

American Specialists Hold First Meeting

Fifteen American Specialists on the Soviet Union gathered in Washington at the Committee's invitation on December 6 for the first substantive meeting of the group. It considered three working papers—on strategic parity, the Soviet economy, and human rights—and reviewed the major themes developed from these topics at a dinner meeting that evening with senior State Department officials.

The main point of discussion at the dinner was whether Soviet attitudes and internal decisions can be known with sufficient certainty to warrant basing American policy on them. Improvement of the U.S. geopolitical position can be seen as a means of influencing Soviet behavior, and the burden of adjustment can similarly be viewed as having shifted to the Soviets. This was the challenge presented to the Specialists.

Three levels of possible engagement were identified: (1) fine-tuning of American policy so as to influence specific Kremlin debates—which most thought unfruitful; (2) American conduct broadly designed with one eye on the internal struggle for ascendancy between hard-liners and Westernizers in Moscow—which most thought could be effective; and (3) traditional diplomacy, going beyond geopolitical pressure to seek to understand and influence Soviet motivation—which all of the Specialists seemed to

think not only possible but essential.

[Three days later, at a Yeshiva University speech in New York, Secretary of State George Shultz stated that: "Americans have sometimes tended to think that power and diplomacy are two distinct alternatives. This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding. The truth is, power and diplomacy must always go together, or we will accomplish very little in this world."]

The moderator summed up the dinner discussion by suggesting that in approaching Soviet actions and attitudes "know-everything is impossible, know-nothing is hazardous and probably ineffective. The Specialists aim to operate in the muddled middle, where light can be useful and where those with an interest in illumination can attract our insights."

Authors of the working papers were Mark Garrison, Brown University; Robert Byrnes, Indiana University; and Robert Tucker, Princeton University. The State Department participants were headed by Michael Armacost, Under Secretary for Political Affairs (the No. 3 official, and senior foreign service officer, in the Department). A friendly and encouraging letter was received from Secretary Shultz.

Further meetings, with Congressional audiences, are in preparation for February and April.

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