A distinguished analyst asserts that ever since the end of World War II the Soviets have been waging a major offensive in a different kind of war.
on two false attitudes.

The first is that any agreement, even a bad one, is better than no agreement at all, and that a willingness to compromise will solve a conflict. This, in the face of all the evidence, is simply not true. For to communists the ending of conflict is not necessarily a desirable goal. Negotiating, to them, is part of the conflict, and is designed to consolidate gains, to increase pressure on the opposition, or to obtain a respite.

The second false attitude is that peace can be preserved by allowing a tolerable level of violence to continue. It is certainly not tolerable to those who suffer from it. At some point, the violence will spread and the tolerance level will be breached, thereby endangering peace.

Given these attitudes, it is not surprising that recent negotiations to end wars have not always proved successful. In Indochina, for example, North Vietnam is making a face of the cease-fire agreement. The point to understand is that in Indochina, in the Middle East and Europe, Russia has managed to establish for her a "can't lose" situation based on ground rules advantageous to her alone.

The first of these rules is that communist countries are off-limits, while the rest of the world is free-for-all. Eastern Europe, North Korea, Cuba and North Vietnam have all established that point. Second, in a free-for-all situation, a Communist Party has to win but once. Brezhnev himself stated the doctrine: "Experience shows us that, in the present conditions, the victory of the socialist system in this or that country can be regarded as final, and the restoration of capitalism can be regarded as precluded." In other words, neither the ballot box nor revolt can ever throw the communists out.

Third, revolutionary parties know that they will be supported—by Russia, China or both—whereas the threatened governments of non-communist countries do not know whether they will be supported by the United States or not.

Crucial Test. In continued pursuit of the final goal of winning World War III without a nuclear exchange, the Soviets' aim over the next few years must be to remove the United States' presence and influence entirely from the European, Asian and African land mass. This is by no means a preposterous step.

In an article on the "competitive relationship" between the United States and the Soviet Union since World War II, Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski, of Columbia University, has drawn attention to its cyclical pattern, with first one side being assertive and then the other. He attributes this swing in assertiveness to four major factors: the relative international standing, relative military power, relative economic power and relative strength of the domestic policy base of the two countries. The United States, of course, has always had the advantage in economic power. In the other three factors, the advantage has varied at different periods since 1945.

The United States has tended to become assertive only when all or most of these factors have been favorable, whereas the Soviet Union has been prepared to be assertive with only one factor, or at the most two, in its favor—as in the period 1970 to 1972. During this recent period of Soviet assertiveness, Brzezinski has rated the international standing of the two powers as roughly equal, the military power as a questionably marginal U.S. advantage, economic power as still a U.S. advantage, and the domestic policy base as a Soviet advantage.

But since 1972, when the article was written, the factor of international standing has definitely moved in favor of the Soviet Union, particularly as a reliable ally; and military power is also clearly moving to the advantage of the U.S.S.R. This emphasizes one of Brzezinski's major points: "Until now, the stability of the relationship has not been tested by an assertive Soviet policy conducted in the context of a clear Soviet military superiority."

The Cost and the Risk. If South Vietnam falls because of a failure of American will, that test may come sooner rather than later. It could take the form of Hanoi tearing up the cease-fire agreement and launching another general offensive. This, if successful, might trigger further Arab moves, supported by Russia, either on oil or against Israel. By that time, Israel might be in a position where its security depended entirely on an American guarantee.

(A guarantee has only one meaning: the willingness to spill blood.) It is not difficult to visualize that there would be a panic-stricken attempt to get out of these obligations by talking. That would immediately indicate a readiness on the part of the United States to make concessions at the expense of its ally. The stage would be set for strategic surrender.

Today, the credibility of the United States has waned. It is becoming doubtful whether any solid structure of peace can be created, and whether any Presidents in the next decade will be able to restore that credibility, or create such a structure, unless they are very strong men indeed.

The materials for that structure are all at hand and are contained in the four factors already mentioned: military power, sufficient in both the nuclear and conventional fields to maintain the deterrence; economic power, with all that it entails in the form of foreign aid; international standing, which requires a clear appreciation of vital interests, enforcement of agreements, and absolute faith with allies; and a supporting domestic policy base, for which nerve, will and stamina are the main ingredients.

In the end, however, the question of whether the United States will remain a great power, capable of holding the West together and of safeguarding Western civilization, will depend less on the military, economic and political factors and more on the psychological factor which affects men's minds in every corner of the world. Unless the people of the United States understand that their credibility is at stake, and learn that the greater their credibility the less is the cost and the less the risk, it is going to be very dark indeed at the end of the tunnel.