

## Who Won Cold War?

To the Editor:

The American electorate is being led to believe that the cold war was won in the four years between Ronald Reagan's ascension to power in 1981 and Mikhail S. Gorbachev's emergence as leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. Completely forgotten are four decades during which the containment policy, forged in the late 1940's by the Truman Administration, and continued by successive administrations, provided the rationale for the Western alliance to counter the threat of Soviet expansionism.

The final decline of the Soviet Union, however, was triggered by the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, which ended when the Soviet Union under Nikita S. Khrushchev backed down to President Kennedy's demands for the removal from Cuba of the offending nuclear missiles. In 1964, Khrushchev was dumped; the Soviet leadership under Leonid I. Brezhnev was determined to deal from a position of strength. They initiated a massive expansion and modernization of military forces, greater than any seen before in peacetime.

The Soviet military had first call on industrial production, which still had not fully recovered from the devastation of World War II; the increased burden curtailed any real growth in the economy, which stagnated. Soviet military strategy changed from a defensive to an offensive posture, capable of projecting power beyond its borders through large, mobile ground forces, longer-range combat aircraft, intercontinental ballistic missiles, global surveillance and a blue-water Navy with its own aircraft and forward bases. Behind the facade, the Soviet Union was really the world's largest underdeveloped nation!

Even the United States, the richest country on earth, couldn't afford such waste. It lasted only as long as the tired, scared old men in the Kremlin, the immediate heirs of Stalin did. As Mr. Reagan's luck would have it,

Brezhnev, Yuri V. Andropov, Konstantin U. Chernenko and the others expired on his watch. That's how he won the cold war.

JULIUS L. ROTH  
Huntington, L.I., Aug. 15, 1992