

6249

**SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY
AND IDEOLOGY**

E 22

INTERDOC

6249
E22

RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN



1 208 522 6

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Ideology	1
Ideology and communism as seen through Soviet eyes	1
Ideology and foreign policy as seen through Soviet eyes	4
Some Western views on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy	6
Conclusions	10
Bibliography	14



International Documentation and Information Centre
(INTERDOC)

Van Stolkweg 10, The Hague

The Netherlands

1972

**Schenking van de Leidse
Studentenvereniging
voor Internationale
Betrekkingen (SIB)**

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND IDEOLOGY

by C. C. van den Heuvel

Ideology

The purpose of this article is to examine the present-day significance of communist ideology for Soviet foreign policy. Whereas in the past communist ideology appeared to exert a great influence, its importance since World War II seems to have diminished considerably. There are even a number of observers who have written off the role of ideology altogether. In contrast, however, there are also those who regard ideology as anything but a spent force and who attach the greatest importance to the role it plays in the formulation of foreign policy.

It is difficult to think of any concept over which there is so much misunderstanding and confusion as "ideology". For some ideology is nothing more than a collection of theoretical ideas, for others it takes on the significance of a religion. One man rates it as highly positive, another as utterly negative. The negative evaluation stresses the unscientific nature of ideology, its rigidity, tendency towards simplification and its encouragement of fanaticism, absolutism and totalitarianism. The positive evaluation, on the other hand, sees ideology as a philosophy of life - not merely a doctrine but a plan for the future and a guide to practical action. The best approximation for the concept of ideology would appear to be an attitude which takes account not only of the particular but also the broader implications, not only the positive but also the negative evaluation, not only the rational but also the irrational factors. An approximation of this kind would also appear to offer the best chances of gaining a deeper insight into the subject under discussion.

Ideology and communism as seen through Soviet eyes

According to pure Marxism productive forces and productive relations together form the economic substructure of society, while it is circumstances, above all else, which determine the productive forces superstructure, i.e. philosophy, politics, law, morality, religion and the arts. Ideology - as a system of views, ideas and concepts - is interrelated with all the

- 2 -

foregoing and thus constitutes an essential part of the superstructure. Ideology is not an independent phenomenon but a reflection of the social situation from which it derives and upon which it depends. Changes in the productive relations bring changes in ideology.

Increasingly, however, Marxism-Leninism came to regard ideology as possessing not merely a derivative, but also an independent, significance. Ideology even came to be seen as a potentially important factor in bringing about change in the economic superstructure. This growing appreciation of the role of ideology was expressed in a wide variety of ways, particular emphasis being laid on its significance for the implementation of the class struggle, the revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism and communism. In recent years ideology has increasingly come to be regarded as an important weapon in the struggle against imperialism.

"In our struggle against bourgeois ideology the weapon we possess is a powerful one: Marxist-Leninist ideology. Its strength we know only too well. And we see how our ideas are spreading all the time among the masses. Precisely at this time Marxism-Leninism is on the offensive and it is our duty to launch this offensive on an ever-broadening front. Now, as never before, we must be mindful of Lenin's warning that if the communists show any sign of faltering in their ideological task or become in any way alienated from this task, then the greater are the risks of bourgeois ideological penetration. Let it be repeated that the struggle against the pernicious influence of bourgeois ideology on the workers forms an important spearhead in the task of world communism.

..... It is the duty of the communists to march in the vanguard of the battle against imperialism on all fronts, including the ideological front".¹

On the Soviet side the awareness of the dangers confronting ideology are only too real and various methods are being resorted to in an attempt to avert these dangers.

The first is the adoption of a more flexible attitude to in-

creasingly prevalent views on official doctrines. Thus it was that in the matter of the relationship between sub-structure and superstructure a discussion in several Soviet newspapers during the mid-1960s encouraged readers to ask whether the real issue here was not in fact the end of historical materialism. Indeed there is a growing body of opinion on this subject that in fact the superstructure determines the substructure, consciousness determines material existence, the subjective factor determines the objective factor. Similarly it is the Party which determines production and not vice versa.

Secondly, warnings were issued against capitalist and imperialist attempts to undermine ideology by subversive activities. The Western desire for détente which had been finding expression for a number of years already was eagerly seized on in this connection.

"Apart from military adventures, imperialism is devoting increasing effort to a subversive political and ideological struggle against the socialist countries, against the communist and entire democratic movement. This lies at the root of the so-called policy of bridge building, the name given by the defenders of imperialism to their schemes for ideological and other subversive activities against world socialism".²

Thirdly the Soviet leaders realized that the general move away from ideology, a phenomenon which emerged in the Sixties, was not something from which their country could remain aloof. Not only among the broad masses but even among the party cadres a declining interest in ideology could be detected and this process has continued. Obviously this is a source of serious concern to those same leaders, not least because they realize that ideology is the most important justification of their being in power. It is not surprising, therefore, that over the last few years growing emphasis has been placed on the great importance of ideology and that all kinds of attempts have been made to keep interest in ideology alive. The following quotations provide typical examples of this:

"The ideological education of every Soviet citizen was, and continues to remain, the most important task of all".³

"At the core of the Party's entire ideological-educational work is the inculcation of the communist view of life on the broadest possible masses of the workers and their education in the ideas of Marxism-Leninism".⁴

"The Party shall continue to work tirelessly for the consolidation of this source of our strength - the indestructible ideological-political unity of the Soviet people".⁵

Ideology and foreign policy as seen through Soviet eyes

On 30 March 1970 at the 24th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev summed up Soviet foreign policy as follows:

"The objectives of Soviet foreign policy, as formulated at the 23rd Party Congress of the CPSU, consist in working with the other socialist countries to secure favourable international conditions for the building of socialism and communism; in consolidating the unity and solidarity of the socialist countries, their friendship and fraternity; in supporting the national liberation movements and promoting all-round cooperation with the young developing countries; in consistently defending the principles of peaceful coexistence between states having different social systems and finally in steadfastly resisting the aggressive forces of imperialism and preserving mankind from a new world war".⁶

The Soviets point repeatedly to the close links between foreign policy and ideology. They draw attention to the existence of various ideological currents in the world, each trying to assert itself. They believe that relationships, contradictions and conflicts between these ideologies are complicated and exert a direct influence on foreign policy.

The basis of Soviet foreign policy towards the "capitalist" world is "peaceful coexistence". However, this does not imply ideological coexistence but precisely the opposite: ideological struggle. For years this ideological struggle has been the subject of many speeches and publications by the Soviets. There is probably no publication which sums up this struggle more lucidly (from the communist point of view) than a book by

Colonel I.A. Seleznev published in the Soviet Union in 1964 by the Ministry of Defence under the title "War and Ideological Struggle". The main points from this book have been translated and published (in German) by the "Schweizerisches Ost Institut" in Berne. Part of the introduction is quoted below.

"..... An inexorable, uncompromising struggle is currently being waged between communist and bourgeois ideology. A knowledge and correct application of the regularities of war and a mastery of the principles and rules of warfare are the preconditions for victory in war. An additional and crucial prerequisite for the victory of communist ideology is a knowledge of the regularities of the ideological struggle and a mastery of the methods and means of propaganda. One of the special characteristics of the ideological front is the fact that, in all their ramifications, the ideological struggles never weaken. Between the two social systems there is not a single area which can be exempted from the inexorable ideological struggle. Wherever diplomatic or commercial relations are fostered between the capitalist and socialist countries, wherever there are contacts in the fields of science, the arts, sports etc., everywhere there is this head-on collision between two opposing worlds, two ideologies. There is no such thing as peaceful co-existence in the ideological field and there never can be. Between socialism and capitalism there can be no ideological cease-fire.....". 7

The book referred to above was published in 1964, but since then its message has been repeated in many ways and on many occasions. Again and again the point is made that, while peaceful coexistence may consist in avoiding wars and promoting economic competition and exchanges in a wide variety of fields, it consists equally in sustaining international class struggle and ideological irreconcilability. These last two factors are highlighted in a book by V. N. Egorov, published in Moscow in 1971 under the title "Peaceful Coexistence and the Revolutionary Process". The passages quoted below are taken from Chapter VI, "Peaceful Coexistence and the Building of Socialism":

"..... Peaceful coexistence does not mean the preserv-

ation of the social status quo, or any relaxation in the ideological battle. Peaceful coexistence is war between socialism and capitalism in all fields of social economic relations. It assumes a struggle between States with different social systems, but excludes actual war between them. It is a specific form of class war in the international arena.....

..... Peaceful coexistence is a specific form of the class war between socialism and capitalism, having a number of peculiar features. One of them is that the battle between the two world systems goes on simultaneously in all the basic spheres of social life - economic, political and ideological. Another peculiarity is that this struggle manifests itself through inter-State relations and is carried on by a State-organized working class against a State-created monopolistic bourgeoisie. A third feature is that the battle takes place in the world arena without the use of weapons. It is waged on a constructive and not a destructive basis, which corresponds with the basic needs of all nations.....". 8

Some Western views on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy

Western Sovietologists have always been preoccupied by this question and views on the subject vary greatly. The degree of influence exerted by ideology is interpreted variously as being anything from considerable to insignificant. In the light of this, an attempt has been made to reproduce below a number of existing views on the subject.

Among those who regard the role of ideology as highly influential is Zbigniew Brzezinski. In an article in which he describes communist ideology as the key to Soviet policy he writes:

"It is precisely because the ideology is both a set of conscious assumptions and purposes and part of the total historical, social and personal background of the Soviet leaders that it is so pervading and so important. For the moment possibly the least hazardous conclusion could be to suggest that, while the pressures for the erosion of ideology are gradually building up,

the "conservative" forces of the ideology are still well entrenched and have not lost their capacity to exert influence.....

Ideology gives the leaders a framework for organizing their vision of political developments, it sets limits on the options open to them as policy-makers; it defines immediate priorities and longer-range goals; and it shapes the methods through which problems are handled". 9

Brzezinski does not see the erosion phenomenon as heralding the end of ideology:

"This, however, does not mean the end of ideology, if by 'end' is meant the conventional notion that eventually the Russian élite will become similar to its pragmatic Western counterpart. For the time being, the erosive tendencies noted above are counteracted by the persisting measures of indoctrination, by the fact that some of the basic ideological tenets have penetrated Soviet society and have become accepted by the people, and by the sense of historical momentum at home and abroad. Once an ideology is embodied in a party bureaucracy, with a vested interest in power, it can continue to exert a transforming influence on society, even if the majority of the professional Soviet Party bureaucrats (the apparatchiki) have lost their revolutionary fervor". 10

In a recent study on European security the British "Institute for the Study of Conflict" begins by making an assessment of the ideology factor in Soviet foreign policy:

"The present rulers of the Soviet Union are heirs to the Tsars' dominions as well as to the State philosophy established by Lenin and consolidated by Stalin. Their foreign policy is thus a hybrid of Great Russian imperialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. The ideology, shorn of its earlier idealism, has turned into a carapace of self-righteousness, which protects them from self-doubt. The accretion of ideology is important. It legitimizes an imperial policy, and obscures expansionist purposes. It is an efficient servant of the State and lends itself, in ways not open to the Tsarist autocracy, to the recruit-

ment or use of non-Russians in the service of Russian imperialism. The ideological justification of policy, and the discipline imposed in the name of doctrine, are continuing realities that tend to be overlooked in contacts between Western statesmen or diplomats and Soviet ones - especially relatively pragmatic or technocratic men (of whom the Premier, Kosygin, is an example). The fact therefore needs to be restated at the outset of this study". 11

Boris Meissner considers that the influence of ideology still retains an importance among the factors governing Soviet foreign policy. He distinguishes between three chief factors: world revolutionary, nationalist and totalitarian. Comparing the foreign policy of the Soviet Union with that of other states, he writes:

"In the first place Soviet foreign policy is imbued with an inborn ideological urge to expand, which was alien to Tsarist Russia. Secondly, it exhibits totalitarian traits nurtured under the Stalinist banner. Thirdly, it is based on a "primacy of domestic policy" which attributes central importance to the foreign policy protection of the orthodox communist system of power and society. To this extent Soviet foreign policy, in its objectives, instruments and methods, differs profoundly from the foreign policy pursued by the traditional powers". 12

The writer sees in Soviet foreign policy the relationship between ideology and power as follows:

"Soviet foreign policy, despite the ideological forces to which it is subjected, is therefore based primarily on sober power calculations. Underlying these power calculations is no ordinary pragmatism but a theoretical pragmatism, i. e. a realpolitik which is oriented towards the final objective held out by Marxist-Leninist ideology, as Utopia legitimates totalitarian power". 13

Among those who are inclined to regard the ideological factor in Soviet foreign policy as less important - if important at all - is J.W. Bezemer. Writing in an article in the "Internationale Spectator" of 22 July 1967, Bezemer tackles this question by maintaining that it is best to proceed from "partial doctrines". He continues:

"Yet we must always bear in mind that in the long run none of these doctrines can be regarded as inviolable. The path of Marxism-Leninism is strewn with doctrines which have either been utterly discarded or adapted beyond all recognition to suit the prevailing circumstances. It is extremely dangerous, therefore, to make predictions about the future behaviour of the Soviet leaders on the basis of an analysis of specific Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Admittedly ideological approximations may in fact help to explain historical or contemporary behaviour. Yet there is always the constant danger that ideological explanations may do no more than conceal the shortcomings in our knowledge or our ability to find a more satisfactory explanation". 14

The writer also goes on to affirm that the actions of the Soviet leaders in the field of international politics are in no way inhibited by ideology, but that the latter is in fact continuously used as a means of explaining and justifying their policies. He concludes by putting forward an important reason why a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism is an indispensable aid to any study of Soviet foreign policy:

"The reason is that public statements on policy frequently resort to a lavish use of the language of ideology. A knowledge of this language enables the inquirer to take timely cognizance of indications of imminent policy changes or differences of opinion in the communist world". 15

The kind of people who dismiss the influence of ideology as insignificant are usually those who regard Soviet foreign policy as the instrument of national interests and who see communist theory merely as the means of justifying communist practice.

Samuel L. Sharp regards "Marxist-Leninist ideology as quite irrelevant to any analysis of the day-to-day response to world politics". Echoing Winston Churchill's words ("But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian nationalism"), he goes on: "Clearly implied in this observation was the logical supposition that the policy-makers act in what they believe to be the best interest of the state over whose destinies they are presiding. In this sense the Soviet Union is to be looked upon as an actor, a protagonist, on the stage of international politics, and in this

writer's view, its actions can be interpreted most fruitfully in terms of behavior germane to the practice of international politics". 16

"Theory is utilized by the communist leadership to justify their power and politics..... Theory does not determine the nature of action; action determines the meaning of theory". 17

Conclusions

The views reproduced above reflect some of the theories on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy. Assessments of this influence range from considerable to insignificant. Among those who ascribe to the latter interpretation, however, there are few who would claim that ideology exerts no influence whatsoever. Even in the event of this influence being restricted to a justificative and explanatory role with regard to the political actions of the Soviet leaders, this in itself is still a factor of some importance. Those who maintain that Soviet foreign policy is determined primarily by national interests and not by ideology are creating an antithesis which exists only in part. Frequently the national interests of the Soviet Union do not run counter to those of the world communist movement under the leadership of that country. For a long time Soviet foreign policy under Stalin was determined to an important extent by the principle "socialism in one country". As far as the outside world was concerned, this was a principle which stipulated that the Soviet Union must first develop into a powerful country - precisely in the interests of world revolution.

If I may conclude by expressing my own views on this question, then I would be inclined to attribute a greater importance to the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy than is usual at present among Western observers. This influence, however, I see more as an indirect than a direct factor.

Marxist-Leninist ideology is an ideology in the broadest sense of the word, i. e. it is not only a doctrine but also a philosophy of life. It is an expectation for the future which lays down methods and means for the achievement of an objective, setting itself up as the driving force behind the actions of its adherents. The influence of this ideology on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union in the early days of that country's existence was considerable. The active forces behind the policy were the revolutionaries, whose party had just come to power in a

struggle in which the cult of ideology had played a role of overriding importance. It now remained to demonstrate the correctness of this ideology to the world at large. The behaviour of Soviet representatives abroad clearly reflected the ideology in which they had been reared. This situation, of course, did not remain static, since the cultivation of relations with other countries posed practical problems which could not be dispelled by the mere application of ideology. One factor which was destined to play an important role was the growing awareness, on the part of the Soviet representatives, of different systems and values. Consequently they became exposed to certain influences which, despite the usual denials, increasingly gathered momentum. These influences, however, were not restricted to them alone and there was a growing penetration into the Soviet Union of Western ideas and knowledge about the West, particularly after World War II. As a result, a situation arose where Soviet citizens had increasing opportunities to compare their own system and values with different systems and different values. There can be no doubt that such a process, which is continuously gathering momentum, produces an erosive effect. Will this erosion mean the beginning of the end for ideology?

Without doubt the significance of ideology in the Soviet Union will diminish, and in some cases it will probably diminish markedly. This is particularly true of those groups opposed to the existing regime, but it applies equally to those in a position to keep abreast of ideas, developments and events beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. However, this movement away from ideology must not be overestimated, since in the final analysis the extent of its effect is highly limited. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union still constitutes the most important power in the land: indirectly it controls the country and dominates the situation. This applies not only to ideological training itself, but also to the implementation of the measures necessary to prevent any attempt to interfere with ideology. A continuous programme of education is being pursued, based on communist principles, objectives, methods, means and solutions. This programme of education embraces every area of life and is continuously consolidated through the medium of the press. Quite clearly this programme of indoctrination falls short of its objective in the case of a not insignificant number of people

- in particular opponents and critics of the regime and those who are just indifferent. In the case of the very large majority, however, it certainly succeeds, through a process of continuous repetition, in bringing influence to bear on large numbers of people, most of whom have no opportunity to form comparisons with other ideas and institutions. This influence is difficult to measure, but in the case of many people its effect is such as to create a frame of reference tending to promote thoughts, feelings and actions in conformity with the indoctrination. Obviously this does not mean that ideology can produce cut and dried solutions, but certainly it can point in a given direction and dictate options. Many people who have been subjected to a lifetime of continuous and intensive indoctrination find it impossible to rid themselves of its influences and, consciously or unconsciously, their actions continue to be guided by their upbringing. Whether these people are of a theoretical or practical disposition makes little difference. Khrushchev was a pragmatist "par excellence", yet he was a prime example of a man upon whom ideology had left its mark. This was clearly demonstrated by his utterances during visits to Western countries. His spontaneous reactions on a wide variety of occasions were typical reflections of a world in which thoughts and feelings are largely determined by a thorough ideological training.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union forms an integral part of that country's overall policy, implemented by officials whose training in communist ideology has been long and intensive. This is equally true of those who are responsible for the implementation of foreign policy. For them the ultimate objective is a world communist society. Their attitude to Soviet foreign policy is conditioned accordingly, i. e. they see it as an instrument for the furtherance of that objective. The Soviet Union has relations with Communist Parties, communist countries, developing countries and capitalist countries. Relations with the CPs and the communist countries are determined to a very large degree by the principle of "proletarian internationalism". "Socialist internationalism" is the guiding principle underlying relations with the communist countries. The strategy and tactics adopted towards the developing countries can be traced back to various communist doctrines. "Peaceful coexistence" is the application of Marxism-Leninism to relations with capitalist countries at

the present time. At the root of peaceful coexistence lies the continuation of the struggle against imperialism by other means, i. e. the class struggle at international level.

In the conduct of an extremely complex Soviet foreign policy Marxism-Leninism does not supply the solution to the many different problems. Some problems there may be which can be summarily resolved by the application of ideology; other problems however, may require solutions which call for the exact opposite. Yet this is not the function which ideology fulfils in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. The influence of ideology must be seen rather as an indirect influence. By their ideological training, by the movement of which they are part, by the country they serve, by the offices they hold, those responsible for the formulation and implementation of Soviet foreign policy are predisposed to pursue specific paths, to use specific methods and to choose specific solutions. There can be no doubt that the importance of ideology has diminished over the years and that this process will probably continue under the influence of growing Soviet contacts with the outside world and despite fierce Soviet counter-attacks against any ideological interference.

However, the influence (and in particular the indirect influence) of ideology is still so strong as to constitute a compelling reason why the Western countries, in the conduct of their own foreign policy, must pay serious regard to this factor.

Bibliography

- ¹Speech by Leonid Brezhnev delivered on 7 June 1969 at the International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow.
- ²Kommunist, No. 13, September 1968, Moscow: "True to our international duty"
- ³Trud, 26 November 1970, article by F. Nikitin
- ⁴24th Congress of the CPSU: report of the CC of the CPSU; report by Leonid Brezhnev; publication by the Press Section of the Soviet Embassy to the Netherlands (1970), p. 140
- ⁵Idem, p. 154
- ⁶Idem, pp. 8-9
- ⁷Krieg und Ideologischer Kampf (War and Ideological Struggle), Colonel I. A. Seleznev (abridged translation), Schweizerisches Ost Institut, Berne, 1964
- ⁸The Cold War, Ideological Conflict or Power Struggle, Communist Ideology: Key to Soviet Policy, 1966, (contribution by Brzezinski), p. 46 et seq.
- ⁹Political Power: USA/USSR
Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel P. Huntington, 1964, p. 56
- ¹⁰Idem, p. 68
- ¹¹European Security and the Soviet Problem, report of a study group of the Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, January 1972
- ¹²Wesen und Eigenart der sowjetischen Aussempolitik (The Essential Nature of Soviet Foreign Policy), Boris Meissner, Europa-Archiv, Series 18, 1969

¹³
idem

¹⁴
De ideologische factor in de buitenlandse politiek van de Sowjet-Unie (The ideological factor in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union), J.W. Bezemer, Internationale Spectator, 22 July 1967, p. 1161 et seq.

¹⁵
idem

¹⁶
The Cold War, Ideological Conflict or Power Struggle, Communist Ideology: Key to Soviet Policy (contribution by Samuel L. Sharp) p. 70 et seq.

¹⁷
idem (contribution by Robert V. Daniels) p. 59 et seq.

98005036

6249
E22

RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN



1 208 522 6

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Ideology	1
Ideology and communism as seen through Soviet eyes	1
Ideology and foreign policy as seen through Soviet eyes	4
Some Western views on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy	6
Conclusions	10
Bibliography	14



International Documentation and Information Centre
(INTERDOC)

Van Stolkweg 10, The Hague
The Netherlands

1972

**Schenking van de Leidse
Studentenvereniging
voor Internationale
Betrekkingen (SIB)**

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND IDEOLOGY

by C. C. van den Heuvel

Ideology

The purpose of this article is to examine the present-day significance of communist ideology for Soviet foreign policy. Whereas in the past communist ideology appeared to exert a great influence, its importance since World War II seems to have diminished considerably. There are even a number of observers who have written off the role of ideology altogether. In contrast, however, there are also those who regard ideology as anything but a spent force and who attach the greatest importance to the role it plays in the formulation of foreign policy.

It is difficult to think of any concept over which there is so much misunderstanding and confusion as "ideology". For some ideology is nothing more than a collection of theoretical ideas, for others it takes on the significance of a religion. One man rates it as highly positive, another as utterly negative. The negative evaluation stresses the unscientific nature of ideology, its rigidity, tendency towards simplification and its encouragement of fanaticism, absolutism and totalitarianism. The positive evaluation, on the other hand, sees ideology as a philosophy of life - not merely a doctrine but a plan for the future and a guide to practical action. The best approximation for the concept of ideology would appear to be an attitude which takes account not only of the particular but also the broader implications, not only the positive but also the negative evaluation, not only the rational but also the irrational factors. An approximation of this kind would also appear to offer the best chances of gaining a deeper insight into the subject under discussion.

Ideology and communism as seen through Soviet eyes

According to pure Marxism productive forces and productive relations together form the economic substructure of society, while it is circumstances, above all else, which determine the productive forces superstructure, i. e. philosophy, politics, law, morality, religion and the arts. Ideology - as a system of views, ideas and concepts - is interrelated with all the

- 2 -

foregoing and thus constitutes an essential part of the superstructure. Ideology is not an independent phenomenon but a reflection of the social situation from which it derives and upon which it depends. Changes in the productive relations bring changes in ideology.

Increasingly, however, Marxism-Leninism came to regard ideology as possessing not merely a derivative, but also an independent, significance. Ideology even came to be seen as a potentially important factor in bringing about change in the economic superstructure. This growing appreciation of the role of ideology was expressed in a wide variety of ways, particular emphasis being laid on its significance for the implementation of the class struggle, the revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism and communism. In recent years ideology has increasingly come to be regarded as an important weapon in the struggle against imperialism.

"In our struggle against bourgeois ideology the weapon we possess is a powerful one: Marxist-Leninist ideology. Its strength we know only too well. And we see how our ideas are spreading all the time among the masses. Precisely at this time Marxism-Leninism is on the offensive and it is our duty to launch this offensive on an ever-broadening front. Now, as never before, we must be mindful of Lenin's warning that if the communists show any sign of faltering in their ideological task or become in any way alienated from this task, then the greater are the risks of bourgeois ideological penetration. Let it be repeated that the struggle against the pernicious influence of bourgeois ideology on the workers forms an important spearhead in the task of world communism.

..... It is the duty of the communists to march in the vanguard of the battle against imperialism on all fronts, including the ideological front".¹

On the Soviet side the awareness of the dangers confronting ideology are only too real and various methods are being resorted to in an attempt to avert these dangers.

The first is the adoption of a more flexible attitude to in-

creasingly prevalent views on official doctrines. Thus it was that in the matter of the relationship between sub-structure and superstructure a discussion in several Soviet newspapers during the mid-1960s encouraged readers to ask whether the real issue here was not in fact the end of historical materialism. Indeed there is a growing body of opinion on this subject that in fact the superstructure determines the substructure, consciousness determines material existence, the subjective factor determines the objective factor. Similarly it is the Party which determines production and not vice versa.

Secondly, warnings were issued against capitalist and imperialist attempts to undermine ideology by subversive activities. The Western desire for détente which had been finding expression for a number of years already was eagerly seized on in this connection.

"Apart from military adventures, imperialism is devoting increasing effort to a subversive political and ideological struggle against the socialist countries, against the communist and entire democratic movement. This lies at the root of the so-called policy of bridge building, the name given by the defenders of imperialism to their schemes for ideological and other subversive activities against world socialism".²

Thirdly the Soviet leaders realized that the general move away from ideology, a phenomenon which emerged in the Sixties, was not something from which their country could remain aloof. Not only among the broad masses but even among the party cadres a declining interest in ideology could be detected and this process has continued. Obviously this is a source of serious concern to those same leaders, not least because they realize that ideology is the most important justification of their being in power. It is not surprising, therefore, that over the last few years growing emphasis has been placed on the great importance of ideology and that all kinds of attempts have been made to keep interest in ideology alive. The following quotations provide typical examples of this:

"The ideological education of every Soviet citizen was, and continues to remain, the most important task of all".³

"At the core of the Party's entire ideological-educational work is the inculcation of the communist view of life on the broadest possible masses of the workers and their education in the ideas of Marxism-Leninism".⁴

"The Party shall continue to work tirelessly for the consolidation of this source of our strength - the indestructible ideological-political unity of the Soviet people".⁵

Ideology and foreign policy as seen through Soviet eyes

On 30 March 1970 at the 24th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev summed up Soviet foreign policy as follows:

"The objectives of Soviet foreign policy, as formulated at the 23rd Party Congress of the CPSU, consist in working with the other socialist countries to secure favourable international conditions for the building of socialism and communism; in consolidating the unity and solidarity of the socialist countries, their friendship and fraternity; in supporting the national liberation movements and promoting all-round cooperation with the young developing countries; in consistently defending the principles of peaceful coexistence between states having different social systems and finally in steadfastly resisting the aggressive forces of imperialism and preserving mankind from a new world war".⁶

The Soviets point repeatedly to the close links between foreign policy and ideology. They draw attention to the existence of various ideological currents in the world, each trying to assert itself. They believe that relationships, contradictions and conflicts between these ideologies are complicated and exert a direct influence on foreign policy.

The basis of Soviet foreign policy towards the "capitalist" world is "peaceful coexistence". However, this does not imply ideological coexistence but precisely the opposite: ideological struggle. For years this ideological struggle has been the subject of many speeches and publications by the Soviets. There is probably no publication which sums up this struggle more lucidly (from the communist point of view) than a book by

Colonel I.A. Seleznev published in the Soviet Union in 1964 by the Ministry of Defence under the title "War and Ideological Struggle". The main points from this book have been translated and published (in German) by the "Schweizerisches Ost Institut" in Berne. Part of the introduction is quoted below.

"..... An inexorable, uncompromising struggle is currently being waged between communist and bourgeois ideology. A knowledge and correct application of the regularities of war and a mastery of the principles and rules of warfare are the preconditions for victory in war. An additional and crucial prerequisite for the victory of communist ideology is a knowledge of the regularities of the ideological struggle and a mastery of the methods and means of propaganda. One of the special characteristics of the ideological front is the fact that, in all their ramifications, the ideological struggles never weaken. Between the two social systems there is not a single area which can be exempted from the inexorable ideological struggle. Wherever diplomatic or commercial relations are fostered between the capitalist and socialist countries, wherever there are contacts in the fields of science, the arts, sports etc., everywhere there is this head-on collision between two opposing worlds, two ideologies. There is no such thing as peaceful co-existence in the ideological field and there never can be. Between socialism and capitalism there can be no ideological cease-fire.....". 7

The book referred to above was published in 1964, but since then its message has been repeated in many ways and on many occasions. Again and again the point is made that, while peaceful coexistence may consist in avoiding wars and promoting economic competition and exchanges in a wide variety of fields, it consists equally in sustaining international class struggle and ideological irreconcilability. These last two factors are highlighted in a book by V. N. Egorov, published in Moscow in 1971 under the title "Peaceful Coexistence and the Revolutionary Process". The passages quoted below are taken from Chapter VI, "Peaceful Coexistence and the Building of Socialism":

"..... Peaceful coexistence does not mean the preserv-

ation of the social status quo, or any relaxation in the ideological battle. Peaceful coexistence is war between socialism and capitalism in all fields of social economic relations. It assumes a struggle between States with different social systems, but excludes actual war between them. It is a specific form of class war in the international arena.....

..... Peaceful coexistence is a specific form of the class war between socialism and capitalism, having a number of peculiar features. One of them is that the battle between the two world systems goes on simultaneously in all the basic spheres of social life - economic, political and ideological. Another peculiarity is that this struggle manifests itself through inter-State relations and is carried on by a State-organized working class against a State-created monopolistic bourgeoisie. A third feature is that the battle takes place in the world arena without the use of weapons. It is waged on a constructive and not a destructive basis, which corresponds with the basic needs of all nations.....". 8

Some Western views on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy

Western Sovietologists have always been preoccupied by this question and views on the subject vary greatly. The degree of influence exerted by ideology is interpreted variously as being anything from considerable to insignificant. In the light of this, an attempt has been made to reproduce below a number of existing views on the subject.

Among those who regard the role of ideology as highly influential is Zbigniew Brzezinski. In an article in which he describes communist ideology as the key to Soviet policy he writes:

"It is precisely because the ideology is both a set of conscious assumptions and purposes and part of the total historical, social and personal background of the Soviet leaders that it is so pervading and so important. For the moment possibly the least hazardous conclusion could be to suggest that, while the pressures for the erosion of ideology are gradually building up,

the "conservative" forces of the ideology are still well entrenched and have not lost their capacity to exert influence.....

Ideology gives the leaders a framework for organizing their vision of political developments, it sets limits on the options open to them as policy-makers; it defines immediate priorities and longer-range goals; and it shapes the methods through which problems are handled". 9

Brzezinski does not see the erosion phenomenon as heralding the end of ideology:

"This, however, does not mean the end of ideology, if by 'end' is meant the conventional notion that eventually the Russian élite will become similar to its pragmatic Western counterpart. For the time being, the erosive tendencies noted above are counteracted by the persisting measures of indoctrination, by the fact that some of the basic ideological tenets have penetrated Soviet society and have become accepted by the people, and by the sense of historical momentum at home and abroad. Once an ideology is embodied in a party bureaucracy, with a vested interest in power, it can continue to exert a transforming influence on society, even if the majority of the professional Soviet Party bureaucrats (the apparatchiki) have lost their revolutionary fervor". 10

In a recent study on European security the British "Institute for the Study of Conflict" begins by making an assessment of the ideology factor in Soviet foreign policy:

"The present rulers of the Soviet Union are heirs to the Tsars' dominions as well as to the State philosophy established by Lenin and consolidated by Stalin. Their foreign policy is thus a hybrid of Great Russian imperialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. The ideology, shorn of its earlier idealism, has turned into a carapace of self-righteousness, which protects them from self-doubt. The accretion of ideology is important. It legitimizes an imperial policy, and obscures expansionist purposes. It is an efficient servant of the State and lends itself, in ways not open to the Tsarist autocracy, to the recruit-

ment or use of non-Russians in the service of Russian imperialism. The ideological justification of policy, and the discipline imposed in the name of doctrine, are continuing realities that tend to be overlooked in contacts between Western statesmen or diplomats and Soviet ones - especially relatively pragmatic or technocratic men (of whom the Premier, Kosygin, is an example). The fact therefore needs to be restated at the outset of this study". 11

Boris Meissner considers that the influence of ideology still retains an importance among the factors governing Soviet foreign policy. He distinguishes between three chief factors: world revolutionary, nationalist and totalitarian. Comparing the foreign policy of the Soviet Union with that of other states, he writes:

"In the first place Soviet foreign policy is imbued with an inborn ideological urge to expand, which was alien to Tsarist Russia. Secondly, it exhibits totalitarian traits nurtured under the Stalinist banner. Thirdly, it is based on a "primacy of domestic policy" which attributes central importance to the foreign policy protection of the orthodox communist system of power and society. To this extent Soviet foreign policy, in its objectives, instruments and methods, differs profoundly from the foreign policy pursued by the traditional powers". 12

The writer sees in Soviet foreign policy the relationship between ideology and power as follows:

"Soviet foreign policy, despite the ideological forces to which it is subjected, is therefore based primarily on sober power calculations. Underlying these power calculations is no ordinary pragmatism but a theoretical pragmatism, i. e. a realpolitik which is oriented towards the final objective held out by Marxist-Leninist ideology, as Utopia legitimates totalitarian power". 13

Among those who are inclined to regard the ideological factor in Soviet foreign policy as less important - if important at all - is J.W. Bezemer. Writing in an article in the "Internationale Spectator" of 22 July 1967, Bezemer tackles this question by maintaining that it is best to proceed from "partial doctrines". He continues:

"Yet we must always bear in mind that in the long run none of these doctrines can be regarded as inviolable. The path of Marxism-Leninism is strewn with doctrines which have either been utterly discarded or adapted beyond all recognition to suit the prevailing circumstances. It is extremely dangerous, therefore, to make predictions about the future behaviour of the Soviet leaders on the basis of an analysis of specific Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Admittedly ideological approximations may in fact help to explain historical or contemporary behaviour. Yet there is always the constant danger that ideological explanations may do no more than conceal the shortcomings in our knowledge or our ability to find a more satisfactory explanation". 14

The writer also goes on to affirm that the actions of the Soviet leaders in the field of international politics are in no way inhibited by ideology, but that the latter is in fact continuously used as a means of explaining and justifying their policies. He concludes by putting forward an important reason why a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism is an indispensable aid to any study of Soviet foreign policy:

"The reason is that public statements on policy frequently resort to a lavish use of the language of ideology. A knowledge of this language enables the inquirer to take timely cognizance of indications of imminent policy changes or differences of opinion in the communist world". 15

The kind of people who dismiss the influence of ideology as insignificant are usually those who regard Soviet foreign policy as the instrument of national interests and who see communist theory merely as the means of justifying communist practice.

Samuel L. Sharp regards "Marxist-Leninist ideology as quite irrelevant to any analysis of the day-to-day response to world politics". Echoing Winston Churchill's words ("But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian nationalism"), he goes on: "Clearly implied in this observation was the logical supposition that the policy-makers act in what they believe to be the best interest of the state over whose destinies they are presiding. In this sense the Soviet Union is to be looked upon as an actor, a protagonist, on the stage of international politics, and in this

writer's view, its actions can be interpreted most fruitfully in terms of behavior germane to the practice of international politics". 16

"Theory is utilized by the communist leadership to justify their power and politics..... Theory does not determine the nature of action; action determines the meaning of theory". 17

Conclusions

The views reproduced above reflect some of the theories on the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy. Assessments of this influence range from considerable to insignificant. Among those who ascribe to the latter interpretation, however, there are few who would claim that ideology exerts no influence whatsoever. Even in the event of this influence being restricted to a justificative and explanatory role with regard to the political actions of the Soviet leaders, this in itself is still a factor of some importance. Those who maintain that Soviet foreign policy is determined primarily by national interests and not by ideology are creating an antithesis which exists only in part. Frequently the national interests of the Soviet Union do not run counter to those of the world communist movement under the leadership of that country. For a long time Soviet foreign policy under Stalin was determined to an important extent by the principle "socialism in one country". As far as the outside world was concerned, this was a principle which stipulated that the Soviet Union must first develop into a powerful country - precisely in the interests of world revolution.

If I may conclude by expressing my own views on this question, then I would be inclined to attribute a greater importance to the influence of ideology on Soviet foreign policy than is usual at present among Western observers. This influence, however, I see more as an indirect than a direct factor.

Marxist-Leninist ideology is an ideology in the broadest sense of the word, i. e. it is not only a doctrine but also a philosophy of life. It is an expectation for the future which lays down methods and means for the achievement of an objective, setting itself up as the driving force behind the actions of its adherents. The influence of this ideology on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union in the early days of that country's existence was considerable. The active forces behind the policy were the revolutionaries, whose party had just come to power in a

struggle in which the cult of ideology had played a role of overriding importance. It now remained to demonstrate the correctness of this ideology to the world at large. The behaviour of Soviet representatives abroad clearly reflected the ideology in which they had been reared. This situation, of course, did not remain static, since the cultivation of relations with other countries posed practical problems which could not be dispelled by the mere application of ideology. One factor which was destined to play an important role was the growing awareness, on the part of the Soviet representatives, of different systems and values. Consequently they became exposed to certain influences which, despite the usual denials, increasingly gathered momentum. These influences, however, were not restricted to them alone and there was a growing penetration into the Soviet Union of Western ideas and knowledge about the West, particularly after World War II. As a result, a situation arose where Soviet citizens had increasing opportunities to compare their own system and values with different systems and different values. There can be no doubt that such a process, which is continuously gathering momentum, produces an erosive effect. Will this erosion mean the beginning of the end for ideology?

Without doubt the significance of ideology in the Soviet Union will diminish, and in some cases it will probably diminish markedly. This is particularly true of those groups opposed to the existing regime, but it applies equally to those in a position to keep abreast of ideas, developments and events beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. However, this movement away from ideology must not be overestimated, since in the final analysis the extent of its effect is highly limited. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union still constitutes the most important power in the land: indirectly it controls the country and dominates the situation. This applies not only to ideological training itself, but also to the implementation of the measures necessary to prevent any attempt to interfere with ideology. A continuous programme of education is being pursued, based on communist principles, objectives, methods, means and solutions. This programme of education embraces every area of life and is continuously consolidated through the medium of the press. Quite clearly this programme of indoctrination falls short of its objective in the case of a not insignificant number of people

- in particular opponents and critics of the regime and those who are just indifferent. In the case of the very large majority, however, it certainly succeeds, through a process of continuous repetition, in bringing influence to bear on large numbers of people, most of whom have no opportunity to form comparisons with other ideas and institutions. This influence is difficult to measure, but in the case of many people its effect is such as to create a frame of reference tending to promote thoughts, feelings and actions in conformity with the indoctrination. Obviously this does not mean that ideology can produce cut and dried solutions, but certainly it can point in a given direction and dictate options. Many people who have been subjected to a lifetime of continuous and intensive indoctrination find it impossible to rid themselves of its influences and, consciously or unconsciously, their actions continue to be guided by their upbringing. Whether these people are of a theoretical or practical disposition makes little difference. Khrushchev was a pragmatist "par excellence", yet he was a prime example of a man upon whom ideology had left its mark. This was clearly demonstrated by his utterances during visits to Western countries. His spontaneous reactions on a wide variety of occasions were typical reflections of a world in which thoughts and feelings are largely determined by a thorough ideological training.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union forms an integral part of that country's overall policy, implemented by officials whose training in communist ideology has been long and intensive. This is equally true of those who are responsible for the implementation of foreign policy. For them the ultimate objective is a world communist society. Their attitude to Soviet foreign policy is conditioned accordingly, i. e. they see it as an instrument for the furtherance of that objective. The Soviet Union has relations with Communist Parties, communist countries, developing countries and capitalist countries. Relations with the CPs and the communist countries are determined to a very large degree by the principle of "proletarian internationalism". "Socialist internationalism" is the guiding principle underlying relations with the communist countries. The strategy and tactics adopted towards the developing countries can be traced back to various communist doctrines. "Peaceful coexistence" is the application of Marxism-Leninism to relations with capitalist countries at

the present time. At the root of peaceful coexistence lies the continuation of the struggle against imperialism by other means, i. e. the class struggle at international level.

In the conduct of an extremely complex Soviet foreign policy Marxism-Leninism does not supply the solution to the many different problems. Some problems there may be which can be summarily resolved by the application of ideology; other problems however, may require solutions which call for the exact opposite. Yet this is not the function which ideology fulfils in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. The influence of ideology must be seen rather as an indirect influence. By their ideological training, by the movement of which they are part, by the country they serve, by the offices they hold, those responsible for the formulation and implementation of Soviet foreign policy are predisposed to pursue specific paths, to use specific methods and to choose specific solutions. There can be no doubt that the importance of ideology has diminished over the years and that this process will probably continue under the influence of growing Soviet contacts with the outside world and despite fierce Soviet counter-attacks against any ideological interference.

However, the influence (and in particular the indirect influence) of ideology is still so strong as to constitute a compelling reason why the Western countries, in the conduct of their own foreign policy, must pay serious regard to this factor.

Bibliography

- ¹Speech by Leonid Brezhnev delivered on 7 June 1969 at the International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow.
- ²Kommunist, No. 13, September 1968, Moscow: "True to our international duty"
- ³Trud, 26 November 1970, article by F. Nikitin
- ⁴24th Congress of the CPSU: report of the CC of the CPSU; report by Leonid Brezhnev; publication by the Press Section of the Soviet Embassy to the Netherlands (1970), p. 140
- ⁵idem, p. 154
- ⁶idem, pp. 8-9
- ⁷Krieg und Ideologischer Kampf (War and Ideological Struggle), Colonel I. A. Seleznev (abridged translation), Schweizerisches Ost Institut, Berne, 1964
- ⁸The Cold War, Ideological Conflict or Power Struggle, Communist Ideology: Key to Soviet Policy, 1966, (contribution by Brzezinski), p. 46 et seq.
- ⁹Political Power: USA/USSR
Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel P. Huntington, 1964, p. 56
- ¹⁰idem, p. 68
- ¹¹European Security and the Soviet Problem, report of a study group of the Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, January 1972
- ¹²Wesen und Eigenart der sowjetischen Aussempolitik (The Essential Nature of Soviet Foreign Policy), Boris Meissner, Europa-Archiv, Series 18, 1969

¹³
idem

¹⁴
De ideologische factor in de buitenlandse politiek van de Sowjet-Unie (The ideological factor in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union), J.W. Bezemer, Internationale Spectator, 22 July 1967, p. 1161 et seq.

¹⁵
idem

¹⁶
The Cold War, Ideological Conflict or Power Struggle, Communist Ideology: Key to Soviet Policy (contribution by Samuel L. Sharp) p. 70 et seq.

¹⁷
idem (contribution by Robert V. Daniels) p. 59 et seq.

98005036