

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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USSR AGREES TO NUCLEAR TEST SUSPENSION TALKS

Soviet Premier Khrushchev, in agreeing to talks on 31 October on suspension of nuclear weapons tests, warned that continued American and British testing may force the USSR to resume tests. This threat may have been designed to strengthen the Soviet bargaining position at the talks. His statement, contained in the 29 August Pravda interview, was timed to coincide with publication of the Geneva technical talks report.

The Soviet premier rejected the Anglo-American "conditions" for renewing the suspension on a yearly basis. He called instead for a ban "for all time," with negotiations to be completed "within two or three weeks."

Khrushchev recalled the Supreme Soviet decision of 31 March 1958 which stated that the USSR would be free to resume tests if the Western nuclear powers failed to follow the Soviet lead in suspending them. Although Khrushchev declared that the continuation of American and British tests "relieves the Soviet Union of the obligation it had assumed unilaterally," a resumption of tests at this time would seriously weaken Moscow's propaganda position in view of the repeated charges of American and British insincerity regarding a test suspension. In the Soviet appraisal, however, the security implications of continued US-UK nuclear progress could outweigh the negative aspects of test resumption prior to the 31 October meeting.

The 29 August Pravda statement regarding possible resumption of Soviet testing was appended to notes sent by Moscow to the United States and Britain the next day. This unusual procedure and the pessimistic tone of Khrushchev's remarks are calculated to demonstrate growing Soviet impatience and indignation over the West's "delaying tactics."

At the same time, Moscow has been promoting its "peaceful approach" to nuclear energy problems at the second International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy at Geneva. Khrushchev's message to the conference claimed that, had agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons been achieved, cooperation on the utilization of nuclear materials for peaceful purposes would have been much further advanced.

On 30 August the Soviet Union also followed the American and British action of declassifying details of research on the controlled release of nuclear energy from the fusion process. According to press statements, Western scientists attending the meeting are considerably impressed with the Soviet research made public thus far. An attempt to take advantage of the discussions on peaceful uses to further the Soviet campaign for a permanent ban on nuclear tests came during the 3 September conference session when the head of the Soviet delegation attacked, as a political device designed to conceal American desire to continue nuclear weapons tests, the American suggestion that nuclear explosives could be used for peaceful purposes.

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