

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE -
HISTORICAL
COLLECTION
DIVISION-HR70-14
DATE: 05-17-2012SUBJECT: CIA Report [redacted] on Soviet Plans and Policies
Related to the German Situation

Veracity of detail aside, what this report does is outline a Soviet course of action as the Berlin crisis moves along which is plausible in some respects but considerably more ominous in intention than other information and experience have led us to conclude. In brief, the report asserts that Khrushchev has already decided to sign a German treaty "right after" the Party Congress and "to strike first against the West if the situation warrants action" after the treaty is signed. In the meantime apparent Soviet readiness to negotiate is designed to keep the situation in hand while Warsaw Pact maneuvers and resumed nuclear weapons tests put the USSR in the best posture for attack. An attack against Iran is also envisaged and the Communist Chinese would "protect against attack from Japan".

The scenario of developments presented in the report is striking in one respect: It does not necessarily differ with what we might expect to see down to the Party Congress in any event. The key difference asserted in the report relates to Soviet intentions, not developments in the period preceding the signing of a treaty. Thus we already have the announcement of Warsaw Pact military exercises (source informed us of them in advance), which we have regarded as a logical Soviet "preparedness" measure and backdrop for strengthening the Soviet negotiating posture. If their purpose is, as the report asserts, the more sinister one of providing cover for preparations for a "first strike", the fact of the exercises will not, in itself, permit us to be certain.

We continue to believe that Khrushchev thinks he can obtain satisfactory progress toward resolution of the Berlin problem on Soviet terms through negotiations and that he does not regard nuclear war as a means of achieving this objective. The CIA report suggests that this assessment is wrong, or at least that Khrushchev is prepared and even eager to run much higher risks than we had thought. However, the report is not entirely clear on the question of what "situation" would warrant a Soviet "first strike". Is the "second pill" Khrushchev reportedly expects the West to swallow simply the signing of a separate treaty or something more -- e.g., actual turnover of access controls to the East Germans? If the signature of a treaty were unaccompanied by interference with access, Khrushchev would not regard it as a particularly risky action. If physical interference with access were contemplated, the risks would be assessed as high indeed, and contingency planning to prepare for Western reactions to the interference would be required. Such planning might well include provisions to bring strategic forces to a high state of readiness and for some kind of a "first strike" in response, for example, to an Allied military

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probe along the autobahn. (The report itself leaves unclear whether the "striks" would be local in character, against Western Europe only, or also against the Western hemisphere. An attack against Iran seems quite unlikely until the Berlin crisis had been resolved one way or the other.)

On balance, we incline to believe that the report, which we accept as an accurate reflection of the source's knowledge, presents considerable information, not all of it accurate or complete, on Soviet contingency planning in the Berlin crisis, but that there is no evidence that the Soviets intend to proceed to the signing of a separate peace treaty and interference with Western access regardless of the outcome of the negotiating process. This assessment rests on the following considerations:

1. Khrushchev cannot ignore the weaknesses in his intercontinental nuclear striking capability which we now know exist. To do so would suggest some degree of insanity and we have no other reason to regard his handling of the Berlin crisis as anything but calculated and rational.

2. It seems highly improbable that a decision as risky as that to proceed undeviatingly to interference with Western access would be taken by the Soviet leaders in principle. They could not know what intervening developments might present more attractive or less risky alternative possibilities. This analysis strengthens the likelihood that what is reported as intended action is actually contingent action.

3. The source of the report has access to circles more likely to be involved in contingency planning than in the political decisions establishing intentions. To the source, therefore, a clear picture of aggressive intent might emerge from a pattern of events and information which had, in part, a less ominous overt purpose of political intimidation and, in part, an element of prudent preparation for eventualities, however unlikely.

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September 28, 1961