



Title	3. An Asymmetric State
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Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 2, 55-70
Issue Date	1984
Doc URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2115/7936
Type	bulletin (article)
File Information	KJ00000034078.pdf



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3. An Asymmetric State

Alain Besançon

What are the strong points and the weak points of the USSR? The answer depends on whether we assume that the USSR is a state like any other, or a totally different one. Our states, belonging to the so-called Free World, deal with the Soviet Union on a state to state basis. We usually believe that state to state relations are ultimate and that other relations are subordinate. This is wrong. But we have to set forth two different analyses: a symmetrical one (our state versus their state), and an asymmetrical one opposing on the one hand our states and on the other, to quote its official appellation, "The International Communist Movement, headed by the Soviet Union," — that is, a political entity in which the Communist party uses the Soviet state as an instrument.

1

Most analyses approach the USSR from the symmetrical point of view. They entail a description of the Soviet Union that includes a list of strengths and weaknesses that in our world would indeed be strengths and weaknesses.

In the field of economics, relying on a collection of statistics, sometimes corrected, sometimes not, we speak about successes and failures. We try to evaluate the gross national product, the standard of living, and the military expenses. In doing so, we come to assertions of this type: the burden of armaments is curbing individual consumption. The oil crisis will oblige the USSR to find other sources of energy, or to conquer new oil fields outside its territory. The claims of the consumer will bring on better and more flexible management. East-West trade will spread the seeds of a market economy, and will link Soviet interests with our own.

In the fields of politics and military balance, we try to evaluate data that, in our world, would be treated as factors of weakness or of strength. The presence of irreducible nationalities (Turks of Central Asia) is perceived against the background of English or French colonial experience. Their demographic upsurge, their ethnic coherence, fit the criteria of what is assumed to be an empire in the classical sense of the word. With respect to the growing militarization we ask questions of this kind: what is the influence of the so-called military-industrial complex? Is a *coup d'état* foreseeable that will wipe out the obsolete Marxist ideology and achieve Russia's permanent aims — access to the warm seas, protection of its European glacis, and control over world resources? Is a new and more sophisticated generation coming to power? Can Andropov be a representative of this new elite?

All that is the daily bread of Western Sovietology. I shall not take the

trouble to refute these assertions, but rather ask why we have been misled so long by this totally erroneous approach. With regard to the Soviet Union, the concepts of empire, dictatorship, bureaucracy, gross national product, and management are clearly inadequate. Nevertheless we use them, because the Soviet state exists and assumes some of a regular state's functions. However, it ignores the following functions: to be an arbiter between social groups (because there are no autonomous and acknowledged social groups); to warrant justice or security to citizens (because the ideas of justice and security are distorted and become synonymous with the prepotency of the Communist party); to represent society to itself or to the rest of the world (because there is no such thing as Soviet society). To sum it up, the state has no specific bond with society, does not stem from it and is not responsible for it.

Now, what is the main function of the Soviet state? It is to represent the superior interest of socialism (I will not try to define "socialism" here). It makes use of the tools of a regular state (army, police, diplomacy, trade, influence, etc.) but it does not have the aims and the purposes of a regular state.

Here lies in my opinion the source of Western mistakes. Even great statesmen such as Churchill, de Gaulle, and Kissinger faced the Soviet Union primarily as a state and tried to include this state in a concert of powers. They hoped to bait the Soviet Union with the lure of common interest. But socialism excludes the very idea of common interest.

Therefore, dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union, we have to consider first the original nature and the real objectives of this political entity. The Soviet projects are *not* those we assume them to be. They are not to develop the economy, to raise the standard of living, to modernize or whatever. The one project is to "build socialism" and to spread it over the whole world. The fact that nobody knows what socialism is is irrelevant. The built-in program is to build socialism, to propagate it; here lies, as Vladimir Bukovskii noticed, the only legitimacy of the system. Once you ride a tiger, it is not easy to get off.

The Soviet Union is not primarily a state. It is the base of a universal revolution, the crystalline seed destined to crystallize the planet in the pattern of this initial model. Strength and weakness must be measured only in reference to the above-mentioned project.

This project is two-fold.

(a) It is materially to build and to maintain a system able to generate a power-system competitive with the adversary (that is anything which is not "socialism") and to control firmly the Soviet population; to generate a sector capable of imitating socialism; to make believe that socialism is at work (planned economy, "new man," collective agriculture, etc.); to tolerate a sector outside socialism, a sort of economic reserve (free market, second economy, black market) in which the first sector can get supplies.

(b) It is morally to build and maintain a political-cultural apparatus able (i) to generate a legitimizing ideology, i.e. a global interpretation of the historical world, supposedly warranted by positive science, (ii) to organize a body of men

devoted to ideology — keepers of the doctrine and of the “wooden language” — the international Communist movement, (iii) to control, to animate, and to lead this movement with the elder party, the CPSU, assuming the functions of the Soviet state.

There is thus an equation: ideology = party = power. The party depends on ideology; power depends on the party.

2

Starting from these premises, we can set up a list of strong and weak points. A weak point is something that prevents the Soviet system from realizing its project and not something that would prevent it from accomplishing a program similar to ours, which it never cared about.

Let us begin with an inexhaustive list of strong points:

(1) The quasi-limitless supply of natural and human resources: Communism controls directly the territory of the Soviet Union, and indirectly about one-third of the earth and forty percent of the world's population. Any setback, any economic or demographic or military failure can be checked and counterbalanced for a long time without risking a global disaster.

(2) The absence of opposition and society's inability to resist. This is true of the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent of Eastern Europe. Every group that was capable of any self-organization or had any autonomy — Churches, professional milieux, and unions — has been broken, repressed, and atomized. To some extent nationalities and even the opinions of the public have been affected.

(3) Unity of the party. This is the historical superiority of the CPSU which, unlike the Chinese Communist Party, is not plagued by internal dissension and strife.

(4) The direction of the international Communist movement. Tradition and political coherence demand that there be a center in charge of the general strategy; this center is naturally the CPSU. The center supports inside the “brother parties” a devoted, half-clandestine apparatus. With the political agreement of these parties, the “men of Moscow” can operate and arbitrate conflicts that occur between the general interests of the Movement and particular interests of the individual parties. Since Stalin's time, more flexible structures have been implemented and they seem to work correctly.

(5) Self-occupation of the dominated zone. As I said, there is no such thing as the Soviet empire. An empire, in the classical sense of the word, displays generally the following features: it relies mainly on military strength; it is relatively indifferent to the social structures used by the subjugated people and does not seek to transform them; it acknowledges the legitimacy of other competing empires. None of these criteria applies to Soviet domination.

The method of Communist domination is first to “hatch” a local Communist party and to help it to seize power. Second, it is to warrant the permanence of this power through the international Communist movement, through the influence of the Soviet state and eventually through the Soviet army. Therefore, Soviet domina-

tion is exempt from the heavy burden of occupation so difficult for classical empires to maintain (compare for instance the British, French, and Japanese twentieth century empires).

(6) The historical fact that Communism can present itself as an alternative solution to any crisis whatsoever, in any political regime. Communism is the solution to the crisis of an *ancien régime* (e.g. Tsarist Russia, imperial Iran), of a nation emerging from colonial emancipation (e.g. China, Vietnam, Angola), of a South American dictatorship (e.g. Cuba, Nicaragua), of an authoritarian state (e.g. Salazarian Portugal), and finally to a deep political crisis inside a democracy (e.g. Chili, France). Here we have to keep in mind that a Communist party never starts a revolution, but is prepared to manipulate a revolution and to seize power through a revolution by presenting itself as the universal solution to a crisis.

However, as regards the Soviet project, there are many flaws and weaknesses, though in respects other than those we are accustomed to considering. Here is an in-exhaustive list :

(1) The most obvious is the progressive rotting and disintegration of the civilian socialist sector of the economy and the relative rise of the nonsocialist sector. There is a creeping strike, or a slowdown of work, a debasement of the ordinary worker's life because of alcoholism, poor health, etc. The worker sells his working strength on the black market. The standard of living is to be compared with that of Bangladesh. There is a decrease in life expectancy and a rise in infant mortality quite extraordinary in a country which claims to be developed and industrialized.

(2) In the Soviet view, this situation is quite tolerable, in so far as it does not entail unacceptable political consequences. But shortages in towns, especially in Moscow and Leningrad, may have dangerous results, particularly if they undermine the reliability of the decisive military sector. To remain competitive it is necessary to concentrate available resources on military targets. But in doing so, we get near the point of rupture. The logistic foundation of the military system is jeopardized by excessive contraction undertaken in order to meet the requisites of an arms race.

(3) The condition of ideology is far from satisfactory. Ideology is the central column of the system. Outside the Soviet camp ideology remains in good condition. In Europe, though, its prestige is declining within the higher strata of the intelligentsia. But it is still thriving in the lower intelligentsia. Ideology is also penetrating into countries like England, the United States, and Japan, where it had not been until recently, due to the generalization of mass education and higher education. In South America, the success of ideology as a mixture of messianism and Marxism stems from the crisis of the Church. The first instance of Castroism, that of Che Guevara, failed, but the second, that of the Sandinistas, is succeeding thanks to the ecclesiastic driving belt.

However, inside the Communist world, ideology is no longer a belief. It is only a language. Ideology is to be spoken as a compulsory medium in public affairs and also — this applies only to party members — in private affairs. It identifies

itself with power. It is a kind of behavioral code, but it is no longer a sincere and naive creed.

(4) The party is open to corruption. By corruption I mean the loss of its Leninist essence. The party is threatened by two evils:

(a) cynicism. The party member disconnects himself from ideology, and makes use of it only as a passport to power. Power is desired for the privileges attached to it, and not for the sake of promoting "socialism." Following this line the party turns into a privileged *caste*.

(b) business. The party member gets into business relations with what remains of civil society. He deals, trades, and sells protection for money. In the long run, political decisions can be affected by private interests. If it moves in this direction, the party turns into a privileged *class*.

However, as a rule, the party is neither a caste nor a class. It is rather a sort of sect or religious order. It is pervasive throughout the society, but at the same time it is cut off from society and not allowed to maintain organic links with it.

In order to protect the party from fusion with society, it is necessary to build an efficient fence. This is the role of the complex network of schools, hospitals, resorts, and stores reserved strictly for party members according to the internal hierarchy.

However, the trend toward corruption urges a perpetual raising of the level of privileges in order to prevent any involvement in society. In the long run, this also is politically dangerous.

(5) There is a permanent danger that at some place in the "socialist camp" a sudden breakdown of Communist rule will take place. This happened or nearly happened in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The danger is this: if socialist power is overthrown, people discover immediately that socialism never actually existed. It is of vital importance not to let history deviate from its course. The power's legitimacy is at stake.

3

What can the party do, and what is it actually doing, to solve these difficulties? Theoretically, there are two possible political lines. Practically, the party is following a third one.

(1) The first line would be a return to a Stalinist (or, more accurately, Leninist) style of government. But this would be counterproductive. Certainly, it would be necessary to kill many people, but this is no problem for a Communist government. A more delicate problem would be the purgation of the party. It is an easy kind of operation to begin, but difficult to control and to end. The old men in power do not forget the dangers they escaped in the late thirties. Moreover, you cannot follow this line without weakening the state's power. You cannot wipe out the peasants' private lots without starting a new famine, nor can you crush the free market without paralyzing the entire system of production. Andropov showed some intentions of going this way; he was soon obliged to stop.

(2) The second line would point towards the liquidation of the regime by the "right wing." It would replace it with a kind of national Bolshevism and throw away ideology. The advantages of this line are obvious from the first. As Solzhenitsyn noticed, the great cause of pain in the Soviet Union is not poverty or oppression, but the pressure of ideology — the daily domination of a pervasive and universal lie. It would be a fantastic relief. Moreover, the surrender of ideology could greatly improve the rationality and the efficiency of management. It would put a quick end to food shortages and to the industrial and agricultural mess. From the government point of view, such a move would reinforce military power and consolidate the party as a caste or as a class.

In spite of all these advantages, I do not think that such a line is likely to be adopted. Ideology is the core of the system; to put it aside entails a change in the basis of legitimacy. In the present condition, the consequence would be a break in the power elite that might trigger an uncontrolled explosion. This kind of power needs a dose of magic as an ingredient. Magic is useful for controlling national and social tensions. It is easier to send people to the Gulag for breaking the rule of proletarian "internationalism" (or another magic formula) than it is for mere nationalism. Behind ideology is not the traditional Russian Empire — only a void.

(3) These are the reasons why Brezhnev followed, and now Andropov is following, a third line. It can be described as sight navigation between pure Stalinism and pure national Bolshevism. Politically Andropov stands in the center, the most comfortable position. He tries to safeguard the ideological magic, and at the same time to make full use of national Bolshevik realism.

In the field of internal politics, such a line is careful and conservative. There are no more rumors of great reforms in contrast to the time of Stalin and Khrushchev. It is more a matter of piecemeal management combined with harassment of dissent. The prevailing atmosphere is of a routinized jail, or maybe a night asylum or a mental hospital, where certain inferior pleasures that help people to be quietly ruled are dispensed. The USSR, with its incredible debasement of daily life, is becoming a nation of bums.

In foreign policy, as if in compensation for this, Andropov's line is, as Brezhnev's was, active and bold. It spreads out in two directions.

(a) It tries to compel the Western and industrialized states to subsidize the USSR power system. Already, nearly 100 billion dollars have been poured into the CMEA. This reinforces the system and consequently helps it to exert new pressure on the West to raise the level of subsidy. The great technology robbery is potentially even more important.

(b) It tries to obtain a "great success": that is, to extend Communist domination, to submit new states to the control of the CPSU. A "great success" (I voluntarily use this vague expression) reinforces the alliance between Communism and Russian nationalism, quiets the growing contest between Leninism and national Bolshevism, and, finally, gains the party some popular support. But where is this "great success" to take place? Anywhere, but more likely, where a strategic victory

can be obtained — in Europe. Conquering without war is the favorite method of Communism. But in Europe we are a region difficult to conquer without war. As time passes, a “great success” becomes more urgent. The task of the peace movement, to the extent that it is manipulated by Moscow, is to lower the risk. There is the rub.

4

Materially, we deliver to the Soviet Union money, goods, and technology: these are equivalent to power. Private business is not equipped to refuse an opportunity for profit. But states support this traffic for several bad reasons: for Keynesian motives — by supporting the trade, we make our economic machines run; and for political motives — because we hope to normalize the Soviet regime. When this second motive fails, we support the subsidy again because we hope to buy tranquillity in return for this aid which amounts to a sort of ransom. Money, trade, and technology make the Soviet Union stronger. So it becomes necessary to pay a higher and higher ransom. At least, let our capitalists risk their own money. Now states cover the risk with the money of the taxpayer, as is the case in France, Germany and Italy. Public opinion could protest against such a policy.

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Morally, we could quicken the decline of ideology and, consequently, erode the regime's legitimacy. But the Soviet regime compels us to legitimate it. It tries to make us use words that pertain only to the wooden language of ideology. Each time we agree to be *both* (“they” and “us”) for peace, for peaceful coexistence, for non-intervention in internal affairs, for democracy, for détente, and for the rights of men, we compromise ourselves. We act as does the rank and file Soviet citizen when he is obliged to speak the wooden language, when he is constrained to lie. Freely we give to socialism the honorability, the legitimacy, and the reality it needs permanently.

But to escape this trap, to refuse to use the conventional language, to “delegitimize” the Soviet system, amounts to a political battle of the first magnitude.

In a democracy, such a battle cannot be won without popular support. The first step is then to inform the population. In the name of détente, and peace, the USSR tries to suppress any information concerning itself. For instance, we almost decided not to disclose some details about the attempted assassination of the Pope in order not to destroy the chance of future talks. Information is then the first move in our strategy. But information involves understanding. Historical experience shows that it is not enough to be “against” Communism. The one thing Communism cannot stand is not opposition — it is understanding.

We cannot know whether we will win or will be defeated in this political battle.

The greatest illusion would be to think that we can avoid the political battle by preparing only for a military one. The military battle will be lost, in fact, it will never be fought, if the previous political battle is not engaged — that is, if, having been ignored, it is lost by default.

Comment

Haruki Wada

To be very frank, I question the validity of the paradigm provided by Besançon. Besançon underlined that the Soviet Union is not a state, but the basis for world revolution. In other words, the international Communist movement, headed by the USSR, is a political entity. I would be surprised if a Soviet scholar made such a statement. But I was certainly more surprised to hear such an argument made by a French specialist on Soviet affairs, since it is my firm conviction that the international Communist movement might have existed at some time in the past, but by now it has completely ceased to exist.

It is true that the Russian Revolution born out of World War I aroused at that time great hopes and radical passions among young intellectuals and workers in European countries, as well as in colonies and semi-colonies throughout the world. The international Communist movement thus started. The Soviet Union was then looked upon as if it were the fatherland of the oppressed in the world. No one can doubt that this was a genuine conviction of millions of people at that time. Western capitalist countries were severely hit by the impacts exerted upon them by the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement guided by it. However, in the long run those countries in the West were even able to make use of these impacts and succeeded in improving the social conditions of the working classes, and in revising to a certain degree their imperialistic policies toward their colonies and semi-colonies. For its part, the Soviet Union failed to fulfill her promise of creating an entirely new civilization or a paradise for the working people of the earth. The contradiction between the decorated façade and the real content of the Soviet type of Communism was best illustrated by the existence of the "Gulag Archipelago" in the USSR. The fact came to be widely known only after 1956 and especially in the 1970s. The international Communist movement, damaged by the Sino-Soviet dispute, was completely destroyed by the decisive decline of the authority of the Chinese type of Communism. After the end of the Vietnam War the international Communist movement ceased to exist.

Despite this, revolutions have been incessantly occurring in the Third World. Sometimes these revolutions are led by Communists, but primarily by the indigenous revolutionary leaders in the Third World themselves. Talking about South America, Besançon stated that the success of Communist ideology stems from the crisis of the Church. I cannot agree with this argument. As is often the case in other areas of the Third World, in South America as well formidable revolutions are rather the result of poverty, social injustice, political repression, economic backwardness, and exploitation of national minorities. Catholic radicals are simply prepared to work side by side with Marxists and Communists. Those Catholics are receiving encouragement from the encyclicals of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. Those bishops and priests who are fighting for human rights intend to save

the Church from its crisis rather than destroy it. With regard to the relationship between these revolutions in some Third World countries and the Soviet Union, Castro's case is still suggestive even now. A revolutionary democrat, Castro became a Communist after the victory of his revolution in Cuba. His government has been able to obtain aid only from the Soviet Union. Almost all the revolutionary governments in the Third World badly need aid from advanced industrial countries. Yet, Moscow is very frequently the only source of such aid. Assistance from the USSR naturally tends to lead to an increase or expansion of Soviet influence. The Soviet Union, of course, has demonstrated her proclivity to take full advantage of this influence in her confrontations with the United States. Thus, in my view, it is not Soviet influence that brings revolutions to the Third World, but revolutions in the Third World that help Soviet influence expand. That is to say, revolutions in the Third World are not to be regarded as events brought about by the international Communist movement. The Soviet type of Communism has already ceased to be the basis of a world revolution. The Soviet Union is now a state and society which must be viewed as such.

In his paradigm Besançon enumerates six strong points and five weak points of the Soviet Union. The second of his strong points is "the absence of opposition and the incapacity of resistance from society." Of course, "the absence of opposition" in the USSR is an indisputable fact, but I wonder if this fact represents the strength of the Soviet Union. True, the absence of opposition was regarded for a long time by Communists as an ideal political situation. But the absence of opposition seems also to be a decisive obstacle to the further development of the Soviet Union. Besançon's argument about "the incapacity of resistance from society" does not seem to fit the realities in the present Soviet Union, where churches, social classes, interest groups, professional milieux, labor unions, public opinion, and nationalities are exerting from below some kinds of pressures and influences upon the political leadership at the top. Even the Soviet party-state leadership cannot govern the society without taking these kinds of pressures and influences into consideration. Next, from the list of weak points enumerated by Besançon, I have the impression that with such weak points prevalent in itself the Soviet Union cannot then act as the basis for a world revolution. The standard of living in the USSR is to be compared to that of Bangladesh. The USSR, with its incredible worsening of daily life, is almost becoming a throng of bums. Besançon, writes: "Ideology is no longer a belief in the current Soviet society. It is only a language." I strongly wonder how it can possibly exert influences upon other countries, still claiming itself to be the center of the international Communist movement. Here lies an essential weakness of Besançon's argument.

At the very end of his paper Besançon stated that in compensation for the miserable internal position the Soviet Union under Andropov becomes active to obtain a "great success" in Europe by conquering with war. In this picture of the threat of Soviet aggressiveness in Europe there is no international Communist movement. This argument is already familiar to us. And the practical conclusion is also familiar enough. Besançon concluded that the task of the peace movement, in so far

as it is manipulated by Moscow, is to lower the risk. This kind of warning has been voiced many times from the lips of politicians. In sum, I must say that Besançon's paper seems to me to be another attempt to press us into the old conclusion in the disguise of new paradigm.

Comment

Hiroshi Kimura

My first comment concerns the definition of "strength" and "weakness" in Besançon's paper. Strength and weakness are vague, ambiguous terms. I wonder if such words can be used in the academic community. Strength or weakness depends upon the point of view from which you are looking at the Soviet Union. The ruler's perspective, for example, must be different from that of the ruled in the USSR, depending upon which value he or she considers more relevant, e.g., equality or efficiency, or *égalité* or freedom — these values stand in a permanent dilemma. They stand in "either-or" relations. One must choose either one of these pairs, thereby sacrificing the other. I am afraid to say that Besançon's paper takes a Western, capitalist type of value or standpoint; from this perspective he is discussing the "strength" and "weakness" of the Soviet Union. Without taking any particular position, however, it seems to me a little hard to judge what is weakness and what is strength in the present Soviet society and system. Furthermore, strength and weakness sometimes constitute something like two sides of the same coin. Therefore, one could say that exactly the opposite side of the picture can be drawn from some of the six points enumerated by Besançon. Let us illustrate this. The first point of strength, for example, is "the quasi-inexhaustibility of natural and human resources." Nobody can deny this fact, but one could say at the same time that, unless they are exploited effectively and cheaply, the resources are worthless. Hence we cannot regard the Soviet Union as a resource-rich country. The second strength, "the absence of opposition," is also correct, particularly when one looks superficially at the Soviet Union, but the very same point can be considered also as a weakness of the Soviet system, because the absence of opposition means nothing but the lack of a self-rectifying mechanism. The third strength in Besançon's list is "the unity of the party." Besançon himself, however, noted in another part of his paper, i.e., the fourth weakness, that "the party is open to corruption." In other words, two diametrically opposed phenomena (unity and corruption) stem from the same root (the party). The list can go on.

Second, Besançon's way of using the term "ideology" in his paper does not seem to me very consistent or clear. He has emphasized very much the role of ideology. That is fine. But what bothers me is that at the same time he has not hesitated to underline the great role that such things as the traditional Russian national mind-set and belief system play in the Soviet society without elaborating

at all on the crucial question as to how he relates this to the Soviet ideology. In other words, Besançon is not necessarily clear about whether he includes the traditional Russian values in his concept of ideology, or whether, reversely, he excludes them from ideology, thereby even putting them in an opposing position.

Third, I have the impression that, in contrast to both Hough's and Sato's arguments, Besançon stressed continuity rather than change under the same Soviet ideology and system. That is fine, and may be a correct picture. Yet I wonder if he elaborates on the relative weight of both aspects of the Soviet Union, continuities and discontinuities, which have undoubtedly existed in the Soviet society at least since Stalin.

Discussion

Friedberg began the discussion by emphasizing the need to pay attention to the differences rather than the similarities between the Soviet system and the Western capitalist system. He said that originally scholars had viewed the Soviet Union as an ideologically propelled civilization with few if any similarities to a normally functioning modern state. But since 1956, and especially since Khrushchev's secret speech, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. Western observers have begun to note in Soviet society a great many institutions and processes not unlike those of the West. In the process they have begun to lose sight of the fact that in addition to the obvious similarities there are a great many differences. When a choice ultimately has to be made, it is those differences rather than the similarities that will decide the choice. In this sense Friedberg regarded Besançon's paper as exceptionally valuable.

Friedberg also talked about the role of nationalism in the Soviet Union. He said that Soviet propaganda directed toward the Soviet people during World War II had emphasized nationalism — raw nationalism with elements of chauvinism and racism. In 1945 with the defeat of Japan, Stalin had raised his toast with the words "We Russians have been waiting for this for four decades." Having made an exhaustive study of Soviet mass fiction, Friedberg had discovered that it once again emphasizes racial antagonisms, fear of the Chinese, suspicion of the Japanese, and that it was whipping up old hatreds of the Germans.

Making a comment on ideology in the Soviet Union, Katsenelinboigen said that it is not Marxist, but a cocktail composed of old Marxist phraseology and old Russian ideology. After Stalin's death, there had been a slight modification of this: the extremes had been down-played. But the cocktail is a real ideology which the people now use. That is why there is a very peculiar ideological situation, a very strange combination of ideals concerning national goals, in the Soviet Union. They believe in the primitive idea of centralization as a method for solving all of Russia's problems. After a long elaboration on this "cocktail" Katsenelinboigen stressed the need to discuss such questions as the extent to which the Russian

nationalists will succeed in the future. In other words, to what extent will Soviet ideology really be able to satisfy Russian nationalism?

Underlining the inclination to believe that the Communists must have institutions similar to those of the West, Besançon said that the West has unions, so they have unions; the West has parliaments, so they have parliaments. There is a very serious exchange between the parliaments of the Soviet Union and those of the rest of the world. There is a so-called Parliament Union. It is an international organization which includes the so-called parliament of the Soviet Union. The spirit of symmetry is particularly important, Besançon continued, when words are dealt with. It is often thought that if the words are the same, the things are also the same. For instance, when the Soviet Union uses such words as "peace," "democracy," "national independence," and "freedom," the immediate natural response is to assume that these words have the meanings customarily assigned them. But the real meaning of these words in the Soviet language is, according to Besançon, different, and can be summed up in one word: hegemony of the Communist party, under which there is no democracy.

Next, Besançon expressed his strong doubt about Katsenelinboigen's notion that Soviet ideology is a cocktail or a rephrasing of the old Russian nationalism. Ideology, in Besançon's view, is not defined by its contents; it is what the party says at any given moment, and nothing more. When the party uses nationalistic themes, they are not to be taken as ideology, because the party merely considers it convenient to employ the language of nationalism. Having said this, however, Besançon expressed a view similar to Katsenelinboigen's. The important thing is the mixture of Communism and nationalism. Besançon said that Communism is the master of this alliance, and can change the arrangement at any moment it chooses. For instance, in 1945 Stalin had used nationalism to play with patriots, but he had retained the freedom to employ a perfectly different language at any other moment.

Kido was disturbed by the statement in Besançon's paper that "the state has no special bond with society." In Kido's opinion, very few if any states, whether good or bad, could exist without some kind of special bond with society. Only the Polish United Workers Party had judged — incorrectly — that its state could exist without such a bond. Kido said that he sees the political system of the Soviet Union as rather different from that of Poland or Hungary — which he feels is unfortunate since he personally wants to see liberalizing tendencies in the Soviet Union as well. Yet the present political system seems to him to have relatively strong roots in the Soviet society. In reply Besançon said that when society really does exist in the Soviet Union then civil society exists as it does in Western countries. In other words, society exists everywhere in the Soviet Union, in Communist China, and in North Korea. Every man must use a proper language, behave according to common morality, and return good for good. But, he said, these are not in the framework of socialism. It is precisely the task of the state to push people into another framework where these three things would be impossible. Poland and Hungary are surely different from the Soviet Union with regard to the relationship between state and society. In Poland and Hungary, the

state is weaker and the society stronger. In contrast, Besançon considers society to be destroyed in Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where compromise is cancelled and Sovietism reigns unchallenged.

Joseph Kun commented that the purpose of scholarship in Besançon's paper seemed to him to be to delegitimize the Soviet system, and to engage in a political battle of the first magnitude. He personally agrees with Walter Rostow that Communism is the disease of transition. The countries that are successful now had been preindustrial. He pointed out that even during the last four years of recession Communist strength had been falling in both industrialized and unindustrialized countries, except Portugal. In view of what is actually happening now, he believes that we do not have to debase scholarship in order to engage in an ideological struggle with an enemy. He concluded that serious scholarship, truth, sincerity, and spontaneity of discussion are far better weapons. Agreeing that scholars must be careful about choosing proper and precise words, Besançon replied that he would correct such misleading words as "Soviet society," "Russian society," and "Russian economy."

Criticizing Besançon's paper which had delved into a very high level of generalization and abstraction, Fitzpatrick commented that a discussion about the Soviet Union or its political system is better conducted at a lower level of generalization with more specific information. In justification of his way of generalizing Besançon cited the example of Orwell, who, never having been in the Soviet Union and having encountered Communism for only a few weeks in Barcelona, had worked at a very high level of generalization. Such a global vision had practically vanished in the 60s, and had instead given birth to the enormous entity of monographs on a specialized subject, which cannot predict the future of the Soviet Union. Besançon stressed the need for scholars to have a conceptual framework of theory or principle that allows facts to make sense only when correctly interpreted.

Noting that Besançon had written that "the Soviet Union is the basis of universal revolution," Koyama wondered how Besançon sees Yugoslavia which has tried to build a unique, self-managed socialism. His second question concerned the rather conservative stance that the Soviet Union has been taking recently. The Soviet Union is not as revolutionary as it had been just after the October Revolution. It seems to prefer the status quo in Western Europe, for instance, and does not welcome the seizure of power there by left wing supporters. An example of this attitude had occurred ten years ago when the Soviet Ambassador in France had supported Giscard d'Estaing instead of Mitterrand. Koyama also wanted to know Besançon's definition of socialism.

Besançon replied, first, that the concept of a world revolution has been deeply ingrained in the self-consciousness of the "Bolsheviks" since the time of Lenin. But this does not mean that every Communist party submits to the will of Moscow. He explained that when a man is engaged in the Communist movement, he wants to promote Communism in his own country. Hence there is a perpetual conflict between local interests and the world Communist movement, and complex arbitration is required to resolve it within the confines of this framework. Second, to Besançon

it seemed that whether the Soviet Union's recent behavior is considered conservative or revolutionary largely depends on how the revolution is envisioned. If revolution is imagined in a romantic or even Marxist way, the Soviet Union is certainly not a revolutionary country any longer. But if revolution is defined as what Brezhnev calls "real socialism," what the Soviet Union has been doing is still to be regarded as revolution. Third, Besançon said that as for his definition of socialism, he has none.

Kim said that he had not yet been persuaded by Besançon's statement that there is no such thing as a Soviet empire. Instead, he proposed as a better concept or model for explaining the Soviet system the "imperial model," which, based on the so-called "imperial mentality," has been developed by John Reshetar at the University of Washington. While Kim fully understood that in some aspects the Soviet Union's foreign policy has been defensive rather than offensive, he still believed that the "imperial mentality" may persist in the USSR. Besançon found Kim's question remarkable and helpful. He said that when a power of a new type seizes control, as Communism has done, it tends to find in the national heritage all recipes of government. But there is no reason not to use them as instruments with different aims. Yet, Besançon felt that the word "empire" should not be used without caution, because there are a few features of Soviet domination that do not fit into the classical scheme of "empire." These include the urge to transform society, reliance by the local Communist party not on military means but on political means, and the illegitimacy of any other domination.

Minagawa found it difficult to follow why Besançon did not go beyond the totalitarian model. Pointing out that the situation in the Soviet Union and even in the CPSU is too complex to allow him to consider the party supreme or totally united, Minagawa wondered if Besançon was ready to revise his conceptual framework in view of the simplicity of his paper. While agreeing that the party is complex, Besançon did not see why it was unsafe to state that, despite many difficulties, it can maintain its basic unity. Minagawa then asked whether Besançon thought that there might be a more organic mechanism operating within the CPSU. Besançon said that he did not think so, because so far the CPSU has not been jeopardized seriously, despite some difficulties in operation. Wada asked how if the Soviet Union is in such a miserable situation it could possibly become the basis of a world revolution. He wondered whether Besançon's argument had been contradictory. Wada himself felt that Soviet policies are currently facing great difficulties, as are those of the U. S., vis-a-vis Third World countries.

Kimura said that Katsenelinboigen's juxtaposing Western-born Marxist ideology and Russian indigenous nationalism or traditional belief-system, which is in many ways contradictory to the original ideas of Marxism, seemed quite appropriate. But he also noted that what Katsenelinboigen should have done was to combine them harmoniously. Both may share a common paternalistic way of thinking, an overwhelmingly powerful elite, etc. In other words, Katsenelinboigen should elaborate on the question of how these apparently contradictory components of the cocktail work together. In the Russian traditional indigenous mind-set is there some

element that readily receives part of Marxism? Finally, Kimura remarked that with Reshetar's "imperialist mentality" Kim had introduced a very interesting concept. Pointing out that, no matter how important it may be, the Russian mentality is after all only one of many factors determining foreign policy, Kimura wondered to what extent it is the Russian and to what extent the Soviet mentality that determines the Soviet Union's "aggressive" behavior.