

"With Marxist states in the third world facing insurgencies or chronic instability and non-Marxist states requiring economic assistance that the Soviet Union does not supply, Soviet leaders appear to face difficulties not only in expanding but in maintaining their influence in the third world. . . . There is no indication, however, that the Soviet Union will pull back from its commitment to its Marxist allies in the third world."

The Soviet Union and the Third World

BY MARK N. KATZ

Research Associate, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

SINCE the 1960's, the third world has become one of the major arenas of Soviet-American rivalry. The Soviet Union has had important successes in the third world—especially during the 1970's—but it has also had significant failures and even now experiences serious problems.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of third world countries that have experienced Marxist-Leninist revolutions, coups or takeovers. These include North Vietnam and Cuba in the 1950's, South Yemen and the Congo in the 1960's, and South Vietnam, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Laos, Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Grenada in the 1970's. Further, all these Marxist-Leninist regimes are pro-Soviet. The only pro-Chinese Marxist-Leninist government was the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea that lasted from 1975 to 1978; then Vietnam invaded and replaced Pol Pot with a pro-Soviet Vietnamese puppet regime. Because of its ability to provide more economic and military assistance, Moscow has prevented new Marxist regimes from allying themselves with China, its main Communist rival.

In addition, over the years the Soviet Union has established close relations with non-Marxist states in the third world, signing treaties of friendship and cooperation with India, Iraq, Syria and North Yemen. And the Soviet Union has close military ties with Libya.

But Soviet leaders have also experienced setbacks with non-Marxist (or in some cases, quasi-Marxist) regimes. Pro-Soviet radical leaders have been overthrown and replaced by more conservative leaders in countries like Ghana, Mali and Chile. During the

1970's, Egypt and Somalia abrogated their treaties of friendship and cooperation with Moscow and expelled all Soviet advisers. Other countries that once had close ties to the Soviet Union did not break with them dramatically, but gradually their friendly relations cooled. Among these countries are Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, Burma, Uganda and Peru.

Soviet leaders soon noticed that they could not rely on non-Marxist-Leninist regimes either to "continue on the path toward socialism" or to remain allies of the Soviet Union.¹ Without strong influence over these regimes, the Soviet Union could not prevent them from following their independent national interests, which often differed from Soviet interests. And attempts by the Kremlin to exert influence over these non-Marxist regimes in order to keep them allied to the Soviet Union backfired and led them to improve their ties to the West instead.

By the mid- to late 1970's, many Soviet writers concluded that the only reliable third world regimes were "states of socialist orientation."² Each of these states had a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party in power and often had a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union as well.³ Most had institutions similar to those of the Soviet Union and other Communist regimes: a Marxist-Leninist party with a Politburo, Secretariat and Central Committee; an intelligence service, usually organized by the East Germans; a corps of political officers in the ranks of the armed services; a "popular militia" that could serve to counter a coup attempt by the army; and a central planning organization and economic ministries to insure state control over most (if not all) of the economy. A country with these institutions and a large number of Soviet, Cuban and East German economic and military advisers was much less likely to change its foreign policy orientation.

Soviet leaders can indeed boast that no third world country ruled by a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist vanguard party has ever been overthrown by internal forces. The one such regime that did fall from power recently—Grenada's—was overthrown not by internal forces but by a foreign invasion.

¹For an examination of Soviet writing on this issue, see Mark N. Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 133-136.

²For a discussion of the concept of "states of socialist orientation," see Francis Fukuyama, *Moscow's Post-Brezhnev Reassessment of the Third World*, R-3337-USDP (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, February, 1986), pp. 83-85.

³Colonel G. Malinovsky, "National'no-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie na sovremennom etape," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 24 (December, 1979), pp. 25-36.

Nevertheless, these states of socialist orientation present serious problems for the Soviet Union. In six Marxist regimes (Afghanistan, Angola, Kampuchea, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nicaragua) there are insurgencies that the regimes have been unable to defeat. Troops from established socialist states have sometimes intervened (witness the Cubans in Angola, the Vietnamese in Kampuchea and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan), but these troops have been unable to defeat the insurgents.⁴

RIVAL FACTIONS

Another such state—South Yemen—does not face an insurgency, but has experienced chronic infighting among rival factions of the Marxist leadership. This rivalry erupted in fierce fighting in January, 1986; up to 10,000 were reported to have died; and fighting could break out again in the future.⁵ Finally, all third world countries ruled by Marxist-Leninist parties, including long-established regimes like the regimes of Vietnam and Cuba, are experiencing severe economic difficulties. Their attempts to construct a socialist economy has led to economic stagnation.

While the "socialist commonwealth" greatly expanded in the 1970's, the weakness and unpopularity of the newer Marxist-Leninist regimes meant that the Soviet Union and its allies have had to support them; in some cases this support has been necessary just to keep them from being overthrown. At a time when the Soviet Union itself is facing severe economic difficulties, this is a costly and seemingly unending burden. Soviet academic writers have commented on the poor economic performance of the states of socialist orientation compared to the states of capitalist orientation in the third world. There seems to be general acknowledgement that the socialist states pose significant problems for the Soviet Union. In addition, some observers argue that the Soviet Union should put greater emphasis on making friends with

the more stable nonsocialist third world governments on the basis of common interests, if not common ideology.⁶

There is no indication, however, that the Soviet Union will pull back from its commitment to its Marxist allies in the third world. Although Soviet military writers seldom discuss openly the insurgencies taking place against third world Marxist-Leninist regimes, their writing about insurgencies in general indicates that they believe counterinsurgency operations can succeed.⁷ Even some of the "regional peace proposals" the Soviet Union has made for countries like Afghanistan are designed to end external support for the opposition movements while leaving the Marxist regime firmly in power.

Will the Soviet Union succeed in helping its weak Marxist allies in the third world to defeat the opposition movements they are fighting and to establish their power? Will the Soviet Union be able to assist Marxist revolutionaries to come to power in other countries (an event that has not yet happened in the 1980's)? And will Soviet leaders expand their relations, especially in the military sphere, with non-Marxist third world states?

THE MIDDLE EAST

In the Middle East, Moscow's closest allies are Syria, Libya, Iraq and South Yemen. Of these, only South Yemen has a Marxist-Leninist government. Iraq and Syria are ruled by rival branches of the Baath party; Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi espouses his own brand of Islamic socialism.

Soviet support of the Arabs and United States support of the Israelis in the Arab-Israeli conflict have won many friends for the Soviet Union in the Arab world. But the Soviet Union has also experienced many disappointments, particularly President Anwar Sadat's expulsion of all Soviet personnel from Egypt. Moscow's relations with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak are cordial, but hardly friendly. Some conservative Arab states like Jordan and Kuwait have purchased Soviet arms; yet these countries have strictly limited their ties to Moscow. The Arab monarchies, in particular, have no illusion about whether the Soviet Union would help their internal opponents overthrow them if possible.⁸

The Iran-Iraq War has complicated Soviet policy in the Middle East; although Moscow has supplied Baghdad with substantial military assistance (especially after Iranian forces crossed into Iraq in 1982), Moscow's close allies, Libya and Syria, have backed Iran. Other Arabs have criticized the Soviet Union for providing arms to Libya and Syria without the condition that they cannot retransfer the arms to Iran.⁹ Further, because of Moscow's initial neutrality in the Iran-Iraq War and its continued support of Iraq's archrival, Syria, Iraq has turned toward the West in

⁴On these insurgencies, see Mark N. Katz, "The Anti-Soviet Insurgencies," *Orbis* (Summer, 1986).

⁵John Kifner, "Battle for Southern Yemen: How the Fury Began," *The New York Times*, January 30, 1986, p. A4.

⁶For an examination of Soviet academic writing on this subject, see Jerry F. Hough, *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986), chapt. 4.

⁷See for example Major General M. Fesenko, "Ognevoe parazhenie nazemnykh sredstv PVO," *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 5 (May, 1984), pp. 66-73; and Admiral P. Navoitsev, "Deistviia VMS protiv berega," *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 8 (August, 1984), pp. 47-52.

⁸On the Soviets and the Middle East, see Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy toward the Middle East since 1970*, 3d ed. (New York: Praeger, 1982); and Mark N. Katz, *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

⁹See for example Kuwait's *Al Watan*, January 4, 1986, pp. 14-16, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Soviet Union*, January 7, 1986, p. H15.

recent years. Baghdad has obtained arms from France; and it restored ties with the United States in late 1984. But since Iraq relies mainly on Soviet arms, it cannot afford to become estranged from the Soviet Union, at least while the war continues.¹⁰

The prospects for Marxist revolution in the Middle East appear dim, because the main opposition to Middle Eastern governments has been dominated by Islamic fundamentalists, not leftists. No fundamentalist Islamic movement appears to be in a position to seize power at present. But if an Islamic regime were able to topple a pro-American regime, the Soviet Union would be pleased, because United States influence would be reduced. An Islamic regime, however, would not necessarily be pro-Soviet, as revolutionary Iran has shown. In addition, Islamic fundamentalist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria can threaten pro-Soviet regimes as well as pro-American ones.

The Soviet Union has made slight progress in increasing its cooperation with non-Marxist regimes in the Middle East since General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. Oman and the United Arab Emirates both recognized the Soviet Union for the first time in 1985. But in the Arab world there is no longer much hope that the Soviet Union will provide the Arabs with the wherewithal to defeat Israel; nor does the Soviet Union seem ready to help them develop economically. However, while the Soviet Union may not give the Arabs as much as they want when there is actual fighting between them and Israel, the Soviet Union has little interest in seeing peace established between the Arabs and the Israelis. Other analysts have argued that if such a peace were established, the Arab states would have less need for the Soviet Union because they would have less need for Soviet weapons and more need for the kind of economic assistance that is available mainly from the West.

Whether this argument is valid will not be known unless or until there is a general peace in the Middle East. However, the Soviet Union has been willing to give more help to those Arab states and groups—like Syria, Libya and radical Palestinian factions—that have been least willing to compromise with Israel. As long as the Arab-Israeli conflict remains unresolved and the United States continues to support Israel, the Soviet Union is likely to retain some allies in the Arab world and perhaps gain others.

¹⁰Ties with the United States were broken in 1967. See Frederick W. Axelgard, ed., *Iraq in Transition: A Political, Economic, and Strategic Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986).

¹¹On the Soviet Union and South Asia, see Stephen P. Cohen, "South Asia after Afghanistan," *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 1 (January-February, 1985), pp. 18-31.

¹²Paul Quinn-Judge, "Philippine Insurgents Are Turning Down Soviet Support," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 26, 1985, pp. 1, 12.

SOUTH ASIA

Another article in this issue is devoted to Soviet aims in Afghanistan. It is sufficient to note here that since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to protect the tottering Marxist regime, the Soviet Union has been unable to defeat the mujahideen, and the mujahideen have been unable to drive Soviet troops out of their country.

The prospects for Marxist revolution in South Asia are not good. Soviet leaders may hope that Pakistan's General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq will be overthrown or replaced by opposition leader Benazir Bhutto or someone else who might be less willing to help the mujahideen in Afghanistan. The mujahideen's resistance would be hampered without the sanctuaries provided in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and the aid that is channeled through Pakistan.

The Soviet Union has friendly relations with India; it continues to sell weapons to India and to license India to produce Soviet weapons, like MiG's. New Delhi sees Moscow as a useful ally against Pakistan and China, its main rivals. And even though the Indian government under Indira Gandhi indicated that it was not alarmed about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, India has been unhappy that it has failed to persuade the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government has moved to improve relations with the United States. Although India is not likely to give up its close relationship with Moscow, there are significant differences between the two that will block Soviet efforts to become more closely allied with New Delhi.¹¹

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Although pro-Soviet Marxist regimes came to power in Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos, the "domino theory" that other countries in Southeast Asia would also become Communist has so far proved false. Some of the nations of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei) have authoritarian regimes of questionable popularity, but most have experienced strong economic growth over the last decade and enjoy standards of living higher than those in Indochina.

There are Marxist guerrilla groups operating in Thailand, Malaysia and Burma, but these have—or once had—links with China rather than the Soviet Union. The Marxists in Burma control some territory, but the central government seems to be in no danger of falling. The Communist guerrillas in Thailand and Malaysia have been contained.

A growing Marxist insurgency in the Philippines is led by the New People's Army (NPA). Like the other Marxist groups in Southeast Asia, the NPA is Maoist, though its actual ties with China are tenuous. The NPA has reportedly turned down recent offers of Soviet support.¹² Toward the end of the Ferdinand Marcos

regime, the NPA was very strong, but Corazon Aquino's peaceful succession to power has limited the appeal of the NPA and has led to defections from its ranks. It is too early to tell whether the insurgency will come to an end, but it is apparently on the defensive.

As for the Soviet Union allying itself with the non-Marxist regimes of the area, this appears to be extremely unlikely as long as Vietnam occupies Kampuchea. At this writing, these nations see very little to gain from closer ties with the Soviet Union.¹³

AFRICA

In sub-Saharan Africa, three of Moscow's closest allies—Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique—are fighting insurgent movements. In Ethiopia, guerrillas in Eritrea and other provinces are struggling to make their regions independent of Addis Ababa. In Angola and Mozambique, South African-backed guerrillas are attempting to overthrow the Marxist regimes. In all three cases, the Marxist regimes have thus far been unable to defeat the rebels.

The likelihood of Marxist revolution does not seem great in Africa, except in Namibia (where an insurgency led by the leftist South-West Africa People's Organization—SWAPO—continues), in South Africa (if the opposition to the government should become dominated by Marxists) and, perhaps, in the Western Sahara (although the Moroccan government is doing well against the Algerian-supported Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra y Rio de Oro] guerrillas). Elsewhere in Africa, a Marxist regime might come to power through a coup d'état by a self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist. But as the Soviet Union knows, such leaders are often overthrown themselves—unless the Soviet Union and its allies are able to gain enough influence to prevent this.

The Soviet Union has also befriended non-Marxist states in Africa, usually providing them with military assistance. But non-Marxist African states desperately need the economic assistance that the Soviet Union has been unable or unwilling to provide. Only

¹³On Soviet policy in Southeast Asia, see United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Soviet Union in the Third World, 1980-85: An Imperial Burden or Political Asset?* 99th Congress, 1st session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 104-121.

¹⁴On the Soviets and Africa, see Peter Clement, "Moscow and Southern Africa," *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 2 (March-April, 1985), pp. 29-50; and Paul Henze, *Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia: Regional Resistance to a Marxist Regime*, R-3347-USDP (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, December, 1985).

¹⁵On the Soviet Union and Latin America, see Cole Blasier, *The Giant's Rival: The USSR and Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983).

¹⁶On the Sendero Luminoso, see Cynthia McClintock, "Sendero Luminoso: Peru's Maoist Guerrillas," *Problems of Communism*, vol. 32, no. 5 (September-October, 1983), pp. 19-34.

the West can provide this aid. Thus while non-Marxist African states may want to receive Soviet weapons on concessional terms, they have little incentive to become so close to the Soviet Union that they alienate Western donors.¹⁴

LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, the Soviet Union's oldest and best ally is Cuba, where Fidel Castro came to power in 1959. Cuba has long been a stable Marxist state and does not face a sustained insurgent movement. Since 1979, Nicaragua has had a Marxist regime against which "contra" revolutionary forces are still fighting.

There were several Marxist insurgencies in Latin America in the 1960's; but these all failed; witness Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. The most likely candidates for Marxist revolution in Latin America in 1986 are those Central American nations near Nicaragua: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. However, guerrilla activity in these countries peaked around 1981; since then, Marxist forces have usually been on the defensive. Whether or not Marxism eventually comes to Central America remains to be seen, but the guerrillas will have to increase their activity there a great deal in order to succeed.¹⁵

Elsewhere in Latin America, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) has unleashed a campaign of terror in Peru. This group, however, claims to be Maoist, and the Soviet Union has a long-established arms relationship with the Peruvian government.¹⁶ Marxists are also believed to be gaining strength within the Chilean opposition, although this group is not yet in a position to overthrow the military government of General Augusto Pinochet. Marxist revolution is apparently not a significant threat to the larger, more developed Latin American nations. To the smaller, weaker nations threatened by Marxism, the United States can be more of a hindrance and the Soviet Union less of a help simply because of geography.

With regard to the non-Marxist states of the region, Latin America provides the Soviet Union with many potential friends because, above all others, this area traditionally tried to avoid "United States imperialism." But like other regions of the third world, Latin American governments are interested in obtaining

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Mark N. Katz is a research associate at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies of the Smithsonian Institution's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. He is the author of *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), and *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

The lesson of Chernobyl is that a policy of "openness" will remain meaningless so long as political leaders cannot be held accountable to society for their actions. As long as this is the case, abuse of power can always be masked. Yelena Bonner can be allowed to travel to the West for medical treatment; but Andrei Sakharov remains in exile in Gorky. Anatoly Shcharansky can be exchanged in an international spy swap; yet Jewish emigration remains at an all-time low. Writers may be given a longer leash in order to write about society's problems; but dissidents are arrested and harassed as diligently as ever.

Recent developments in the Soviet Union are reminiscent of Samuel Johnson's aphorism that, in order to survive, familiar things must be made to appear new, while new things, in order to be accepted, must be made to appear familiar. The Soviet Union does not change by leaps and bounds, but by accretion. Although a new generation may now be firmly in power, it too must struggle hard and long to overcome its past. ■

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economic assistance, and this is not available from the Soviet Union to the same degree that it is from the West (although the Soviet Union has established strong commercial links with some Latin American nations, most notably Argentina). Non-Marxist Latin American governments are suspicious of Soviet intentions, since they perceive the Soviet Union as working actively to promote revolution against other Latin American governments. Only if there were a severe deterioration in United States-Latin American relations would the Soviet Union significantly improve its ties with the non-Marxist governments of Latin America.

CONCLUSION

The most obvious challenges to Soviet interests in the third world are the insurgencies being fought against pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regimes. Should such a regime be toppled by an indigenous opposition movement (and not by external intervention as in Grenada), the Soviet Union would lose an ally; and an important—and unwelcome—precedent would be set: for the first time, a guerrilla movement would have toppled a Marxist-Leninist regime in the third world. Other guerrilla movements might fight all the harder after seeing another guerrilla movement succeed. Fur-

¹⁷On the "Reagan Doctrine," see Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "The Guns of July," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 64, no. 4 (Spring, 1986), pp. 698-714.

¹⁸David B. Ottaway, "U.S. and Rebel Sources See Soviets Bolstering Support for Third World," *The Washington Post*, June 11, 1986, p. A36.

¹⁹Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-75.

ther, these guerrilla movements might receive increased Western aid, thus making it more difficult for the Soviet Union and its allies to defend Marxist regimes.

Western aid to these insurgent groups is a growing problem for the Soviet Union. The United States has given assistance to the Afghan guerrillas since the administration of President Jimmy Carter and has given aid to the Nicaraguan contras since the early years of Ronald Reagan's administration, but recently, a "Reagan Doctrine" has emerged to give assistance to the opponents of other pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regimes in the third world.¹⁷

It is perhaps no accident that after Gorbachev came to power in the spring of 1985, even stronger counteroffensives were launched against the guerrillas in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Afghanistan (the strongest Vietnamese offensive against the resistance in Kampuchea preceded Gorbachev's accession to power). In all these campaigns, the Marxist-Leninist regime (often with external assistance) made significant progress and the guerrillas were put on the defensive. In none of them, however, were the guerrillas defeated; thus they continue to pose a threat to Soviet interests.¹⁸

However, in another respect these insurgencies serve Soviet interests: as long as the opposition is never strong enough to seize power, its existence encourages the Marxist regime to rely on the Soviet Union and its allies. No other country is likely to supply the Nicaraguan, Angolan and Ethiopian governments with military assistance equivalent to that provided by Moscow and Havana even if these regimes were willing to expel the Soviet and Cuban troops. In Mozambique, Soviet and Cuban assistance has been limited—possibly because the Soviet Union and Cuba recognize that South Africa has too many advantages—and the Mozambicans have turned to Zimbabwe, Portugal and other Western countries for military aid. As a result, Soviet influence in Mozambique appears to have declined.¹⁹

This consideration might apply to Kampuchea as well: as long as Vietnam is bogged down fighting there, it will need Soviet military assistance. But Vietnam would probably continue to seek Soviet military assistance because of the hostility between Beijing and Hanoi. Similarly, the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan does not help the Soviet Union; the Marxist regime there (like the one in Phnom Penh) is in no position to break from the intervening power that props it up.

With Marxist states in the third world facing insurgencies or chronic instability and non-Marxist states requiring economic assistance that the Soviet Union does not supply, Soviet leaders appear to face difficulties not only in expanding but in maintaining their influence in the third world. This is very different from the situation a decade ago, when Soviet influence