CHAPTER I

SOVIET RELATION WITH EAST EUROPE: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Relations between Soviet Union and East Europe had occupied the attention of world policy makers and scholars since the end of the Second World War. A careful assessment of Soviet-East European relations requires an examination of many aspects of Soviet behaviour, including its expectations, opportunities, and vulnerabilities.

This chapter attempts to trace the historical background of Soviet interest and influence in Eastern Europe. It also tries to understand the Soviet concern for security during inter-war period, the Cold War rivalry between the two power systems in Europe and the dynamism of leadership changes in the Soviet Union from Stalin to Brezhnev and its impact on the policy shift as well as internal behaviour of the Soviet Union with particular reference to the evolution of her policy towards East Europe.

Generally speaking what we called the East Europe consisted of eight countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia.¹ These states shared several essential features, including

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¹ In the post-Cold War era the number of East European countries has gone, due to the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, up to twelve. They are Poland, Czech Republic, Slovanin, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania. If we add to this the three Baltic states of Lithunia, Latvia and Estonia, who would not be averse to call themselves East European, the number would be fifteen. Further, the changed international reality of the post-communist phase has created the difficulty of nomenclature, too. Many of these countries would not agree to be called East European without necessary qualification. For them the rubric ‘East Europe’ symbolised the uniformity of a political, economic, military and ideological system headed by the Soviet Union and to which they helplessly belonged. It was the ideological dichotomy which characterized the East-West divide of Europe during the Cold War era. Now that the East Europe of the Cold War are with (continued...)
political and economic structures and institutions, pattern of socio-economic changes, membership in two important regional organizations, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and, of course, to a great extent a common historical heritage. Except Albania and Yugoslavia, these countries shared a substantial economic dependence on the Soviet Union. A political dependence characterized by the need to keep their international and domestic policies within the limits of scientific socialism, as defined by the Soviet Union, was also an essential feature of East European scene.² Hence, the USSR was without any doubt the essential ingredient of the political configuration in East Europe.³ The East Europe thus constituted a peculiar political, military and economic alliance of states which had multilateral linkages with the Soviet Union. For the same reason it was generally referred to as the Soviet bloc.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE RISE OF PAN SLAVISM

The beginning of Soviet interest and influence in East Europe, can be historically traced back to period of Czars. The genesis of this phenomenon can be seen in the

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its necessary political, economic, military and ideological manifestations of a bloc does not exist, there is a need, it is argued, of realistically defining the political importance of the area and calling it by a suitable name. Thus, countries like Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia would prefer to call their region as East-Central Europe, Central and Eastern Europe rather than East Europe only. On the other hand, the region ranging from Rumania till Albania is historically known as the Balkan region about which there does not seem to be any controversy among these states. Finally, with the reunification the former German Democratic Republic has merged into the Federal Republic of Germany and, therefore, is no longer a part of East European region.


role of the movement known in history as pan-slavism. An epic poem illustrates the relationship among these countries with Russia occupying a prominent place. In it the poet invokes the mythical patron goddess, Slava, whose corporate image personifies the unity of slavdom: her head Russia; her trunk, Poland; her arms, the Czechs; and her legs, the Serbs.4

Between 1848 and 1914 Pan-Slavism was an important nationalist movement in Russia and East Europe which tried to reinforce its aim with a heightened degree of sentimentalism.5 It was tried to be projected that the Slavs had a strong yearning for salvation from the yoke of the Turks and for this purpose they looked to Russia for their protection. The racial element among the Slavs, all belonging to the same historic group of people, played an important role for these countries. It is this factor that created the strong feelings of unity and mutual bonds on which pan-Slavism was founded.

Among the Balkan peoples the Bulgarians had suffered most from the Turkish oppression and stood closest to the Russians, territorially and spiritually. There

4 Kollar’s epic poem of Slav patriotism, "Slavy Deera" (Daughter of Slava), 1824, Kollar was poet-scholar of cultural Pan-Slavism.

5 In the 1870s Pan-Slavism was propagated by many Russian writers, including the great novelist Dostoyevski and the Publicist Domilevsky, whose Russia and Europe had appeared in 1871. It forecasts a long war between Russia and Europe, culminating in a union of all Slav peoples and the extension of Slavdom over Central Europe and large parts of the Turkish Empire. Romantic in flavour, Pan-Slavism in this period became a tool of more realistic politics - favoured by the Slavs of the Balkans only as a possible bludgeon against Turkey, by the Russian government only as a mask for Russian imperialism. It played little part in arousing the Balkan revolts of these years which sprang from indigenous nationalism. Yet it exacerbated relations between the great powers, particularly between Russia and Germany, because it stood far an indefinitely ambitious programme of expansion. See David Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon (Penguin Books, 1966), pp.517-19.
existed a constant interdependence of culture between Bulgaria and Russia. The war of 1877-78 was a war of liberation of the Slavs by the Russians and an epoch when Pan-slavism was at its height as a genuine outburst of fraternal feelings. Even today this fact is not forgotten by the Balkan peoples, who feel that they are beholden to Russia for their freedom.

Though racial history enjoys little respectability among contemporary scholars, it is an undeniable fact that the traditional idea of national communities based on kinship plays a vital role. It still remains true that the sense of modern nationhood has been greatly strengthened by the awareness of ancient hereditary bonds based on the 'mother tongue', on generations of interbreeding, and hence on common biological descent. In Central and East European countries, the growth and evolution of the ethnic core has always attracted much scholarly attention. But in the 19th century, scholars paid much more attention to the Slavonic connection. Some philologists had made serious efforts to establish the common origin of the Slavonic languages stressing that all the Slavonic-speaking peoples possessed a common racial origin. However, both poles and Russians claimed their 'natural right' to the leadership of the Slavonic peoples. In Russia, pan-Slavism became an integral element of Russian nationalism. As a result, Polish delegates to the various Slav congresses of the 19th century - Prague (1848), Moscow (1867), Prague (1908), Petersburg (1909), Sofia (1910) - regularly took a dissenting position against that of the Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, or South Slav delegates, earning Poland the label of "the Judas of the Slavs".

Historically, the genesis of the Slavonic culture can be found in the great Moravian Empire, which reached the peak of its power under Svatopluk (870-894). It included the territory of Slavonic tribes in Silesia, including Crocow region (Poland) and a part of what was to become Hungary (Pannonia), an area also populated by Slavs. The great Moravian empire was the oldest west Slavonic state, associating not only the Slavs of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, but also Lusation Serbs and Poles (in little Poland) and through the Slavs in Pannonia linking up with the southern Slavs. Within the empire arose the oldest of all Slavonic cultures. Its language, old church Slavonic became for a considerable period the oldest written language of all the Slavs.7

After the collapse of the Slavonic mission in Moravia (885), Slavonic culture spread partly to Bohemia, Bulgaria, to the southern Slavs and to Russia. In Bulgaria there was a new growth of Slavonic literature at the beginning of the 10th century and before a long second script was created - the cyrillic, which the southern Slavs still use today and which gave rise to the Russian alphabet. The growing differentiation of the Slavonic languages resulted in old Slavonic becoming merely the official and, above all, the ecclesiastical language still used in the orthodox church.8

THE WORLD WARS AND THE SOVIET CONCERN FOR SECURITY

From the beginning East Europe remained a vulnerable point for the security of Russia. Most of the attacks launched by the European powers on Russia came through East Europe, which was never powerful enough to prevent them. The second

7 Ibid, p.47.
half of the 19th century was marked by Russia's efforts to gain some influence in this region on the basis of the existence of strong traditional ties. Russia had to face hostile influences from other nations, especially from England. One of the main objects of the Berlin Congress of 1878 was to weaken Russia and checkmate its influence in the Balkans. Nevertheless, Russia succeeded in establishing its influence to some extent in the region viz., in Bulgaria, Serbia, Rumania and Poland, etc.

After the First World War, Russia was subjected to the humiliating treaty of Brest-Litovsk and had to face intervention at the hands of the allied powers. In order to safeguard its security interests, the USSR concluded military alliance with France and Czechoslovakia in 1935 and treaties of non-aggression with Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland. Despite their efforts, the USSR had to face the German invasion during the Second World War. Moreover, the East European countries Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria joined hands with the aggressor. The other countries were too weak to resist the aggression. There was no barrier left to check the Germans; they kept advancing towards the east and finally into the USSR. The USSR was able to repel this invasion at a great cost in men and material.

During the Second World War the ideologically rival systems - capitalism and communism - joined hands in order to face the common enemy, Nazism and Fascism. The USSR signed treaties with allied governments, especially a twenty year treaty of alliance with Britain on 26 May 1942 and the treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and post war cooperation with the Czechoslovakian government in exile in London on 12 December 1943. The treaty with Czechoslovakia proved to be the nucleus of the Soviet of bilateral alliances in East Europe in subsequent years.
The Second World war brought about fundamental changes in the international situation, especially in terms of correlation of forces. For the USSR it was not merely a struggle for the defence of its own interests but above all for retention, consolidation and expansion of the gains of the October Socialist Revolution and the socialist system.\(^8\) The decisive role played by the Soviet Union in the defeat of German fascism eventually created favourable conditions for the overthrow of capitalist and Landlord rule by the people of East European countries.\(^10\) It paved the way for the national liberation struggle in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Albania and East Germany. As Georgi Dimitrov was to say later:

Had it not been Soviet Union, there would generally have been no free and independent nations in South Eastern Europe and no flourishing people's Democracies advancing towards socialism.\(^11\)

Consequently, the treaties of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance were signed between the USSR and the peoples democracies of East Europe. The treaties signed with people's democracies were not only of mutual assistance but also contained provisions for cooperation in all areas of economic, political and cultural life of the two sides. Similarly, the USSR and Yugoslavia signed a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance with Rumania (February 4, 1948), Hungary (February 18, 1948) and also an agreement on supplies of Soviet equipment and primary materials on

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credit to Albania (April 10, 1948). Thus since the end of the Second World War, East Europe had occupied a prominent place in Soviet foreign policy.

THE SHADOW OF COLD WAR

The end of the Second World War was quickly followed by the cold war with the American-Soviet confrontation over political development in East Europe. There has been a good deal of controversy among the historians over the motive behind the Soviet Union's policy in East Europe after the Second World War. According to some historians, the Soviet Union had already planned her policy and was following an aggressive course. But other contented that the Russians were simply responding to the western moves to claw back East Europe and that, accordingly, it was essentially a defensive policy. In this connection it is noteworthy to recall what Stalin wrote in his message to Churchill in April 24, 1945,

Poland is to the security of the Soviet Union what Belgium and Greece to the security of Great Britain.... I do not know whether a genuinely representative government has been established in Greece, or whether the Belgium government is a genuinely democratic one. The Soviet Union was not consulted when those government were being formed nor did it claim the right to interfere in those matters, because it realises how important Belgium and Greece are to the security of the Great Britain. I cannot understand why in discussing Poland no attempt was made to consider interests of the Soviet Union in terms of security as well.

Stalin also apprehended that the western powers would try to prevent the rise of socialism in East Europe. The developments like the American intervention in Europe - the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan - which were instruments for


subjugating many west and East European countries economically and politically to the interests of the American monopolies contributed further to the strengthening of Stalin’s assumptions.

It was a fact that the defeat of Hitler by the Soviet Union was the most decisive of all the factors for the emergence of the system of people’s democracies in East Europe. In this sense it can be said that Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union and Central Europe played an important role in the establishment of socialism in this zone. However, this does not mean as some western scholars have argued, that socialism was a forcible imposition on East Europe by the Soviet Union and it was established solely with the help of the Red army. There are various factors which falsify this thesis, viz., (i) the advent of the communists to power in Yugoslavia and Albania without the assistance of the Red army (ii) the non-existence of communist regimes in Finland and Austria in spite of the presence of the Red army and (iii) the existence of various path and timings of the particular takeovers. Actually, the causes of varied course and time table of the communist takeovers lie in the geographical position of each country, the strength of the communist parties, the abilities of leading political forces western involvements in specific countries and the popularity of the Soviet Union. Taking all these factors into consideration, we can safely argue that the Soviet policy was mainly based on the geo-political concept. As the two very prominent Soviet authors have stated,

The victory allowed establishing just and secure frontiers of the Soviet Union in the West. The Soviet Unions encirclement by capitalist states,

which had lasted for more than a quarter of a century was brought to an end.\textsuperscript{15}

It is thus obvious, that the security concern had been one of the main objectives of the Soviet policy in East Europe since the Second World War. As E.H. Carr noted before the end of the war.

The sole interest of Russia is to assure herself that her outer defences are in sure hands, and this interest will be best served if the lands between her frontiers and those of Germany are held by governments and people friendly to herself.... Everything goes to show that she will be in a position after the war to shape the settlement on lines consistent with this conception of what her security demands.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{STALIN ERA: A COERCIVE COURSE}

In the beginning, the East European countries were not expected to adopt and follow the Soviet economic and political models necessarily though they were expected to adopt a foreign policy line not inimical to the Soviet interests. One can argue that the turning point in Soviet policy towards East Europe came when Czechoslovakia and Poland wanted to accept aid under the Marshall Plan. In order to disassociate these two countries from doing so the Soviet Union introduced the instrumentality of Cominform\textsuperscript{17} to ensure formal control over the East European

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\textsuperscript{15} A.G.Gromyko and B.N. Ponomarev, eds., n.7, p.10.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Times}, 10 March, 1945, p.10.
\textsuperscript{17} Cominform name given in the West to the Communist International Bureau, an agency of international communism founded under Soviet auspices in 1947 and dissolved by Soviet initiative in 1956.

The Communist International Bureau was founded at Wileza Gora, Poland, in September 1947, with nine members - the communist parties of the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, France and Italy. The most vehement supporters of the Cominform were the Yugoslav Communists under the leadership of Tito; therefore, Belgrade was selected as the seat of the organisation. Mounting tension, however, between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union led ultimately to the expulsion of Tito’s party from the (continued...)
countries and along with that a Stalinist reign of terror was unleashed in the region.16

The Cominform endorsed collectivisation as the only right path to Socialism. Yugoslavia’s defection from the Cominform and her split with the USSR in 1948 further promoted a Stalinist purge throughout East Europe. In the true Leninist style Stalin would not voluntarily part with control over a body like Cominform that had been under his control and probably he also feared that if he permitted Tito to acquire control over the Yugoslav party, the leaders of the other East European parties might try to follow the latter’s example.19 He did not succeed in stopping Tito from emerging as the unchallenged leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party, though his control over Cominform was as absolute as over its predecessor, Comintern. Taking, however, a quick lesson from the Yugoslav experience Stalin demanded that the East European leaders unquestioningly adopt Soviet economic and political model, the most prominent component of which was collectivization of agriculture, rapid industrialization and a highly centralised political system managed by a single political party and an absolute ideological control of the society. By insisting that his policies

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Cominform in June 1948 and the seat of the bureau was moved to Bucharest. The Cominform’s activities consisted mainly of publishing propaganda to encourage international communist solidarity. The French and Italian communist parties were ineffective in carrying out the chief task assigned to them by the Cominform - to obstruct the implementation of the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine. Like the Comintern, the Cominform served more as a tool of Soviet policy than as an agent of international revolution.

On 17 April 1956 in a gesture that was part of a Soviet programme of reconciliation with Yugoslavia, the Soviets disbanded the Cominform.


be adopted throughout the Soviet bloc, he established a set of clear criteria by which it was possible to evaluate the submissiveness of East European leaders.

Consequently the Stalin period symbolised the high water mark in laying the socialist foundation in East Europe which was also differently called the ‘Stalinization’ of the region. The internal transformation of each of the East European society was based on the same pattern which Stalin had so ruthlessly pursued in the USSR during the nineteen thirties. The new pattern applied by him to form the basis for the relations between the USSR and East Europe implied:

(i) The implementation of the theory of the communist party’s political supremacy;

and

(ii) the intensification of the class-struggle to eliminate the class-enemies and its extension to the countryside to liquidate the big landlords for the socialist transformation of agriculture.

Though this Stalinist formula seemingly had the virtues of simplicity and directness, the magnitude of its real alienating effect on the people of East Europe was so great that the party leaders of these countries had to become dependent on Soviet support to stay in power.  

KHRUSHCHEV’S ERA: SOCIALIST COMMONWEALTH

In the aftermath of Stalin’s death the Soviet policy towards East Europe began to be reconsidered in the light of changing realities of international politics, but it remained absolutely un-altered in its basic essentials. In 1956, Khrushchev attacked Stalin for his policy of coercion and terror in a secret speech at the 20th CPSU

Congress which virtually inaugurated the era of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and East Europe. But Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization, in the context of Soviet foreign policy, was not meant to abolish totally the Stalinist mode of interaction between the USSR and East European countries. Thus, the basic nature of Soviet-East European relations remained essentially the same. There was indeed a general agreement in the Soviet leadership on the great potential value of East Europe to the USSR. Keeping Soviet troops in the bloc enabled the USSR to pursue a forward defence policy to counter NATO. But this defence could become strong and effective only if the East European countries made adequate contribution to it. With this realization Khrushchev went in for reconciliation with Yugoslavia which had deviated from Soviet Union in 1949. This approach was kind of confession which seemed to though indirectly, accept, Stalins errors and failure. This marked the beginning of a new attitude or policy adopted by the Soviet Union towards East Europe.

On 14 May 1955, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) was formed, which cemented all the bloc countries in a military alliance under Soviet command. This pact provided a legal basis for the Soviet Union to station its troops in East European countries and intervene if any of them was faced with an external threat.


In order to overcome the bitter Stalinist legacy the Soviet leadership under Khrushchev suggested to the East European fraternal parties to adopt the policy known as "New Course" which required them to follow their domestic policies in accordance with local conditions obtaining in specific countries and try to satisfy popular demand for consumer goods.\(^{23}\) There is no doubt that a relaxation in attitude helped the Soviet Union in improving her relations with East European countries and restore the same with Yugoslavia in 1955. It is evident from the Soviet-Yugoslav declaration wherein it was stated:

The roads and conditions of Socialist development are different in different countries, any tendency to impose one's own views in determining the roads and forms of Socialist development are alien to both sides.\(^ {24}\)

Thus it can be pointed out that Khrushchev's policy in East Europe was innovative, especially in the sense that he tried to look for a substitute for Stalinist coercion. Khrushchev had shown a good deal of flexibility and permitted the East European leaders considerable authority in coping with their own problems responding to domestic pressure, emphasising national interests.\(^ {25}\) He also offered the East European parties an equation to form a balance between dependence and autonomy. Dependence formed part of loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, to proletarian internationalism and to the unity of the socialist camp as, of course, defined by the Soviet Union. This framework could effectively contain the inherent pressures for diversity without the need for continuous Soviet involvement which Stalinism had

\(^{23}\) Kubalkov and Cruickshank, n.2, pp.562-64.

\(^{24}\) *Soviet Yugoslav Declaration* (Moscow: Novosti, June 20, 1956), p.22.

\(^{25}\) Ibid, p.9
professed. Thus to a considerable extent Khrushchev succeeded in reducing the dissatisfaction in East Europe.

The experiences of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies have shown that the bloc unity as the basic imperative for ensuring the security and consolidation of socialism notwithstanding the different means and ways in different countries to solve the specific problems of socialist construction, depending on their historical and national features are not only unavoidable but essential.26

Khrushchev tried to give currency to the concept called "socialist commonwealth" which basically tried to convey the idea that national stand on the road to socialism could differ without, however, diluting the essential Leninist principles. The Soviet Union, however, never accepted the concept of multiple centres of authority on ideology and doctrine, and asserted the right to determine which policies were correct and which were revisionist. The Soviet objective of maintaining a balance between the need to discipline institutional diversity and ideological conformity was clearly reflected in the discussions and resolutions of the World Conferences of Communist Parties held in Moscow in 1957 and 1960. The 1957 declaration condemned Yugoslavia for its ideological deviations and named USSR as the leader of the socialist camp. It also pointed out the dangers inherent in both the earlier approaches of Soviet Union towards East Europe which shifted between over emphasis on uniformity and recognition of diversity and unity. It stated,

Disregard of national peculiarities by a proletarian party inevitably leads to its divorce from reality, from the masses, and is bound to prejudice

26 John C. Campell, n.19, p.9.
the cause of socialism... peculiarities is just as harmful to the socialist cause.\textsuperscript{27}

The 1957 declaration offered solution to this dilemma, by urging the fraternal parties to combat both tendencies simultaneously.\textsuperscript{28} The same approach was reaffirmed in 1960 Conference of Communist Parties held in Moscow.

During the Khrushchev period, the Soviet Union tried to strengthen the network of military and economic ties with East Europe by establishing Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Mutual economic assistance in order to reinforce the unity of the socialist bloc. The main feature of the Khrushchev period was preservation of a balance between unity and control. The main goal of Khrushchev was to have more flexible contacts with the various communist parties, whereby common policies might be chalked out through discussion, although the USSR would still maintain the decisive voice of its leading role in the Communist Movement. The most important aspect of Khrushchev’s plan was the economic integration of East Europe with the Soviet Union for the sake of a supranational division of labour through the institution of CMEA.\textsuperscript{29}

**BREZHNEV ERA: REDEFINING THE LIMITS OF AUTONOMY**

Interestingly, the post-Khrushchev leadership under Brezhnev did not give any clue to a new Soviet policy towards East Europe. In his address to the 23rd Congress

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\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p.21.

of the CPSU in 1966 Leonid Brezhnev generally endorsed the previous position of the Soviet leadership concerning proper norms governing relations among communist states. In the opinion of the Central Committee of the CPSU, there was good common Marxist Leninist ground for closing communist ranks, namely, the general line worked out by the 1957 and 1960 meetings of the fraternal parties. Developments since then, it was argued, had put it to the most exacting test and it had withstood that test. Thus, there was every reason for saying that loyalty to this line was a dependable guarantee of the unity of new success in the revolutionary movements.\footnote{Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 23rd Congress of the CPSU, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), pp.30-31.}

It is obvious that behind a special emphasis on the unity aspect of Soviet-East European relationship the objective of the Brezhnev leadership was to dilute the essentials of the Khrushchevian approach to East Europe as well as to resurrect some of the elements of the Stalinist line.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union during Brezhnev period was determined by the strategic considerations to play the role of a global super power, and in doing so to combine steadily increasing military and economic strength with the policy of "peaceful co-existence" with the West. Specially after the Czechoslovak crisis, the Soviet policy towards East Europe was to reemphasize ideological orthodoxy, tighten discipline and strengthen the institutions for intrabloc cooperation with the leading role of the Soviet Union. Some of the bilateral security treaties with individual East European states were renegotiated and renewed. In 1971, Brezhnev told the delegates of the 24th Party Congress that success in the construction of socialism in
the countries of socialist confederation depended on the correct combination of the general and the national in particular.\textsuperscript{31}

In 1976, while addressing the 25th CPSU Congress, Brezhnev observed that within the socialist confederation, "the process of a gradual drawing together of socialist countries is now quite definitely operating as an objective law." He said much depends upon the policy of the ruling parties and their ability to safeguard unity, combat isolation and national exclusiveness, honour their common international tasks, and act jointly in performing them.\textsuperscript{32}

The concept, which facilitates the East European countries to integrate into a policy by the appropriate combination of the national and the general in their policies, is indentified by the Soviet Union as socialist confederation.

The so called socialist confederation had three distinct but interrelated set of members: the inner members of the confederation, consisting of the 15 union republics of the USSR; the other members of the confederation, consisting of East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, the overseas members of the confederation, consisting of Cuba, Vietnam and probably Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and South Yemen as well.\textsuperscript{33}

The idea of socialist confederation finds expression in the Soviet statements to the East Europeans, while emphasizing the military, economic and cultural mechanism,


which have integrated union republics into the USSR as an equation to integrate the East Europeans states into socialist confederation. In order to integrate the inner and outer members of the confederation the Soviets have tried to link the cohesion of the Socialist Confederation to the cohesion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

However, the Soviet leaders realise that it will be a long journey for the complete and successful integration of confederation to be effective. Brezhnev remarked at the CPSU's 25th Congress in the presence of Soviet and East European delegates, "If you please, there is not a session of the politburo which has not considered various questions connected with the development of cooperation with the fraternal countries, with the strengthening of their unity, and with the consolidation of our common international position." 34

The central institution in the socialist confederation is the communist party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU relies upon the internationalist communist parties to execute the policies which draw socialist nations into the socialist confederation. 35

BREZHNEV DOCTRINE

The most important policy of the Soviet Union towards East Europe was incidentally associated with Leonid Brezhnev, the so-called "Brezhnev doctrine" which came into prominence during and after the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968. What did the "Brezhnev doctrine" signify?

In Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek attempted to liberalize its communist system of government and party control 1968, Brezhnev

34 The Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet-Union, n.32, p.5.
developed the concept known in the West as the Brezhnev Doctrine that justified the invasion of Czechoslovakia by its Warsaw Pact partners. In essence, the doctrine holds the socialist countries have a right to intervene in the domestic affairs of one of their member if they consider that it is pursuing policies that threaten their essential common interests.\(^{36}\)

The significance of the Brezhnev doctrine lies in the strong need felt in 1968 by the Soviet leadership to formally redefine the limits of autonomy in East Europe. The circumstances of the Soviet action in Hungary in 1956 had already indicated that deviation by a member of the Warsaw pact would not be permitted. In the Hungarian crisis, the Soviet Union acted in such circumstances when The Hungarian Communist Party had disintegrated and there appeared a real threat of the reestablishment of capitalism.

Events since 1968 and the Soviet policy towards them had shown her insistence on the maintenance of the main principles underlying the Brezhnev doctrine in East Europe. The 1970 Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of friendship and the 1975 Soviet-GDR Treaty of friendship referred to the need to take joint measures to preserve the achievement of socialism.\(^{37}\)

In the Soviet-GDR Treaty, the two countries "declared their preparedness to take necessary measures to protect and defend the historic achievements of socialism and security and interdependence of both countries." Similar Brezhnev doctrine


language was incorporated in other agreements, except with Rumania, which took exception to the doctrine and was successful in defying it. The 'Brezhnev 1977 Soviet Constitution promulgated under Brezhnev also reflected this concept by recognising the need for "comradely mutual assistance on the basis of the principles of socialist internationalism".38

CONCLUSION

Since the death of Stalin, successive Soviet leadership had tried to find a formula for stability in East Europe, i.e., a combination of "viability and cohesion" that would both protect Moscow's perceived security, political and economic interests and, at the same time, ensure an adequate level of well-being and popular acceptance of the local regimes. This was the reason why Brezhnev's strategy was formulated on the experiences of the Prague events of 1968 which gave the message that the key to the stability in East Europe lay in supporting leaderships capable of maintaining order in their own spheres rather than to those inclined to adopt changing perspectives.

Thus, beginning with the spring of 1968 the Soviet leadership could be seen attempting subtly at a redefinition of the limits of autonomy. The crux of Brezhnev doctrine lay in its insistence on the inviolability of the borders of socialist commonwealth and common interests and obligations of its members towards one another. Prior to Brezhnev, Khrushchev's policy of flexibility towards East Europe had

38 Article 30, of Soviet Constitution adopted on October 7, 1977. It says:
"The USSR, as part of the world system of socialism and of the socialist community, promotes and strengthens friendship, cooperation, and comradely mutual assistance with other socialist internationalism and takes an active part in Socialist economic integration and the socialist international division of labour".
its typical fall out in the Hungarian and Polish crises of 1956. The Brezhnev doctrine was a very calculated and highly confident Soviet response to the regularity of crisis situation occurring in East Europe and particularly aimed at preventing further 'disorder' in that region. But this too failed to prevent crisis in Poland. The crisis in East Europe would be discussed in detail in the next chapter.