

The Soviet Union is 28 years behind the United States in technology, according to Meyerhoff: "To drill a 10,000-foot well, it takes 34 days in the United States and 14 months in the Soviet Union." And he says that pipes made in the Soviet Union are so brittle that, on the coldest days in Siberia, they shatter when kicked. Meyerhoff thinks it will take the Soviets 15 years to develop an indigenous oil industry capable of exploiting the difficult fields—precisely the ones that must be relied on to fill the looming gap in production.

Robert Campbell of Indiana University at Bloomington, another Sovietologist, was skeptical of the Swedish paper: "Some say the Petrostudies people are

connected with the Russians. Their extreme evaluation makes you wonder about it." He added that "it is irrelevant to talk about oil reserves [in Russia] in any case. I'm prepared to believe that there's a lot of oil in the Soviet Union and on its continental shelf." But he said it is pointless to stress numbers because the real questions are when and how the Soviets will be able to produce the oil. Campbell expects production to decline. He agrees with the CIA's engineering analysis, which described numerous problems with the pumps and wells in Soviet oil fields, but he does not endorse the CIA's figures for production rates or reserves.

Campbell, like Dienes and other oil

specialists, awaits the publication of the next 5-year plan for the Soviet oil fields, due to come out next year. Meanwhile, officials in the Soviet oil ministry are reportedly as bewildered as the CIA by Petrostudies' claims that huge reserves are waiting to be tapped. Pressed already to explain the disappointing record of the last few years, these officials find that Petrostudies is making their task more difficult.

The truth of the matter is that even the Soviets have an imprecise inventory of their petroleum resources. The full extent of these will not be known until prospective fields in Siberia and on the continental shelf have been thoroughly explored.—ELIOT MARSHALL

Much Ado About Soviet Trucks

A festering quarrel within the Department of Commerce over an old and seemingly innocuous decision to export truck technology to the Soviet Union is exciting renewed debate about the adequacy of safeguards against Russian military gain from civilian trade with the United States. The dispute, which pits an export control official against his department, threatens to disrupt implementation of recent changes in the export control law. Because resolution does not seem near, American firms seeking federal approval for high-technology exports to the Communist bloc may be faced with unusual delays in the months ahead, while Congress and Commerce officials sift through the varying claims of culpability.

The center of the dispute is the Kama River truck factory in Siberia, built with the assistance of American companies. For now, the Commerce Department is holding up only an application for export of spare parts to the factory. But an official of the department notes that "with all the tension and discord, everything is not running as smoothly as we would hope, particularly with new licensing procedures to be implemented." And the department is clearly under pressure to scrutinize licenses more carefully in light of the controversy.

Lawrence Brady, the dissident bureaucrat causing headaches for top Commerce officials, says in raising the Kama River case that the entire export control system "has been gradually dismantled to the point where the Soviet Union and other controlled countries are capable of acquiring some of the most sophisticated Western technology and diverting it to military forces." Senator Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.), who acted as Brady's sponsor during recent hearings of the Senate subcommittee on international finance, says "I am concerned that the Commerce Department has succumbed to too much business pressure to issue licenses for technologies that have potential military utility." Department spokesmen told the committee this is hogwash, and that Brady has been disseminating "false and misleading information" both about Kama River and about the department's vigilance in preventing diversion of civilian trade.

Although the decision to export U.S. technology to the Kama River plant was made 8 years ago, the department's imbroglia did not arise until April, when the Central Intelligence Agency presented evidence that civilian trucks constructed at the plant were being used by military forces in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The evidence left department higher-ups unconcerned, but it clearly upset Brady, then the acting administrator of the export control administration. He insists that this newly discovered use has strategic implications. "What the Soviets need and want most is economy of scale, and we handed it to them; their capability would have been delayed for years if the United States had not participated," he says.

Disclosure of the CIA evidence was made in May before a forum eager for that sort of information, the Senate Armed Services Committee. The senators promptly interrogated Stanley J. Marcuss, then a deputy assistant secretary for trade regulations; Marcuss, a Carter political appointee, is Brady's boss. Marcuss told the senators that, alarming as this truck threat was, no one seemed to be at fault. The export decision had been made knowingly, he said, and no actual violation of the export regulations occurred because the Soviets had never committed themselves as to what use the trucks would ultimately be put.

It was at this point that Brady jumped ship and accused the department of covering up an apparent rules violation, of "an unwillingness to face up to the Soviets' violation." Neither the rules nor the Soviets' promises were in the slightest bit vague, he says; they signed a promise that the exported equipment would produce either "trucks" or "civilian trucks," and never said anything about "military trucks." Brady says that such a pledge is binding, and that the department ought now to punish the Soviets by denying them any additional truck factory exports.

Exactly where this narrow dispute will settle in the broader issue of high-technology civilian trade with the Soviets is uncertain. But it is clear that those who have opposed such trade in the past are delighted to have a new hook on which to hang their claims, even as tiny a hook as the Kama River truck plant.—R. JEFFREY SMITH