

Orbis. Fifteenth Anniversary Issue: World Politics and U. S. Foreign Policy in the 1970's

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G.A. Arbatov, Director of the U.S.A. Institute in Moscow and the chief Soviet America-watcher, writes: ". . . the words, 'the seventies,' constantly recurring in the titles of numerous American pamphlets and articles, are something more than a device to catch the reader's eye. Behind these titles are the profound malaise and despair of a considerable part of the American public, which is . . . seeking, anxiously and with hope, to peer into the future." The peerers in this volume, aside from Arbatov, are distinguished American foreign policy specialists, a few select political figures, and several professional Kremlinologists. They include William R. Kintner, Morton Kaplan, Charles Burton Marshall, Senators Barry Goldwater and Hubert Humphrey, Foy Kohler, Alvin Rubenstein, and Donald Brennan.

Much of the futurist speculation in this diffuse collection aims at avoiding bad futures rather than at obtaining good ones. Dour forecasting and the rejection of wishful or moralistic thinking mark especially the analyses of America-Russia relations. The stated premise of the volume is that the U.S.-Soviet relationship remains the central issue of foreign policy, despite all pettifogging about polycentrism, multipolarity, triangular relationships, the end of the cold war, etc. The editors note that the "military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union will provide the strategic backdrop against which the policies of the 1970's will unfold."

It is perhaps best to show the nature of disagreements among the contributors "without attribution," since the issues themselves, rather than their proponents, are crucial.

There are, for instance, three quite

different interpretations of Soviet behavior. One is that, as always, the Soviet Union's leadership pursues a "long standing policy aimed at making [it] the dominant world power." Another argues that, however moribund today, Marxism-Leninism continues to compel Soviet leadership, if only because without it they would be stripped of their title to rule. This doctrine requires the leadership to assert, willy nilly, that the "communist system is destined to rule the world." A third interpretation is that, if only because of historical conditioning, a Russian craving for security propels them to a conservative "contingency planning" based upon the *most* unfavorable hypothetical possibilities, including that of general nuclear war. These are quite different but not incompatible assessments.

The first view assumes an unchanged *wish* to hold strategic sway in a future world where no contenders can challenge Soviet supremacy; the second assumes that the leadership is, as it were, caught in a nasty circumstance where, even if it wished to, it cannot repudiate the doctrine which requires it to be perpetually at war with a "capitalist" world—a war which it is compelled to say it will someday win; the third is a pathological existentialist "Russian" view of an environment always very dangerous to Russia's survival, a world composed of a "*cauchemar des coalitions*."

Each of these three assessments addresses itself to motives and intentions rather than to actual practice, observable tendencies, or particular ends. In individual articles purporting to report what is actually going on, one comes across nasty contradictions. For example, "An Amer-

ican View of Soviet Foreign Policy" says in one instance:

"It seems clear . . . that the Kremlin leaders have already made one fundamental decision regarding the Soviet role in the international arena which will continue to dominate their policies in the 1970's: *to try to 'overtake and surpass' the United States in military prowess and in scientific pre-eminence*" (my italics).

A few paragraphs later the same author writes about the consequences of Khrushchev's "ignominy" at the time of the Cuban missile crisis:

"These humiliations were certainly among the factors leading to Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, but it is clear in retrospect that even before his ouster he had himself ordered a speed-up in Soviet production and deployment of ICBS's. His successors have carried this decision forward and are *clearly determined to achieve overall military parity with the United States*" (my italics).

This internal disagreement, seen from an American perspective, is absolutely critical. Generally speaking, and long before the American foreign policy crisis about U.S. commitments and obligations reached its crescendo, it had become a standard Pentagon expectation that the U.S. could (should?) accept strategic parity, if only because then the two superpowers could negotiate their future stability. However, when the new Soviet strategic offensive began in the mid-1960's, and its huge offspring came slouching down the dry-docks and off assembly lines, the rate of weapons' appearance and deployment seemed to continue to increase. Like toothpaste squeezed from a tube of indeterminate size, one could only wonder how much was still in the tube, and whether there are any limits on Soviet concepts of "sufficiency." This situation is made especially unattractive by the historical context in which such new power is manifested—namely, a time when nearly all Western nations plus Japan have chosen to renounce as either futile or unaffordable any pretense to being "azimuthal" strategic powers, powers with wide-ranging "nineteenth-century" aspirations.

From the American point of view this strong Soviet thrust coincides with a time when America's confidence in the uses of its own power is at perhaps the lowest point in our national history. Americans, now so bemused with internal discontents and their Vietnam follies, need to inquire steadily whether parity or supremacy is the Soviet goal. In this connection, our national moods should be carefully heeded, for, as another contributor cautiously notes:

"... never in their history have the American people shown themselves willing to accept a subordinate role to an external dominant power, particularly one disposed to exhibit any political hostility. It would therefore be unwise for the Soviet policymakers to expect that the USSR, having moved abreast of America in strategic military power, could now substantially surpass her and achieve such a strategic preponderance as to pose a psycho-political threat. That development would not be tolerated by the American political system, regardless of how much polarization or how many drastic political changes within that system the counteractive process would require. Perhaps Soviet policymakers understand the foregoing comments better than do certain segments of the U.S. intelligentsia." The key word, of course, is "perhaps."

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Beyond Malthus: Population and Power by Neil W. Chamberlain

(Basic Books; 214 pp.; \$6.95)

Robert E. Neil

This book is a relentless pursuit of the obvious. I could not find a single idea in it that would not be self-evident to any faithful reader of Section 4 of the Sunday *New York Times*. What is worse, Chamberlain insists on couching his platitudes and truisms in a pompous academese that frequently rises to the level of self-caricature.

A few random quotations will illustrate the content and flavor of the book:

"Without attempting any more complete catalogue of devices for containing pressures for change in the authority structure, let us simply note that resort can also be had to physical repression. . . ."

"If there is a pressure on resources, then, we can say that those groups whom we speak of as contained by the authority structure will be disproportionately disadvantaged. The diminishing returns from resources will fall on them most heavily." (In plain English: when things are tough the poor will get an even shorter end of the stick than usual.)

"In general, if a subpopulation is growing at a greater rate than other groups, and is enfranchised, it appears to endanger the interests of those other groups, especially if it itself is dissatisfied with its own participation in the social advantage. . . ."

"The congregation of numbers of those who are discontented with their place in the social scheme may give rise to violent action, such as riots. . . ."

"Without imputing to urbanization any wholly independent influence on society or erecting it into a self-sufficient social force, we can nevertheless recognize that this

demographic phenomenon is pervasive enough in its influence to be given its conceptual role in any general theory of social process. . . ."

Chamberlain does not make these bold assertions solely on his own authority. It would never do, for instance, simply to state what everybody knows, namely, that big cities are lonely and impersonal. Instead, Durkheim and *anomie* are trundled in to confound the skeptics. And then, to prove that *anomie* is a Bad Thing, Chamberlain cites the Kew Gardens episode of 1964 when dozens of New Yorkers witnessed the murder of a young woman without even calling the cops. In case the significance of this example has eluded the reader, the author nails it down with a learned footnote. Here we discover that a two-man "team" of researchers has decided that the Kew Gardens incident shows that "inaction by some induces inaction by others."

All of this blandness of conception and dreariness of expression is really too bad because Chamberlain, in the first chapter of the book, zeroes in on an important and stimulating problem. Population growth has been studied almost entirely in terms of pressure on natural resources (the approach inaugurated by Malthus). But the growth of man's numbers, as the author rightly notes, also involves pressure of people on people and of people on institutions. Even if natural resources were infinite, these other pressures would still pose crucial problems. We must therefore go beyond Malthus in studying the implications of population growth.

So far so good. To be sure, the reader is already aware after chapter 1 that he is in the hands of a wret-