P.S. to the NEWS
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"EVERYBODY" CAN'T SELL THE SOVIETS WHAT WE SELL

"Everybody's doing it" is the standard excuse offered by the sinner to excuse his sin. Group responsibility, egged on by peer pressure, is presumed to provide the fig leaf to hide individual guilt for a wide variety of sins: adultery, alcohol, drugs, gambling, lynchings, illegal discriminations, cheating on income tax, cheating your employer or employee, political bribes, Watergate, or Abscam.

Likewise, "everybody's doing it" is the slogan with which U.S. businesses justify selling high technology to the Soviet Union. They say, "If we don't sell it, other Western countries will; we'll lose the profit but the Soviets will acquire the strategic goods regardless."

The kernel of truth which that argument may have in a few instances has been ballooned with so much hot air, incompetent research, and downright misrepresentation that it should be recognized as false. Most of the U.S. high technology which the Soviets have gotten from us could not have been acquired from other countries in the ready-to-use form in which we shipped it.

The Commerce Department, which has charge of issuing export licenses, has converted the "everybody's doing it" rationalization into bureaucratic jargon: "foreign availability." The Commerce Department came up with the policy that, if an item has the magic quality called "foreign availability," then the license should be issued to a U.S. firm to export it in order to beat the "foreigners" out of the sale.

Quite apart from the lack of patriotism, this policy can't even stand up against factual, pragmatic criteria. Just because some component parts of a plant or machine may exist separately in foreign countries, that is no justification for allowing a U.S. firm to ship the Soviets an entire turnkey plant or setting up and serving a sophisticated machine or computer.

The Commerce Department recently licensed an entire steel plant for export to the U.S.S.R. because the plant's components had "foreign availability." However, if the

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Soviets were to try to buy the components from other countries, (a) it would take them years, and (b) the Soviets would not have the know-how to put them together.

American businesses, using tremendous capital investment, years of research and integrated experimentation in a free-enterprise environment, have built fantastically efficient plants and sophisticated machines. The Soviets simply do not have the necessary know-how to construct the interfaces for computers or to achieve the smooth-functioning technical complementarity which U.S. businesses have been able to attain over years of research and development, honed by the competitive system.

The Commerce Department in 1978 licensed a computer-controlled electron beam welder because of its alleged "foreign availability." In fact, this type of sophisticated drill-bit technology was available from other countries only in very inferior quality and amounts. The tungsten carbide element of this technology could be easily diverted to military use.

In 1978, 861 exports destined for the U.S.S.R. were approved and only 20 applications were denied. Even though the Commerce Department's policy of granting licenses is so pro-export that very little is barred, there are many illegal shipments.

U.S. companies sold the Soviets precision laser mirrors, claimed by their manufacturer to be "the best in the world." Some experts believe that the mirrors are now in use in Soviet space satellites, as well as at Moscow's Physics Institute or Lebdev Institute where they can be used to make laser weapons.

One U.S. firm shipped oscilloscopes, digital counters and micro-circuits for computers to affiliate companies in Austria and West Germany. This hardware was then diverted to foreign trade organizations of the U.S.S.R.

Another U.S. firm diverted $300,000 worth of semi-conductor equipment to the Soviet Union through dummy firms in Canada which then reexported it to Switzerland where it was transferred to a Soviet firm. Another U.S. firm illegally hand-carried technology to the Bulgarian Embassy in London for eventual delivery to the Soviet Union.

Somehow, the Freedom of Information Act does not enable us to find out adequate information about which U.S. firms are shipping to the Soviet bloc, what they are selling, and how it can be used to build up the Soviet war machine.

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