

Soviet Communist party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev confirmed yesterday foreign suspicions that the Kremlin is far from fully satisfied with some major recent developments in the international arena. He betrayed a certain nervousness, particularly over the uncertain fate of the Bonn-Moscow treaty now being debated in West Germany and also over possibility that secret agreements may have been concluded during President Nixon's visit to China.

His assertion that, in deciding on whether to ratify the treaty, West Germany is making "a choice between a policy of peace and a policy of war" is so patently a threat that it may boomerang and actually strengthen those who oppose ratification. And Mr. Brezhnev did not conceal his unhappiness in revealing that the Chinese People's Republic has offered at most to develop relations of peaceful coexistence with Moscow, rather than the more intimate relations the Kremlin believes appropriate among Socialist nations.

In his comments on President Nixon's scheduled May visit to Moscow, Mr. Brezhnev assumed an extremely cautious—but not negative—tone. He took particular care to reassure Moscow's allies that any improvement in Soviet-American relations would not be at the expense of any third parties. Yet the North Vietnamese, for example, must have apprehensions of the same kind they made little effort to mask during Mr. Nixon's visit to China.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the Brezhnev speech—more for what it left unsaid than for what it did say—was his discussion of the Middle East situation. Here Mr. Brezhnev's concern was indicated by the lengths to which he went to overstate the warmth of Arab-Soviet relations, including the assertion, "It can be said with certainty that our relations with the Arab friends have never been so profound and all round as now."

All this turns a blind eye and deaf ear to the virulent anti-Communism in Libya, the open anti-Sovietism in the Sudan and the xenophobic hostility widespread in Egypt. It also takes no account of the general Arab suspicions about what may be hidden behind the increased flow of Soviet Jews allowed to migrate to Israel and behind the resumption of unofficial Soviet-Israeli contacts.

On balance, much of Mr. Brezhnev's address had a defensive tone, responding in words and overtones to criticisms among the Kremlin élite and to misgivings among the Soviet people, misgivings that remain real and understandable for all that they are allowed no public forum.