

Report of Participation at the Conference "The Soviet Union in
the Asia-Pacific Region", 25-28 May 1987, Singapore

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 The above conference was timely in view of the increasing presence of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia and more generally the Asia-Pacific region.
- I.2 The conference was also well-organized and executed, with a fine and competent assortment of Soviet specialists as well as other observers of the international scene.
- I.3 The writer of this report (hereafter 'reportee') served not only as a commentator but also found his knowledge broadened by the experience.

II. ISSUES

- II.1 While the organization of the proceedings was principally by region, the approaches adopted by the various paper-writers differed in style as well as substance and quality. One basic problem, then, was the lack of a general underpinning or assumptions of the various papers which sometimes led to a less-than-holistic appreciation of the Soviet role. This factor, however, could be rectified by good editing should the papers be published.
- II.2 As might have been expected, although the Soviet Union's increasing appearance and role is obvious, not all are agreed as to its eventual objectives or even the sense of perspective it should be viewed. To an extent, this may be nonteleological, but even in the ensuing discussions, it was a factor not adequately dealt with.
- II.3 The reportee enjoyed his assigned role as a discussant and learnt a good deal of the Soviet role in Northeast Asia. Nonetheless, in his comments (see enclosure II.3.1) on the two papers of the session, he found the analyses less penetrating of the Soviet role, in the light of glasnost and that of the Soviet's obvious position (that is, non-retractable) on the Japanese northern territories. Added to this is the whole issue of whether the primary objective of Moscow is to "counter-balance" contemporary US dominance in the Pacific. Such an issue underscores the need for another look at it at a later time (another conference, perhaps).

III. OTHER COMMENTS

- III.1 Doubtless, conferences of this genre are useful, and it is hoped that the papers will be published as a volume, with as already stated, the necessary changes.
- III.2 The lack of a theme(s) could have been dealt with in the pre-organization of the conference and would have enhanced it.
- III.3 The reportee thanks the Asia Foundation and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs for their kind support in having made his participation possible.