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11 October 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

FROM: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Comment on FBI Letter of 27 September 1951 Regarding Politburo Split on War and Peace, and Various Memoranda thereon.

1. I am not impressed by this report. It may have been made in good faith by the informant to FBI, but much needs to be known regarding the position of the "important official" in the complex of Soviet ministries in order to evaluate whether or not he really knew of what he was speaking. It seems to me to be either a rather garbled version of what is going on in the Politburo, or a feeler, or both.

2. In addition to the points brought out by Mr. Bohlen [REDACTED] [REDACTED] memorandum of 5 October, the following seem to me to reduce the credibility of the report:

a. If war with the U. S. is intended by any faction, it should be obvious to them that they could not confine it to Asia. The extent of Asiatic application which is mentioned would vitally affect British and French interests. In any event, the U. S. would attack European Russia by air, and would be almost certain to enjoy European bases in so doing. The USSR could not take this punishment without making an effort to attack those bases, and "trouble in Europe" would be at hand.

b. The "colossal thing" is very reminiscent of Hitler's "secret weapons". Like them, it may involve a hope that some long shot, on which they may be working, would come through. This long shot may not even be in the field of material weapons. More probably, the "Colossal thing" is the reflection of unfounded rumors in Russia itself, or is brought in for psychological effect.

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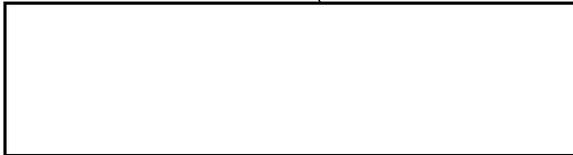
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c. The supposed viewpoint of the conservative third of the Politburo is curious. It contains stereotyped ideas which do not hang together -- i. e., if capitalism is dead, why war even in 25 years? This threat of eventual war, plus the present demand for war which can scarcely be curbed, plus the plug for peace, has many of the earmarks of a feeler.

3. As regards the undated draft memorandum, one way of reconciling simultaneous desires for both war and peace is by assuming that the Russians expect war to be forced on them by the United States when it becomes able to do so. This is a common conception in Russia, and a "preventive war" does not contradict a desire for peace. This, however, is not spelled out in the report, which makes it look like a garbled version of Politburo thinking.

4. As a minor point, a well-developed difference of opinion in the Politburo can exist for an indefinite period of time. The making of a decision is the only factor that closes the ranks, and in some cases a decision may be inexpedient or impossible for a long period. It is suggested that "for any length of time" the second sentence of the draft memorandum be changed to "in the presence of a decision by Stalin".

5. In general I agree with Mr. Bohlen's views and those of the other memoranda accompanying the FBI letter.



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