

Somewhat belatedly, the Soviet leadership recognized that growing Western alarm over Moscow's military buildup posed a serious threat to detente. They attempted to alleviate Western anxieties by denying the existence of a Soviet threat and by disclaiming any interest in military superiority. These statements did little to alter Western perceptions of Soviet policies. Nonetheless, they are still of interest because they were a forerunner of the far more effective public relations campaign launched by Gorbachev.

Brezhnev initiated the policy of verbal reassurance with a major policy address given in January 1977 in the Soviet city of Tula. In this speech, which was later christened the "Tula line" by skeptical Western analysts, he explicitly denied that the Soviet Union sought military superiority over the West. He stated:

Of course, comrades, we are improving our defenses. It cannot be otherwise. We have never neglected the security of our country and the security of our allies, and we shall never neglect it. But the allegations that the Soviet Union is going beyond what is sufficient for defense, that it is striving for superiority in armaments with the aim of delivering a "first strike," are absurd and utterly unfounded.<sup>68</sup>

He offered this characterization of Soviet policy:

Our approach to these questions can be formulated thusly: The Soviet Union's defense potential should be sufficient to deter anyone from disturbing our peaceful life. Not a course aimed at superiority in armaments but a course aimed at their reduction, at lessening nuclear confrontation — that is our policy.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, in his speech later that year marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, he stated:

The Soviet Union is effectively seeing to its own defense, but it is not striving for and will not strive for military superiority over the other

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<sup>68</sup> C.D.S.P., XXIX, No. 3, 1977, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*