the possibility of a nonnuclear phase at the beginning of a global war.⁵³ This concept is closely related to the Soviet hope to exploit their geographic advantages to thrust into key regions on the Eurasian land mass in a situation in which the U.S. may well be, at least partly, cut off from the action, or have difficulty concentrating its forces in distant battlefields. In short, the question of who is going to bog down whom, and which side is going to suffer most in a multifront war, is as yet undetermined (something reflected by the debate within the U.S. bourgeoisie about how many theaters the U.S. military needs to be able to wage simultaneous war in — the well-known 1½ versus 2½ war controversy).

The European Theater

In a discussion of tensions over Europe, the Medvedev brothers ask how anyone could conceive of a reason for the Soviet Union to wage war for that continent. They point out that there are few inflamed territorial disputes between East and West there, and that there is little economically to be gained by annexing a continent that has just been irradiated by nuclear weapons. In other words, what would be the trigger, and what would be the purpose?

The answer is that a war would not simply be for Europe, or to settle long-standing disputes arising within the narrow confines of that corner of the world. Contrary to the views popular within the European left, the Old Continent is not

Figure 2



This illustrates the target coverage of Soviet SS-20s, and incidentally, shows how the bulk of mankind is geographically situated on the Soviet "periphery."⁵⁷

simply some innocent prize being contested by superpower barbarians. It is the home of major powers, imperialist in their own right, complete with neocolonial spheres of influence, ambitions for future expansion, and (quite to the point here) armed to the teeth, including with nuclear weapons. The Western European powers are an integral part of a bloc that militarily and politically represents *the* obstacle to Soviet ambitions to expand its take from international exploitation. Their importance to the Soviet Union is further heightened by the fact that the military and productive power of the old-line imperialist states of Western Europe is one of the particular strengths of the U.S. bloc, and because Europe is the land base from which an invasion of the Soviet heartland would most likely take place.

These realities are reflected in the forces that the Soviet Union has deployed in the European theater. At center stage is a large and diverse arsenal of tactical and theater nuclear weapons, including nearly 1,000 short-range missiles and artillery shells, roughly 1,000 medium-range rockets, and bombers capable of carrying some 1,900 warheads, as well as chemical and biological weapons.⁵⁴

The 243 SS-20s, with three warheads each,⁵⁵ play a key role in Soviet nuclear forces in Europe as well as in the other theaters on the Eurasian land mass (see Fig. 2). The difference between the SS-20s and the older missiles they replaced is that they are highly accurate, mobile, and do not require protracted (detectable) fueling with liquid propellants. In other words, while their predecessors were both vulnerable and only accurate enough for "city-swapping" countervalue standoffs, the new arsenal is far more capable of surviving strategic strikes on the Soviet Union and carrying out the mission of accurately wiping out crucial NATO military targets.⁵⁶

The Soviets have also amassed a huge conventional force in the European theater, including 30 divisions of ground forces in Eastern Europe and another 67 in the European republics of the Soviet Union, totaling between 1 and 1.4 million men; an air force of some 1,350 fighter bombers, 2,050 interceptors, and 550 reconnaissance planes; and the bulk of the Soviets' force of 50,000 tanks, including 19,500 stationed directly in Eastern Europe.⁵⁸

We *refuse* to get sucked into the endless controversy over which side is ahead in Europe. There is no doubt that NATO's conventional inferiority has been vastly blown out of proportion in the West in order to create public opinion for increased Western European defense spending, on conventional weapons in particular, as well as to justify NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons. The NATO allies, including the U.S., have a larger population, slightly larger armed forces, greater gross national product, nearly double the annual military expenditures, and an edge in technologically sophisticated weaponry over the Warsaw Pact. On the other side, the Warsaw Pact has the advantage in numbers of some categories of weapons, and most importantly geography. Not only does it have a deeper rear for maneuver, and interior lines of supply, but the proximity of the Soviet Union means that the Warsaw Pact could bring a greater number of troops (by a

160:100 or 200:100 margin) to bear in the early stages of a war.⁵⁹ Again in nuclear warfare, accumulated forces already "on line" in crucial theaters of combat may play an unprecedentedly important role if means of military production and transport are quickly destroyed by nuclear weapons.

The point is that the Soviets *have* assembled an army with the potential – and mission – of defeating NATO forces and occupying Europe.

Some have seized upon the fact that Soviet forces fall short of the classic 3:1 preponderance assumed necessary for offensive invasion to conclude that Soviet forces in Europe are merely "defensive." But this is a dogmatic misreading of the current state of warfare in which the existence of nuclear weapons, as well as the speed and mobility of modern forces, transforms all such theoretical ratios. Imperialist military planners no doubt have new assessments of the necessary force ratios.

For instance, Soviet writings on theater warfare stress the close coordination between nuclear weapons (which they label "the basic means of destruction") and conventional weapons, and they *emphasize* the importance of surprise and rapid offensive actions in *gaining* a decisive military advantage.⁶⁰

Southwest Asia and China

By this point in the discussion, the assertions by students of asymmetries that the Soviets "never go outside their sphere" should sound a little hollow. After all, what has been documented is precisely that the Soviet military focus is on forging the means to *break out of that sphere*, in a context far different from the trail of localized incidents the apologists concentrate on. However, a brief sketch of Soviet military forces facing south and east helps hammer this overall point home from yet another side.

The invasion of Afghanistan, dismissed as either an anti-feudal intervention or Soviet border paranoia by the "lesser danger" school, is actually more a preview and preparation for what is to come than a self-contained episode. Besides whatever immediate goals and necessities spurred this imperial intervention, the net result is that the Soviets are hundreds of miles closer to the strategically vital waterways of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf and more completely flank both Iran and Pakistan. Further, the southeastern corner of Afghanistan is the site of a massive new military infrastructure, serving both as an airbase providing cover and offensive capabilities into the Indian Ocean and as a massive depot of supplies for any future moves south. This is neither accidental nor unrelated to strategic war preparations. The same can also be said for the 85,000-plus Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the twenty-four Soviet divisions, comprised of roughly 300,000 men, that face Iran and Turkey.⁶¹

The Soviets have also used Afghanistan as a proving ground for their new weaponry and tactics, paralleling U.S.

use of Israeli battle data. And the invasion itself also reflected a newly acquired deftness in Soviet offensive tactics, far in advance over the march into Czechoslovakia. It was a bold strike, tightly coordinating four motorized divisions with special assault detachments that took Kabul from within. The tactics used there, quite successfully at first, should help dispel the mythology of an inherently lethargic bureaucratic bear.⁶²

More importantly the lingering nature of the Afghan war itself has been used to refine training and tactics for the Soviet military as a whole. There has been a massive rotation of lower-level officers through the combat zone, and new regulations have been promulgated giving such veterans accelerated promotions to spread experience and the smell of gunpowder through the ranks.

Massive armed forces also face China. Here again we hear cries about Soviet "defense." We are not about to apologize for China's reactionary collaboration with U.S. imperialism, but those who raise this shrill cry of "defense" seem to have forgotten a bit of recent history. In 1969 it was the Soviet Union that massed a million troops on the Chinese border, provoked numerous border incidents, and threatened to launch a nuclear assault against then *revolutionary* China – an assault postponed due to the preparedness of the Chinese (and in part because of Nixon's warning to the Soviets to desist).

It is these same politics of imperialist bullying that the present Soviet military buildup continues, though now at a time when world war is more immediately on the agenda. Today the Soviets' goals vis-à-vis China are to neutralize whatever military actions the Chinese take in concert with the Western alliance, and to bludgeon the Chinese into the Soviet orbit in the process, without getting drawn into a protracted "two front" war or a draining occupation of heavily populated eastern China.

A look at the kinds of forces deployed on the two sides of the Sino-Soviet border indicates something of their purposes. While the Chinese do have nuclear weapons and a large army, they have neither the nuclear arsenal to take the Soviets head-on, nor mechanized units capable of deep thrusts into the Soviet Union. Western strategy is, essentially, to use China to force the Soviets to commit a large number of forces to Asia and to "keep Soviet forces along the Chinese border tied down," maximizing the U.S. bloc's freedom in other theaters.⁶³

On the other side, the Soviet Union has made a concerted effort to boost its capability to strike deep and hard against China, while not tying down the bulk of their forces – thus frustrating Western strategy. The Soviets have deployed 108 SS-20 missiles in the eastern theater, capable of strikes against Chinese nuclear installations, troop concentrations, and key military facilities (as well as use against Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, etc.), and there are reports that plans are afoot to deploy another 100 on top of that. The Soviets have also stationed between 50 and 60 nuclear-capable Backfire bombers near China and Japan. Whereas in 1967 it would have taken about three-fourths of the Soviet ballistic missile

force to wage a counterforce offensive against China, less than ten percent of the Soviet nuclear forces would be needed today.⁶⁴

A similar purpose guides the Soviet conventional buildup in East Asia. Since 1967 troop strength has doubled from twenty-five divisions to an estimated fifty-two today. While the bulk of this increase occurred during the period of border clashes with China, the Soviets have since then done a tremendous amount of work to make them more combat capable. Roadways and rail lines have been constructed linking this front with supply centers in the Soviet heartland; modern airfields, permanent barracks, command centers, and supply depots have been constructed; and a new command structure, giving Soviet forces more flexibility, was organized.⁶⁵ Because Soviet troops are highly mechanized – seven are armored divisions – and ill-suited for either stationary defense against masses of Chinese troops or for occupation of the country as a whole, there is speculation in the West that Soviet strategy is to strike rapidly at key targets deep inside China and/or perhaps to actually seize chunks of Western China (where the population is sparse and non-Han and where geography makes guerrilla war difficult), and to force capitulation on that basis.

The Soviet armed forces in East Asia are also directed against Japan. Despite its waning pacifist disguise, Japan is an imperialist nation with specific and growing military responsibilities in the U.S. bloc. These responsibilities include, among other things, defending itself and the sea lanes for one thousand miles around it. In addition to being a component part of the U.S. strategy of absorbing, tying down, and assaulting Soviet forces in Asia, this is designed to enable the West to bottle up the Soviet Pacific fleet in its home waters, as well as allow the U.S. to "swing" forces from the Pacific to key battle zones in Europe and the Middle East.

The Soviets have been sanguinely blunt about how they plan to deal with Japan and its contributions to the Western war effort. When Japan's Prime Minister Nakasone bragged that his country was an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," Andropov retorted that "there are no unsinkable aircraft carriers." If there were any lingering doubts about the implications of Andropov's threat, *Tass* soon dispelled them. Warning that participating in the U.S. military alliance would make Japan "a likely target" for Soviet nuclear missiles, *Tass* stated that "for such a densely populated, insular country as Japan," Soviet nuclear strikes "could spell a national disaster more serious than the one that befell it thirty-seven years ago."⁶⁶

Besides the increased numbers of SS-20 missiles, Backfire bombers, and troops already mentioned, the Soviet buildup in the Asian theater has included the strengthening of its Pacific fleet, which includes a major detachment of nuclear missile-carrying submarines stationed at the Sakhalin Island base of Flight 007 notoriety. And the Soviets have reinforced their bases on the Kuril Islands, off the northern coast of Hokkaido, with modern jet aircraft and increased numbers of troops.

The Soviets have a number of objectives here. Their forces

are designed to counter a U.S./Japanese blockade and enable the Soviet fleet to burst into the western Pacific to interdict vital Western shipping lanes, surround and perhaps cut off Japan, and disrupt U.S.-bloc operations in the theater as a whole. There is also much speculation that the Soviets aim to turn the Sea of Okhotsk into a "protected lake" where their nuclear submarines can operate with impunity.⁶⁷

Soviet Naval Forces

In the 1950s, the Soviet navy was a small force used for coastal defense. Today, the Soviet navy is truly a "blue water" navy, with 289 major combat ships, 350 attack submarines, 2 aircraft carriers, and 2 helicopter carriers. The U.S. bloc, however, remains dominant at sea. While the Soviets have more major combat ships and submarines than does the U.S., "the U.S. fleet is still superior in firepower, logistics and the ability to operate for extended periods," in part because of the Soviets' limited access to the oceans, and few ports of call around the world.⁶⁸

But the role of the Soviet navy is neither to simply challenge U.S. naval superiority ship for ship, nor to serve an identical function of preserving the links in a global oceanic alliance. Its design anticipates interrelated functions which combine both strategic nuclear missions with the distinctly naval mission of disrupting the oceanic links of the Western bloc.

A key function is to serve as a component part of the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear forces, as floating launching pads. The waters north of the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. line have been transformed over recent years into a regular haunt of Soviet nuclear-equipped submarines, to preserve a retaliatory capacity in the case that land-based ICBMs are destroyed or used. In addition, the USSR recently shifted submarine patrols closer to the eastern seaboard of North America, bringing their missiles within ten minutes striking time of the U.S. command centers, replicating U.S. capabilities for launching decapitating strikes.

Second, the fleets are designed to prevent the U.S. forces from using the oceans as a reliable link for supply and reinforcement during war, especially to reinforce Europe during land war, and to sever oil links to states like Japan.

And third, these forces are to serve the purpose of the defense of the Soviet Union itself. They are to destroy those Western naval forces poised to attack the Soviet Union from sea and especially the surface fleets are fashioned to protect the strategic nuclear weapons stationed under the waves by fighting U.S. submarine-killers.

Admiral Sergey G. Gorshkov, the father of the modern Soviet navy, once boasted that his fleet was designed to "force the United States to recognize that the ocean, which in the past protected the American continent from the revenge of the victims of its aggression, has no longer its old role as a protecting barrier." He elaborates the overall rationale for the transformation of the Soviet navy as follows:

"In the mid-1950s, in connection with the revolution in military affairs, the Central Committee of our party defined the path of fleet development, as well as the fleet's role and place in the system of Armed Forces in the country. The course taken was one which required the construction of an ocean going fleet, capable of carrying out offensive strategic missions. Submarines and naval aviation equipped with nuclear weapons had a leading place in the program...."

"For the first time in its history our Navy was converted, in the full sense of the word, into an offensive type of long-ranged armed force. Along with the strategic Rocket Forces, the Navy had become the most important weapon the Supreme Command had, one which could exert a decisive influence on the course of an armed struggle on theaters of military operations of vast extent.

"The fleet which for a long time could only carry on combat operations in seas directly next to its own coasts, and which had had experience in a continental war...now sailed the broad expanses of the oceans, and acquired the capacity to carry out strategic missions in the struggle with the strongest of naval enemies. This brought about a fleet requirement for new tactics, for a new operational art, and for a theory covering the strategic utilization of its forces...."⁶⁹

The increasing vulnerability of Soviet land-based missiles to U.S. counterforce attacks, plus a greater Soviet recognition of the possibility of a protracted nuclear conflict, has led them to place more and more emphasis on their nuclear navy, building it to a force of some 62 nuclear-powered submarines, armed with 950 nuclear missiles. Recently Gorshkov declared, "In response to the development by the United States of a strategic submarine missile system, directed above all at the Soviet Union, a similar system has been developed by us. This confronts any aggressor with the inevitability of retaliation."⁷⁰

One of the most significant previews of what is to come was a Soviet exercise centered in the North Atlantic called OKEAN '75. The maneuver started on April 8, 1975, when a unit of destroyers and cruisers left the Soviet military base on the Kola Peninsula for the north of Iceland. There, at the "chokepoints" marking the prospective NATO battleline to contain the Soviet navy within northern waters, the detachment linked up with forces emerging from the Baltic. Together they constituted a pincers movement for engagement in the North Atlantic, armed with ship-to-air missiles capable of both challenging American naval fighter squadrons and the transport planes designed to "big lift" U.S. forces to the combat in Central Europe.

Simultaneously, a battle group was exercising in the sea lanes connecting the northern and southern Atlantic — the group consisted of two missile-equipped destroyers from the Soviet base on Cuba meeting with components of both the

Baltic and Mediterranean Soviet fleets. Another destroyer, together with a submarine tender and a tanker, left the Mediterranean going south and was stationed off the coast of Guinea. Finally a string of submarines stretched through the Atlantic between these two concentration points north and south. This whole open-ocean maneuver was accompanied with landing operations along the Polish and East German Baltic coasts, testing the naval capacity to establish beachheads from Northern European seas, while the Mediterranean fleet was practicing maneuvers around Corsica and Sardinia designed to defeat NATO forces on that sea and for cutting off oil links from Northern Africa to NATO forces.

Alongside the OKEAN '75 maneuvers in the North Atlantic, there were simultaneous exercises in the Indian Ocean at the exit of the Persian Gulf and at the entrance to the Red Sea, including with maneuvers along the tanker route around Africa, at Madagascar, the Cape, and the West African coast. Naval units and air-based land support were deployed from Soviet bases in European Russia, Somalia, and Cuba. In short, the exercise practiced operating in every ocean under a unified command.⁷¹

This April, apparently similar, if yet larger, maneuvers were held involving over 250 warships, support vessels, submarines, amphibious craft, Backfire bombers, and long-range reconnaissance planes, in a number of areas around the world simultaneously.⁷²

Soviet Conduct in the Oppressed Nations

Then there is the question of Soviet activity in the oppressed nations, long considered a trump card by the "lesser evil" school because the Soviets have had less going on in the Third World, and the action they have been involved in has often been under the rubric of "supporting the national liberation struggle."

Our purpose here is not to review the Soviets' reactionary intrigues in the oppressed nations nor to fully analyze the imperialist content of their relationship with various clients — a task taken up elsewhere.⁷³ Suffice it to say that donning the cloak of friend of the national liberation movements doesn't make it so — witness the numerous imperialist "liberators" in the past. Here we want to focus on how the Soviet actions in the oppressed nations fit into their overall plans for waging global imperialist war.

Over the last decades the Soviet Union has struck out far beyond its border regions. Some twenty-seven countries outside the Warsaw Pact equip their armies with varying amounts of Soviet equipment, and thirteen are trained by Soviet missions. Twenty thousand Soviet military personnel are also stationed in nine countries outside the Pact (not counting Afghanistan!) and significant numbers of East Germans, Czechs, and of course Cubans are deployed in other countries as well.⁷⁴

Where the Soviets have tried to establish beachheads in the oppressed nations, they have concentrated on areas that

would be strategically useful in a global military conflict. As *Basic Principles* notes:

"[W]hile seeking generally to penetrate, dominate and plunder throughout the colonial (and neo-colonial) and dependent countries, the Soviet social-imperialists are concentrating much of their 'aid' in areas that are key in strategic-military terms — including the Middle East and parts of Africa — areas rich in strategic materials such as oil and/or crucial as springboards and buffers in preparation for and then in fighting a world war."⁷⁵

A few examples highlight the quality and importance of Soviet incursions around the world. Take the case of Vietnam, a country now tightly integrated into the Soviet bloc. Vietnam has a battle-tested army of one million men, which could be used to pin down U.S. allies, including China, and expand Soviet influence throughout Southeast Asia during wartime. The naval and air base at Cam Ranh Bay, which the Soviets apparently now directly administer, houses Soviet forces capable of hitting targets from southeast China to Singapore, and of projecting naval power into the sea lanes linking the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.⁷⁶

Similarly, their intervention in Angola has enabled the Soviets to establish a substantial military presence, via Cuban and Angolan troops, in the heart of Africa, and gain access to air bases and ports of call in an area rich in strategic minerals and contiguous to important shipping lanes in the Atlantic.⁷⁷

Ethiopia — one of the most highly militarized countries in the world, with 122 soldiers for every medical person, supporting a Cuban army, an ongoing antipopular war against Eritrea, and importing arms at a rate many times higher than any similarly primitive economy in the world — is well placed as a springboard for action against U.S. allies Somalia to the east or Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Egypt to the north.

Soviet actions in the Indian Ocean are a final case in point. Here the Soviets have centered their efforts on obtaining naval facilities from their client states: at Socotra, a Yemeni island in the Arabian Sea, the old British port of Aden in South Yemen, and Perim and the Dahlak Archipelago, islands belonging to Ethiopia. In addition, the Soviets are pressing for bases in Madagascar, on Diego Suarez, and the Maldives. Such bases would greatly strengthen Soviet ability to close or seize the Persian Gulf oil spigot as well as intercept those U.S. forces assigned to shift from the Pacific to either the Middle East or Europe during a war.⁷⁸

Ironically, much of this is noted by some who contend that the Soviet Union is not preparing for world war. Fred Halliday admits:

"[I]t is clear that the USSR has typically sought to extract strategic advantages from its interventions in the Third World, whether or not these were in the interest of the countries concerned themselves. In

most cases, its objectives have not gone much beyond refueling facilities for its naval forces and fishing fleets, or landing rights for its aircraft. There is no doubt that its worldwide intelligence and tracking capacities have been enlarged in the wake of its increased military assistance to the Third World Revolution in the past decade. But no permanent overseas bases have been set up by the Soviet Union anywhere outside the WTO [Warsaw Treaty Organization] itself. This record of relative caution may, however, yet be broken in Afghanistan.⁷⁹

We would like to ask Mr. Halliday, just what is the content of these "strategic advantages," the purpose of these "refueling facilities for its naval forces," "landing rights for its aircraft," etc.? Truly the outlook of some writers blinds them to the significance of the events they themselves document and describe!

In 1974, Minister of Defense Marshal A.A. Grechko spelled out the new Soviet approach to power projection:

"At the present stage the historic function of the Soviet Armed Forces is not restricted merely to their function in defending our Motherland and the other socialist countries. In its foreign policy activity the Soviet state actively and purposefully opposes the export of counter-revolution and the policy of oppression, supports the national liberation struggle, and resolutely resists imperialist aggression in whatever distant region of our planet it may appear.⁸⁰

It is more than symbolic that Soviet armed forces have now been issued "tropical uniforms" consisting of light materials, shorts, and short-sleeved shirts. We can assume that pith helmets were avoided for reasons of tact.

How Soviet Peace Proposals Serve War Preparations

In the past several years an escalating "peace war" parallel to the military preparations of both blocs has developed. Both sides have bombarded the world with sermons, admonitions, and a staccato of proposals for peace and disarmament. In this competition as well, many detect a fundamental difference between the two sides. The U.S. refused to ratify the SALT II treaty, wouldn't even come to the negotiating table for over a year following Reagan's election, and has consistently submitted proposals designed to elicit rejection. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, endorsed SALT II, tipped its hat to the freeze proposal, declared it would not be the first to use weapons, has urged treaties banning war in space and nuclear testing, and even proposed the simultaneous dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. By Soviet count, they have submitted over 150 proposals. Surely, our critics argue, there is some real

substance to these differences.

Indeed there is substance: the two contending blocs have different strengths and weaknesses, which are reflected in their differing proposals. The substance here is different *political* and military strategies for preparing for world war!

Arms-control negotiations are not antithetical to military strategy; rather they complement each other within the framework of the long-range goals of an imperialist state. Arms-control agreements can head off or restrict the development of the enemy's most threatening weapons, while preserving one's own most important weapons; arms control enables one to explore an opponent's force posture, as well as channel arms competition in favorable and controllable directions; and of course arms negotiations are a key political weapon for legitimizing one's own actions as "peaceful," while demonstrating that an opponent is "warlike."

The SALT I and II treaties are clear illustrations of the place of arms control in imperialist strategy. The SALT I treaty, signed in 1972, imposed strict limits on antiballistic missile systems and placed a five-year freeze on the deployment of ICBMs and SLBMs, while not limiting increases in warheads, bombers, or technological improvement of existing systems.

SALT I was useful to the U.S. in that it helped slow down the momentum of the Soviet arms buildup, particularly in heavy land-based missiles (the Soviets had expanded their ICBM force from 190 in 1964 to 1,527 in 1972),⁸¹ and it imposed some more general restraints upon Soviet expansion around the world at a time when the U.S., embroiled in Vietnam, was in no position to challenge the Soviet buildup head on. The treaty provided a political and strategic framework for the U.S. imperialists to regroup their forces, domestically and internationally, in order to take the Soviets on. Within this context, the treaty did not restrict the U.S.'s nuclear buildup, which at that time focused on increasing the number and accuracy of U.S. nuclear warheads rather than the number of missiles.⁸²

From the Soviet standpoint, SALT I also had important strategic benefits. It legitimized the Soviet claim to superpower status and opened new avenues for Soviet contention throughout the world, while enabling the Soviets to fluff their "peace loving" plumage. The freeze on nuclear missiles, and in particular the limitations imposed on antiballistic (ABM) systems, gave the Soviets added protection, albeit quite temporary, against the danger of a U.S. nuclear strike, something that had greatly worried them in the 1950s and much of the 1960s. While the Soviet Union had been the first to work on antimissile systems, it feared that once the U.S. undertook such an effort it would quickly outpace the Soviets, as it had in the ICBM race of the early 1960s. And like the U.S., the Soviets left themselves plenty of freedom to augment their nuclear arsenal. David Holloway notes:

"The Soviet Union negotiated the Interim Agreement with great care, so as not to prevent the deployment of a new generation of ICBMs in the mid-1970s. Competition in offensive strategic missiles has continued apace since 1972, in spite of the negotiations to con-

clude a second SALT treaty.⁸³

SALT II was essentially a continuation of this process: it limited each side to 2,250 delivery systems (about 200 more than the U.S. had at the time), while allowing vast increases in the number of warheads and doing nothing to restrict the arms race in such key fields as bombers and cruise missiles. It restricted that which no one intended to increase; and if anything, the SALT process provided both sides with a "peaceful" rationalization for continuing to refine their nuclear stockpiles. While SALT I and II have been in force, the Soviet arsenal has gone from 2,500 to somewhere over 7,000 warheads, while the U.S.'s has climbed from 5,700 to over 9,000!⁸⁴ Thus, for each side, the SALT process was a form of contention in a particular international framework; a form of preparing to violently recast that framework.

But what of the differences that have emerged since SALT II? Without getting into the details of the various negotiations, a couple of examples suffice to illustrate something of their substance.

Take the question of the Soviet ratification of SALT II, their tacit endorsement of the freeze, and their proposal to limit weapons in outer space.⁸⁵ The Soviets are facing a determined U.S. effort, crystallized in the Reagan five-year, \$1.5 trillion military budget to utilize the West's superior technical and industrial base to bring a whole new generation of nuclear weapons — including the MX, the cruise, the Trident D-5 missiles, the B-1 and Stealth bombers, and antimissile and antisatellite systems — on stream, and gain a decisive nuclear edge over the Soviet Union. In this situation, the Soviets have more to gain than lose by attempting to impose some limits on this prewar arms race. The observation that the Soviets make concrete proposals when they want to close a potentially disadvantageous branch of the arms race, and make "general disarmament" proposals when they want to actively pursue a line of armament, is correct.

Contention between rival imperialist blocs doesn't proceed evenly, but by lurches and spurts within and between the contending blocs. In reality, there is a tiny grain of truth to the Reagan refrain that a freeze today would mean "freezing Soviet superiority." While the Soviets clearly don't have strategic superiority over the U.S. bloc, a freeze today *would* mean freezing a balance of nuclear forces that evolved during the late 1960s and much of the 1970s when the Soviets had more freedom to rapidly build up their arsenal than did the U.S. It would thus freeze things at that point when the Soviets had lurches into rough parity — before the U.S. consummates its leap to the kind of superiority it would like to have at the onset of a third world war.

Of course, it is important to remember that while the Soviets have been churning out various peace proposals, and seeking to reap whatever political advantage they can therefrom, they have also been furiously striving to increase the size and strength of their nuclear arsenal, including trying to match the U.S. on certain key fronts such as star wars, cruise missiles, and ABM systems.

The Soviet supporters make hay over Brezhnev's June 15,

1982 statement that "the Soviet state solemnly declares the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics assumes an obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons." But anyone who believes that vampires will honor peacemongering declarations when vital interests are on the line needs his head examined. In fact Brezhnev put a gigantic escape clause in his "no first use" promise. Later in the statement he said: "In the conduct of its policy, the Soviet Union will naturally continue to take into account how the other nuclear powers act; whether they heed the voice of reason and follow our good example or push the world downhill."⁸⁶ In other words, "we've made this promise, but don't expect us to keep it if the other side provokes us." (Brezhnev's caveat completely continues the longstanding Soviet policy of making a distinction between "preventive" and "preemptive" nuclear strikes; in other words, the Soviets have always insisted they will never "preventively" strike out of the blue in an unprovoked assault, while they have consistently hammered home that they would exercise their right to "preemptively" strike if they had reason to believe that an American strike was imminent.)

The entire rhetorical exchange around "first use" in fact has a great deal to do with the struggle for public opinion in Europe, where in fact NATO's strategy has always been based on preparing a first (supposedly tactical) use of nuclear weapons to counteract Soviet conventional preponderances on the continent. As we have already discussed, the Soviets have much to gain politically by proposing a "no first use" pact (which they know the West must decline at present), while they could only gain something of an edge militarily if the West were somehow pressured into agreeing to it. By forcing the West to openly acknowledge their strategic preparations to use nuclear weapons first, and by making that policy part of the realm of public debate (especially in Europe), the Soviets have been able to go far in the last couple of years, strutting under a mantle of "reasonable peace lovers," toward fanning some political contradictions within the NATO countries and creating favorable political conditions for themselves, to be used in the context of war in the European theater.

The utter cynicism and hypocrisy of Brezhnev's "no first use" pledge is also obvious from the fact that until recently the Soviet Union not only hadn't run out such a plan, but sharply opposed revolutionary China's call in the 1960s for all powers to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons. This opposition stemmed in part from the fact that the Soviets were exercising nuclear blackmail and actually planning a preemptive nuclear strike against China; and from the fact that in the early '60s, before they attained strategic parity, Soviet strategy rested upon holding Europe nuclear hostage in order to prevent a U.S. attack!⁸⁷

In sum, the differences between U.S. and Soviet arms-control proposals reflect differing political and geographical necessities, as well as contention by both — albeit in somewhat different ways — for political advantage. These differences do not reflect some fundamentally different Soviet approach to war and peace.

Conclusion

The armed forces of the Soviet Union are thoroughly imperialist in character: they have been built on an imperialist basis and their central purpose today is to enable the Soviet Union to wage and win a war for the redivision of the world against a rival imperialist alliance. No other analysis comprehends the sum total of Soviet actions, in particular its military doctrine and military-strategic preparations. It is no exaggeration to say that the Soviet social-imperialists, along with the U.S. and its allies, threaten the very existence of humanity by their mutual reliance on massive nuclear arsenals totaling tens of thousands of warheads. Such a posture would be inconceivable for a revolutionary proletarian state.

The argument that the Soviet Union is the "lesser evil" today, that it is not really compelled to go to war, that its military preparations are simply for "defense," rests on a Kautskyite outlook of conciliation with imperialist chauvinism — in this case the USSR's. It blurs over, obscures, and just plain refuses to come to grips with the profound contradictions of imperialism that are driving the world toward war. It is striking that in the debate over the nature of the Soviet military, a whole host of secondary characteristics of the Soviet Union, of particular differences in the position of the two blocs, are seized upon — and clung to — in an attempt to paint the Soviets as fundamentally different than the U.S. imperialists. Ironically, this argument has been given new life today, when preparations for war are becoming more open on both sides. This isn't only because the U.S. has dramatically and blatantly accelerated its military buildup. It also stems from the fact that some have sought refuge from the real possibility of global nuclear war in the notion that the Soviet Union is different, less imperialist, more peaceful than the U.S.: hence war isn't really inevitable. In short, as international tensions have grown, the Soviet Union has begun to look better and better to some people; a "fear of sharp turns and a disbelief in them,"⁸ as Lenin put it, has found expression in the idea that somehow the Soviet Union isn't so bad after all.

At the same time, there are people who have been drawn to this position out of an honest desire to oppose the war preparations of their "own" governments in the West. Debunking NATO propaganda of an "evil empire" and the "Soviet Menace," this line of reasoning goes, serves to deflate any justification for U.S.-bloc military preparations, and therefore contributes to the prevention of war. This is not true. If the resultant analysis is false and misrepresents the actual dynamics unfolding around us, it can only find itself politically paralyzed as events develop, and add to disorientation and even capitulation. At best, the theory of a reactive, defensive, lesser-evil Soviet Union is an illusion that leads away from the revolutionary conclusions that need to be drawn from the present world situation. At worst, it is a call to enlist with one gang of cutthroats in a war against another.

Should war break out, imperialism will be gravely weakened and opportunities for revolution will arise in many parts of the globe. But what stands out even more from an

analysis of the war plans of the imperialists, West and East, is the need to face fully the implications of their murderous projects and on that basis to accelerate work to overthrow them before they can commit such monstrous crimes and unleash such unprecedented horror upon humanity.

Notes

¹ Leonid Brezhnev, "Central Committee Report to the 24th Congress of the CPSU [30 March 1971]," cited in *The Lie of a Soviet War Threat* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980), p. 10.

² Fred Halliday, "The Sources of the New Cold War," *New Left Review*, ed., *Exterminism and Cold War* (London: New Left Review, 1982), p. 319.

³ Roy Medvedev and Zhores Medvedev, "The USSR and the Arms Race," *Exterminism and Cold War*, p. 154.

⁴ Fred M. Kaplan, *Dubious Specter, A Skeptical Look at the Soviet Nuclear Threat* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1980); Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1983); and Edward P. Thompson, "Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization," *Exterminism and Cold War*, p. 6.

⁵ V.I. Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International, Collected Works [LCW]* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Vol. 21, p. 219.

⁶ See the Editors of *The Communist*, eds., *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist? Essays Toward the Debate on the Nature of Soviet Society* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983), and *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist?, Part II: The Question is Joined, Raymond Lotta vs. Albert Szymanski* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983).

⁷ Herbert Block, "The Economic Basis of Soviet Power," in Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 145, 170.

⁸ Halliday, "The Sources of the New Cold War," p. 295.

⁹ Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, LCW*, Vol. 22, p. 295.

¹⁰ "New NATO Study Says Spending by Soviets on Military Has Slowed," *New York Times*, January 30, 1983.

¹¹ Figures from Bruce Russett and Bruce Blair, eds., *Progress in Arms Control? Readings from Scientific American* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1979), p. 5, supplemented by material from U.S. Defense Department, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agency [U.S.A.C.D.A.]*, and *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. Soviet data since 1966 are American CIA estimates. (See U.S.A.C.D.A., *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1968-1977* [Washington, D.C.: U.S.A.C.D.A., 1979]. We have employed lower estimates in the portrayal here of Soviet figures, including recent reassessments by Western intelligence cited in footnote 10. The question of absolute figures and their comparison remains a contentious problem in the analysis of war preparation. There are no "disinterested observers" with first-hand access to data; all figures on the Soviet Union flow from either the Soviet government or from Western intelligence — and neither is particularly trustworthy. As just one example: the Soviet Union releases only one figure for military expenditures annually, covering gross costs. Over the last decade they simply assert a leveling off of their absolute expenditures; in fact, they even insist that their military expenditures have gone through a subtle, politically attractive, decline. Needless to say, this claim is absurd on the face of it. They can't both be claiming to roughly match the United States in military power (which is overall true) and also claim to be winding down

their military effort.

For the purposes of this article, this controversy is fortunately avoidable. Our arguments (unlike the arguments of our opponents) do not rest on comparative bean counting and do not really require the construction of an estimation of military expenditures by both sides. The reader will note that we have consciously kept the use of absolute figures at a minimum. When it proved unavoidable we used the only available sources (i.e., largely Western estimates). However, even there we have largely kept to those figures and estimates for which there should be little controversy.

¹² Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile and Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, *Basic Principles For the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and For the Line of the International Communist Movement* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1981), p. 6, paragraphs 30-31.

¹³ See, for example, "Soviet Arms Technology Has Shown Steady Gains," *New York Times*, December 8, 1980.

¹⁴ N.S. Khrushchev, *On Peaceful Coexistence* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), pp. 148-51, 160-63; excerpts cited in Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, eds., *The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), p. 164. This book by the Scotts is particularly useful for an investigation of Soviet military doctrine because, unlike writings by Western military theorists that simply quote snippets of Soviet works, this translates extensive excerpts of the Soviet writers themselves, with abbreviated and separated commentary by the Scotts. When using this and similar collections we have attempted to make sure, to the extent possible, that Soviet doctrinal ideas are not quoted here in a way that distorts their actual point and violates the context in which they were originally presented.

¹⁵ Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon, *America in Decline: An Analysis of the Developments Toward War and Revolution, in the U.S. and Worldwide, in the 1980s* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1984), p. 150.

¹⁶ Lenin, "Socialism and War," *Lenin on War and Peace, Three Articles* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), pp. 6-7; and Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, LCW*, Vol. 28, p. 286.

¹⁷ V.D. Sokolovskiy, ed., *Military Strategy*, first edition (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1962), pp. 237-39; cited in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, p. 175.

¹⁸ Bob Avakian, *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1979), p. 42.

¹⁹ Mao Tsetung, *On Protracted War, Selected Works (MSW)* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 143.

²⁰ Sokolovskiy, *Military Strategy*, p. 176.

²¹ For instance, one Soviet military publication noted: "Nuclear missiles have altered the relationship of tactical, operational and strategic acts of the armed conflict. If in the past the strategic end-result was secured by a succession of sequential, most often long-term, efforts [and] comprised the sum of tactical and operational successes, strategy being able to realize its intentions only with the assistance of the art of operations and tactics, then today, by means of powerful nuclear strikes, strategy can attain its objectives directly" *Methodological Problems of Military Theory and Practice* [Moscow: Ministry of Defense of the USSR, 1969], p. 288; cited in Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, July 1977, pp. 29-30.

²² On the importance of economic strength in previous wars, Henry Kissinger noted that, "we have won two world wars by outproducing the opponent..." (Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* [New York: W.W. Norton, 1969], p. 16). And the changes in warfare in this regard, wrought by nuclear weapons was indicated by one Soviet strategist who insisted that, "The first law of war is that the course and outcome of war... depends primarily on the correlation of available, strictly military forces of the combatants at the beginning of the war... the beginning of a war can have a decisive effect on the outcome" (V. Ye. Savkin, *Operational Art and Tactics* [Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1972], p. 89); cited in Robert Kennedy,

"Soviet Theater-Nuclear Forces: Implications for NATO Defense," *Orbis*, Summer 1981, p. 339.

²³ Kaplan, *Dubious Specter*, pp. 15-24; for an example of the CPD approach see Pipes, "Why The Soviet Union Thinks."

²⁴ David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 60.

²⁵ This logic was spelled out explicitly by the U.S. government's *Fiscal Year 1984-88 Defense Guidance*, which stated that the U.S. military should have enough nuclear weapons "so that the United States would never emerge from a nuclear war without nuclear weapons while still being threatened by enemy nuclear weapons" ("New Atom-War Strategy Confirmed," *New York Times*, June 4, 1982).

²⁶ "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War," *New York Times*, May 30, 1982. The number of warheads was given in Thomas B. Cochran, William M. Arkin, and Milton M. Hoening, *Nuclear Weapons Data Book, Vol. 1: U.S. Nuclear Forces and Capabilities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Natural Resources Defense Council Book, Ballinger Publishing Company, Harper and Row), cited in "Deception, Self-Deception and Nuclear Arms," *New York Review of Books*, March 11, 1984, pp. 3, 15.

²⁷ John D. Steinbruner, "Nuclear Decapitation," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1981-82, p. 19. And according to the *New York Times*, the U.S.'s "Nuclear strategy would be based on what is known as decapitation, meaning strikes at Soviet political and military leadership and communications lines" ("Pentagon Draws Up," May 30, 1982). Steinbruner also notes: "Given the vulnerabilities of current forces and the strains to which they are subject, a full two-sided alert in crisis must prudently be considered tantamount to war and should not be undertaken for reasons less powerful than those required to justify war itself" (p. 28). This hair-trigger situation is not fundamentally the result of the kinds of weapons both powers have armed themselves with; in fact, the weapons and the kind of instability Steinbruner notes are themselves a reflection, indeed a concentration, of the imperialist rivalry that is the source of war. However, on this basis, the accelerating arms race does develop destabilizing dynamics of its own.

²⁸ See John Steinbruner, "Launch Under Attack," *Scientific American*, January 1984, pp. 37-47.

²⁹ Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 37. Holloway argues that the Soviet stress on preemption may have resulted, in part, from the fact that in the early '60s their strategic inferiority made them vulnerable to a U.S. first strike, and now that they have attained parity, "strategic thinking has placed less emphasis on the idea of preemption" (p. 57). No doubt their vulnerabilities were a factor in their early stress on striking first, and that since then Soviet thinking on nuclear war has evolved to encompass a wider range of scenarios; however, the objective pressures to strike first, as we have noted, remain despite parity, and thus it would be wrong to conclude that Soviet thinking on this question has changed fundamentally.

³⁰ V.I. Zemskov, *Military Thought*, No. 7 (July 1969), excerpts cited in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, pp. 211-212.

³¹ Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 60.

³² Cockburn, *Soviet Military Machine*, p. 197.

³³ G.A. Arbatov, "The American Strategic Debate: A Soviet View," *Survival*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (May/June 1974), pp. 133-34; cited in Desmond Ball, "Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?," *Adelphi Papers* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Autumn 1981), No. 169, p. 32.

³⁴ Medvedev and Medvedev, "The USSR and the Arms Race," p. 168.

³⁵ For example, a 1975 Department of Defense study, which vastly underrates the number of casualties in a nuclear conflict, estimates that an attack against only military targets in the U.S. would kill 21.7 million people (Report from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The Effects of Limited Nuclear Warfare*, September 18, 1975, p. 9;

cited in Ball, "Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?", p. 27).

³⁶ U.S. plans for fighting "limited" nuclear wars were also designed to exploit the U.S.'s technological superiority. Henry Kissinger expresses, in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, his complaint that the U.S. hadn't fully exploited its nuclear superiority against the Soviet Union: "For a nation with a superior industrial capacity and a broader base of technology, it will be strategically most productive to use weapons sufficiently complex to exploit its industrial advantage, sufficiently destructive so that manpower cannot be substituted for technology, yet discriminating enough to permit the establishment of a significant margin of superiority." And: "It would seem that the weapons systems appropriate for limited nuclear war meet these requirements. . . . It is much less certain that with its [the Soviet Union's - M.E.] inferior industrial plant it could compete with us in developing the diversified capability for a limited nuclear war. . . ." "It is no wonder that Soviet propaganda has been insistent on two themes: there is 'no such thing' as limited nuclear war, and 'ban the bomb.' Both themes, if accepted, deprive us of flexibility and undermine the basis of the most effective United States strategy" (Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, pp. 161, 164).

³⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Combat Forces Press, 1953), p. 16; cited in Roman Kolkowicz, "U.S. and Soviet Approaches to Military Strategy: Theory vs. Experience," *Orbis*, Summer 1981, p. 310.

³⁸ Cited in Ball, "Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?", p. 34.

³⁹ Cited in "Soviet Marshal Warns the U.S. on its Missiles," *New York Times*, March 17, 1983.

⁴⁰ Kaplan, *Dubious Specter*, p. 16.

⁴¹ Medvedev and Medvedev, "The USSR and the Arms Race," p. 168.

⁴² Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 41.

⁴³ Reagan, *New York Times*, October 2, 1981; Brezhnev, *Pravda*, October 20, 1981; Ogarkov, *Kommunist*, No. 10 (1981), p. 85; all cited in Holloway, pp. 49, 53. For example, two weeks before the MX missile vote of May 1983, Reagan pointedly told the West German magazine *Bunte* that he did not believe that a limited nuclear war in Europe is possible, thereby sparking headlines in the U.S. and striking a peace-loving pose necessary to usher the MX program through its birth pains. Later, Reagan, in his 1984 State of the Union message noted for the record: "A nuclear war cannot be won, and must never be fought."

⁴⁴ "Bob Avakian on Radio WRRF: World War, Nuclear Weapons, and Revolution," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 189 (January 21, 1983), p. 3.

⁴⁵ Kautsky and Neymarck quoted in Lenin, *Imperialism, LCW*, Vol. 22, pp. 289, 288.

⁴⁶ Mao, *On Protracted War*, SW, Vol. 2, p. 156.

⁴⁷ All three quotes cited in Cockburn, *Soviet Military Machine*, p. 214.

⁴⁸ Ogarkov, quoted in Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 54; Khrushchev, quoted in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, pp. 163-164.

⁴⁹ Much of this information is drawn from Cockburn, *Soviet Military Machine*, pp. 230-41.

⁵⁰ Marshal N.V. Ogarkov, "The 'Soviet Threat': Myth and Reality," in *The Lie of a Soviet War Threat*, p. 88.

⁵¹ Zemskov, cited in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, pp. 213-14.

⁵² These figures are derived from a major article in the West German magazine *Spiegel*, April 11, 1983, pp. 154-71. Because this article is arguing that U.S. military estimates exaggerate the "Soviet threat," it more or less confines itself to conservative estimates and to military forces whose existence are hardly disputed by either East or West.

⁵³ See S.V. Shtrik, *Military Thought*, No. 1 (January 1968); excerpted in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, pp. 202-205.

⁵⁴ Kurt Gottfried, Henry W. Kendall, and John M. Lee, "No 'First Use' of Nuclear Weapons," *Scientific American*, March 1984, p. 36.

⁵⁵ "New Bases for Missiles in Siberia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1983.

⁵⁶ "New Bases for Missiles in Siberia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1983. According to one U.S. defense analyst: "In 1971 Marshal Grechko detailed Soviet targeting priorities for their longer-range theater-nuclear forces. At the top of the list were U.S. Pershing missile bases, nuclear-capable NATO air force units, tanker bases, British and French nuclear submarines, tactical-nuclear weapons storage sites, and U.S. aircraft carriers. These targets were followed by major ports, military bases and barracks, nuclear reactors, command-and-control centers, and the transportation supply net" (Grechko, *On Guard for Peace*, cited in Kennedy, "Soviet Theater-Nuclear Forces," p. 343).

⁵⁷ Figure 2 is from *NATO and the Warsaw Pact Force Comparisons*, a booklet put out by NATO, p. 57.

⁵⁸ "Soviet's Military Buildup a Major Issue for Reagan," *New York Times*, December 7, 1980; and "Soviet Armed Forces Exhibiting Weakness in Several Key Areas," *New York Times*, December 9, 1980.

⁵⁹ A roughly accurate estimate is that NATO, including the U.S., is larger than the Warsaw Pact in population, 575 million to 375 million; GNP, 5.77 trillion to 2.02 trillion; numbers in the armed forces, 4.9 million to 4.76 million; in addition to having the advantage in sophisticated weaponry, including jet aircraft and precision-guided munitions. The Warsaw Pact, on the other hand, has the advantages of geography and a 264:100 superiority in heavy tanks; 207:100 in artillery and rocket launchers; 379:100 in surface-to-air guided missiles; and 177:100 in helicopters. The Warsaw Pact also has more troops in Europe itself (excluding the Soviet Union), between 830,000 (the Soviet estimate) and 980,000 (the American estimate) to NATO's 793,000 troops (Gottfried, Kendall, and Lee, "No First Use," pp. 34, 38, 39, 40; figures for troops in Europe from "West Discloses New Plans for Troop Cuts," *New York Times*, July 9, 1982).

⁶⁰ V. Ye. Savkin writes: "[T]he offensive is the basic form of combat actions, since only by a decisive offensive conducted at a high tempo and to a great depth is total defeat of the enemy achieved." And further, that through "the stunning effect of surprise attacks by nuclear and conventional weapons and decisive offensive operations by troops, the enemy's capabilities are sharply lowered. . . the correlation of forces changes immediately. . . . He may panic and his morale will be crushed" (Savkin, *Operational Art and Tactics*, pp. 248, 232-33; cited in Kennedy, "Soviet Theater-Nuclear Forces," pp. 339, 340).

⁶¹ "Soviet Armed Forces Exhibiting Weakness," *New York Times*, December 9, 1980.

⁶² See Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy*, pp. 81-83.

⁶³ "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy," *New York Times*, May 30, 1982.

⁶⁴ "New Bases for Missiles in Siberia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1983, for figures on number of SS-20s; "Soviet Buildup in Far East Causing U.S. Concern," *New York Times*, January 30, 1984, for figures on number of Backfire bombers; and Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy*, p. 95, for percentage of missiles needed.

⁶⁵ "Soviet's Military Buildup," *New York Times*, December 7, 1980, and "Soviet Buildup in Far East," January 30, 1982, for figures on number of troops. See also Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy*, pp. 89-107; and Robert P. Berman and John C. Baker, *Soviet Strategic Forces: Requirements and Responses* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁶ "Soviet Use of Nuclear Terror," *San Francisco Examiner*, February 6, 1983, Section B.

⁶⁷ "Soviets in Asia: Navy Buildup in the Pacific," *New York Times*, December 30, 1982; and Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan's Search for

Strategy," *International Security*, Winter 1983-84, pp. 152-79, for some discussion of Soviet aims and military buildup vis-à-vis Japan.

⁶⁸ "Soviet's Military Buildup," *New York Times*, December 7, 1980.

⁶⁹ S.G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, Russian edition, published in Moscow in 1976, p. 106, excerpted in *Soviet Naval Strategy*, Dirk Hennings and Alexandra Herrmann (London: Democratic Defense Pamphlet, No. 2, September 1977) p. 29; and Gorshkov, *Naval Collections*, No. 2 (February 1967), pp. 20-21; cited in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, pp. 182-85.

⁷⁰ Cited in Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 60, for figures on submarine-launched missiles; Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, "The Silent Chase - Tracking Soviet Submarines," *New York Times Magazine*, January 1, 1984, for figures on number of missile-carrying submarines; and Gorshkov, quoted in "Soviet Union's 'Retaliatory' Sub System," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 26, 1982.

⁷¹ The source for this description of OKEAN '75 is an article which originally appeared in the West Berlin magazine *Befreiung*, No. 9 (1977), republished as "Soviet Naval Strategy," by Democratic Defense in pamphlet form. The sources cited for the above information are from more available publications: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 20, 1975; *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, February 20, 1976; *Hsinhua*, April 30, 1975; *Die Welt*, March 19, 1977 and February 17, 1976. Also, the Tokyo newspaper *Mainichi Daily News* contains a retrospective analysis of OKEAN '75.

⁷² "Soviet Union is Holding Big Naval Games," *New York Times*, April 4, 1984; "The Case of the Vanishing War Games," *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 251, p. 5.

⁷³ See, for example, Nicholas Cummings, "Angola: A Case Study in Soviet Neocolonialism," *Revolution*, Spring 1984; Santosh K. Mehotra and Patrick Clawson, "Soviet Economic Relations with India and other Third World Countries," *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist, Essays Toward the Debate*; Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, *Cuba, the Evaporation of a Myth* (Chicago: RCP Publications, Third Printing, 1983); "The Role of Social-Imperialism in Colombia," *Cuadernos El Trabajador*, No. 4 (October 1982), reprinted in *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 182 (November 26, 1982), p. 8; and Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1984), Chapter 6: "The Army and the Soviet Connection: 1973-78," pp. 68-77, reprinted in *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 168 (August 20, 1982), pp. 8-10.

⁷⁴ John Erikson and E.J. Feuchtwanger, eds., *Soviet Military Power and Performance* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979), p. 47; "Soviet Armed Forces," *New York Times*, December 9, 1980

⁷⁵ *Basic Principles*, p. 6, para. 29.

⁷⁶ See "Soviet Buildup in the Far East," *New York Times*, January 30, 1984.

⁷⁷ Cummings, "Angola: A Case Study," p. 43.

⁷⁸ "U.S. Naval Buildup is Challenging Soviet Advances in Asia and Africa," *New York Times*, April 19, 1981.

⁷⁹ Halliday, "The Sources of the New Cold War," p. 310.

⁸⁰ A.A. Grechko, "The Leading Role of the CPSU in Building the Army of a Developed Socialist Society," *Problems of History of the CPSU*, May 1974; translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, cited in Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War*, p. 243, emphasis added.

⁸¹ Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, pp. 58-60.

⁸² Kissinger, for instance, writes: "Detente did not prevent resistance to Soviet expansion; on the contrary, it fostered the only possible psychological framework for such resistance. . . . If the Vietnam war had taught us anything it was that a military confrontation could be sustained only if the American people were convinced there was no other choice." And: "SALT I caused us to give up not a single offensive weapons program. The freeze was essential, indeed, if we were ever going to catch up. And we followed SALT I with a substantial modernization of our strategic forces" (Kissinger, *Years of*

Upheaval [Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982], pp. 235, 237, 257).

⁸³ Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 47.

⁸⁴ Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, pp. 58-60.

⁸⁵ "Brezhnev's Statement," *New York Times*, June 16, 1982; "Andropov Offers Ban on Space Arms," *New York Times*, April 28, 1983.

⁸⁶ "Brezhnev's Statement," *New York Times*, June 16, 1982.

⁸⁷ For example, Holloway notes that during the early 1960s the Soviets placed primary emphasis on deploying theater nuclear weapons, 750 of them compared to only 224 intercontinental systems by 1965. He also writes that:

"In September 1961, during the Berlin crisis, *Izvestia* carried a report of an interview Khrushchev had given the *New York Times*. This said that 'Khrushchev believes absolutely that when it comes to a showdown, Britain, France and Italy would refuse to join the United States in a war over Berlin for fear of their absolute destruction. Quite blandly he asserts that these countries are, figuratively speaking, hostages to the USSR and a guarantee against war.' Khrushchev is reported to have told the British Ambassador during the same Berlin crisis that all Western Europe was at his mercy: six hydrogen bombs would annihilate the British Isles, while nine others would take care of France" (Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, pp. 66, 67).

A final note on the hypocrisy of the Soviet Union's 'no first use,' pledge. It could well be that it is the Soviets who end up initiating the use of nuclear weapons - at sea. The fact that the Soviets are at a disadvantage on the seas, combined with the importance of controlling them - albeit for different reasons for each side - may impel the Soviets to resort to nuclear strikes against Western naval forces in order to neutralize them and prevent them from destroying or bottling up the Soviet navy. Certainly Soviet military doctrine stress on both the importance of preemption and the role of nuclear weapons in 'changing the balance of forces' supports this possibility. Further, some Western military analysts write that, "[N]uclear weapons have been closely integrated with a general strategy of sea denial and with a set of battle tactics predicated on winning at sea with less." That this possibility is taken seriously in the U.S. was indicated by the fact that the Pentagon's *Fiscal Year 1984-88 Defense Guidance* paper noted that, according to the *New York Times*, "the Soviet Union might be tempted to start a nuclear attack on the United States Navy in the belief that the conflict could be limited to the sea." The *Guidance Paper* then went on to state specifically: "Therefore it will be United States policy that a nuclear war beginning with Soviet attacks at sea will not necessarily remain limited to the sea" (Gordon H. McCormick and Mark E. Miller, "American Seapower at Risk: Nuclear Weapons in Soviet Naval Planning," *Orbis*, Summer 1981, p. 351; "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy," *New York Times*, May 30, 1982).

⁸⁸ Lenin, *Collapse of the Second International*, LCW, Vol. 21, p. 243.