

Growing Soviet Opposition to Detente

MOSCOW—The fact that Moscow made no change in the flow of Jewish emigrants to Israel during or since the war of Yom Kippur shows how vital to the present Kremlin leadership the policy of detente with the U.S. has become.

Said one Soviet official: "The Arabs bitterly complained that while America was sending arms to Israel, we were sending men to Israel." Soviet officials claim to the Arabs that the emigration cannot be legally stopped, which is ridiculous. The real reason it continues is to avoid a public explosion in the U.S.

Likewise, an extraordinary effort is being made to pretend that the refusal of the U.S. Congress to extend trading equality to the Soviet Union is really a minor matter. That may be true from a strictly economic standpoint, but privately Soviet officials admit that from a political and psychological standpoint it has been a major setback.

The stage is now being carefully set to withstand a probable second major blow from Congress: legislation denying U.S. credits to help finance the economic deals Moscow is trying to

work out—with no conspicuous success despite the headlines—with American business. Showing a stiff upper lip, Soviet leaders say the U.S. may block credits for now but sooner or later will end such discrimination.

In fact, however, denial of U.S. credits would force-feed party leader Leonid Brezhnev a very bitter pill. Although Brezhnev carefully extracted a blank check for detente from the politburo last April (including the secret police and the military, each of whom now have a seat on the 17-member Politburo), he cannot go on forever getting slapped down by the U.S. without serious damage to his power and prestige.

As of today, there is literally no public dissent to Brezhnev's policy of detente. Moscow has paid Washington \$28 million as the first installment on the \$7 billion lend-lease debt. That was the Soviet side of the bargain under which President Nixon promised most-favored-nation trade equality and long-range credits. There will be no further lend-lease payments until the U.S. delivers—but no word of implied criticism of Brezhnev has been allowed.

However, thoughtful Soviet proponents of detente are getting worried. They claim that "everyone" is for detente, but then add elliptically that there are many skeptics not yet satisfied detente is "possible."

Translated, that means detente faces growing and important opposition inside the party or the army or both. And that in turn means Brezhnev may soon face internal political threats which would compel him to veer away from detente.

Thus, while congressional actions may have only small economic effects, they could have decisive and explosive political effects here. That explains Moscow's unprecedented wooing of American public and governmental opinion.

But this courtship, at a time when Khrushchevian political reforms are being turned off, does not come close to meeting American demands for an open society agreeable to political dissent. To the contrary, the courageous civil libertarian and nuclear physicist, Andrei Sakharov, is now being castigated in high party levels as mentally

unbalanced. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, one of the world's truly great authors, is ridiculed by these same officials as "not a real writer."

Nor has the slightest sign been seen here of serious reduction in the alarming growth of strategic nuclear weapons or of relaxation of the rigorous Soviet control of the Eastern European bloc.

To the contrary, the Soviet army is widely believed to be sending hundreds of the new T-62 tanks to Eastern Europe. That may be part of the numbers game in preparation for a U.S.-Soviet agreement on mutual reduction of arms in Central Europe, or it may not.

Thus, while Brezhnev is pushing ahead hard with many small "detentisms," such as unjamming the Voice of America and keeping the emigration pipeline going, he is not beginning to approach the harder issues that matter so much to the U.S. Congress. Unless he does, detente may lose its glow here as Brezhnev fails to obtain the promised benefits. If so, Brezhnev's own glow will also start to dim.