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MEMORANDUM

HR70-14

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

June 8, 1971

Eggleston

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*

SUBJECT: Soviet Concepts of War in Europe

See note page 7.

You have received an important new CIA study, "Soviet Concepts of War in Europe," which evaluates the sensitive Warsaw Pact intelligence I described in an April 20 memorandum [redacted]

Wayne - list papers for CIA

The new study is enclosed at Tab B. My earlier memo is at Tab C.

The CIA Study: Soviet Concepts of War in Europe

NATO doctrine see file

The new CIA study describes current Soviet military thinking on war in Europe, as depicted in official Warsaw Pact documents; postmortem critiques of major Warsaw Pact exercises; [redacted] Soviet critiques of NATO exercises Fallex 68 and Wintex 71), lecture notes taken [redacted] at what was probably a Soviet course on strategy and doctrine, and articles from the Soviet classified journal, Military Thought.

The study makes the following points:

1. NATO's military strategy and exercises have a considerable impact on Soviet thinking on war in Europe.

-- In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Soviet doctrine held that war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact would immediately escalate to general nuclear war. In this period, NATO's strategy emphasized trip-wire forces and massive retaliation.

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-- Beginning in 1965, Warsaw Pact military exercises introduced a short conventional phase. NATO exercises first introduced such a phase in late 1964, reflecting the evolution of NATO's flexible defense strategy, formally adopted three years later.

-- However, Soviet exercises assume (consistent with NATO's) that NATO's conventional forces would be inadequate to contain a counter attack by Warsaw Pact conventional forces and so NATO would initiate nuclear warfare.

-- Thus, Soviet doctrine has continued to hold that a war in Europe would inevitably escalate to nuclear war. Despite the increased NATO attention to conventional operations, the Soviets have almost certainly been encouraged in these views by the continued stress in NATO doctrine and exercises on our capability and willingness, if necessary, to resort to use of tactical nuclear weapons.

The Soviets and their allies have closely examined NATO documents, the Guidelines for Initial Nuclear Use, and NATO exercise scenarios for insight into current NATO doctrine and the flexible response strategy.

They believe the Guidelines and scenarios show (in the words of a Soviet General) that NATO envisages "maximum lowering of the nuclear threshold," that is, a changeover to nuclear weapons "at the earliest stage of a military conflict, even at the start of it." [REDACTED] critique of Fallex-68 observes that "selective and gradual employment of nuclear weapons and the first massive nuclear strike were all initiated by NATO." A September 1970 [REDACTED] presentation to the Chiefs of Warsaw Pact military intelligence directorates dealt with NATO planning for Winter-71 and stressed NATO's readiness to use nuclear weapons "at any time."

2. Current Soviet thinking identifies four phases of a war in Europe (in Pact exercises the war is started by NATO to attain "limited" political objectives such as seizing East Germany):

-- (a) The conventional phase would last 2-10 days, during which Pact forces would mobilize and reinforce, attempt to improve the military and political situation of the Pact, and weaken NATO nuclear forces.

-- (b) The critical phases of the war are the transition to nuclear warfare and the first nuclear strike.

During the transition period, Pact exercise scenarios and statements of military strategy place heavy emphasis on the desirability of pre-empting NATO in the use of nuclear weapons. One of the main goals in Pact exercises since at least 1967 has been to pre-empt NATO. The 1970 [REDACTED] lecture notes observe that it is "very important to pre-empt or suffer heavy losses." (The Glebov article as I noted earlier also stresses pre-emption.)

-- (c) The first nuclear strike by Pact forces is generally described as massive, employing both strategic and tactical weapons, and carried out throughout the depth of the European theater. Pact documents suggest that the Pact has considered and rejected the NATO concept of graduated nuclear escalation. However, the documents do not say whether the first strike is to be confined to the European continent or is to include intercontinental targets as well.

The documents generally agree that Soviet strategic rocket troops will engage targets at 300-400 km from the battle area (making the Rhine the approximate division line between strategic and tactical targets). Targets nearer to the battle area are assigned to the nuclear delivery systems of the Warsaw Pact Fronts.

The evidence on Pact targeting in Europe and capabilities is fragmentary, but suggests that the Soviets have sufficient means to engage all important strategic targets on the first strike. Soviet planners evidently plan to withhold a high percentage of tactical nuclear warheads for use in follow-up strikes.

-- (d) A concluding phase is sketchily described. Apparently Pact planners believe it will primarily involve conventional forces in mopping up activities and could be relatively lengthy.

3. The Pact has occasionally examined variations on the timing and the geographical extent of the nuclear phase, although its basic doctrine apparently remains unchanged.

-- The Pact 1965 exercise, Narew, examined a "pause" technique. Localized initial use of nuclear mines by NATO was met with a demand that NATO cease nuclear action on pain of decisive retaliation. The West persisted by escalating to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the belief that the East was deterred from responding. The East met this escalation with all out use of nuclear weapons. (The scenario -- apparently experimental in nature -- has not been repeated in subsequent exercises.)

-- France has played a special role in at least two exercises, being completely excluded from the list of territory to be attacked on one occasion and being excluded on another occasion pending its behavior in joining the other NATO allies in the war.

-- The CIA study speculates that the geographical division of targets between tactical and strategic forces in Soviet planning (at an uncertain line approximately corresponding to the Rhine) may indicate that the Soviets plan in certain circumstances to withhold nuclear attacks beyond the Rhine in hopes of avoiding French and British attacks on Soviet cities and separating a conflict in West Germany from the rest of Western Europe. [This possibility may be looked at in another light. The Soviets may calculate that they could confine a tactical nuclear war to Central Europe only since (a) the U. S. would be deterred by the Soviet SIOP forces from attacking Soviet cities and peripheral military forces, and (b) the French and British would be similarly deterred if the Soviet peripheral attack forces are withheld. The Glebov article, which is discussed next, gives some ambiguous indications that the Soviet high command is assessing a doctrine envisaging nuclear wars limited in this fashion.]

4. The Glebov article (which I mentioned to you in my earlier memorandum [REDACTED] urges "all generals and officers "to conduct additional studies of "warfare with the limited use of nuclear weapons." Unlike other sources, he advances the "opinion" that there is a "real possibility of conducting a conventional war in Europe" and other areas including the Near East and Far East. Together with the conventional phase of the Pact's exercises, Glebov's statements may represent a growing Soviet recognition that a massive theater wide nuclear strike may not be a desirable course of action in many possible contingencies in Europe. However, there is no evidence that Glebov's recommendations have been widely accepted and his article proves, if anything, merely that the Soviets do not have well thought out concepts and tactics for limited nuclear war in Europe.

Taken as a whole, the new CIA study provides the clearest picture yet of Soviet doctrine for a war in Europe, with regard to:

-- Timing and scope of the initial nuclear strike, and the emphasis on pre-emption;

-- The impact of NATO exercises and doctrine on Soviet thinking;

-- Soviet exploration of the concept of "limited" nuclear war in Europe. (Past assessments, relying heavily on statements from the Soviet military press, provided few insights into these issues.)

However, the study, like much CIA work, is mainly descriptive. It suggests some very significant conclusions, but does not always support them or pursue them in an analytical way. Some of the principal difficulties I have had with the study revolve around the following questions:

1. The Soviet View of the NATO/U. S. Threat. The CIA study asserts (p. 10) that the Soviets "believe that NATO does not intend to restrict a European conflict to the use of tactical nuclear weapons only and that a limited nuclear response by them would only offer the West an opportunity to deliver first a massive and decisive strategic nuclear strike."

No evidence is cited for this "belief." By implication it rests on the Pact's assessment of NATO's exercises which in themselves do not contemplate strategic inter-continental war. (It is worth noting here that the Pact intelligence assessments believe the U. S. strategic forces CPX, High Heels, is coordinated with the NATO exercise scenarios.) There is no evidence in the study that the Soviets believe that NATO has the capability to deliver a decisive strategic nuclear strike. Nor have we seen other evidence that the Soviet leaders believe the West has a decisive strategic first strike capability (taking into account U. S. and allied means of attack).

The study passes lightly over the available evidence on the Pact's view of NATO's conventional capabilities. In this connection, it may be worth noting that the Glebov article contains the following planning guidance for a Front's offensive operations:

"The experience of the Great Patriotic War, especially with regard to the use of tank forces, and also the conducted studies indicate that a strike force should be formed with the intention of fully utilizing the maneuvering capabilities of the troops in order to assure the following: Disruption of an enemy surprise attack; repulsion of this attack; launching of a pre-emptive (surprise) attack against the enemy main force with the use of a larger ratio of forces (1.5 to 2) on a selected axis; and a decisive superiority (three or four times more artillery and tanks) in the sectors of the attack."

As you may recall, our work (NSSM-84) showed that the Warsaw Pact could not expect to gain an overall force superiority of more than 2 to 1 even in a short mobilization scenario but could maintain a superiority of 3 or 4 to 1 in the sectors of an attack, and might sustain forces at a 2 to 1 advantage along one major axis of attack. Thus, the Soviet's judgement about NATO's capabilities could be based on the same sort of force ratio analysis we have been doing and may have reached similar conclusion for scenarios where the Pact can mobilize, reinforce, and concentrate its forces before NATO reacts.

This general view of NATO's conventional capabilities is corroborated by the Pact exercises. For example, Pact exercise scenarios since 1965 portray a NATO attack following a very short mobilization (usually 4-6 days) which is stopped, usually by D plus 2, before reinforcements arrive from the Soviet Union. Attached is a table I prepared to summarize the highlights of major Warsaw Pact exercise scenarios since 1961. However, some further analysis of Pact exercise scenarios and other sources, including Gen. Glebov, may be necessary before we have conclusive evidence on the Pact view of NATO capabilities.

2. The Question of De-Coupling. The CIA study raises a question whether the Soviet Union believes it may be possible to "de-couple" a tactical nuclear war against NATO forces in West Germany from either a theater nuclear war involving French and British strategic weapons or an intercontinental strategic war with the United States.

The evidence presented is suggestive but inconclusive and may simply reflect the limitations of the documents, which do not discuss intercontinental strategic war perhaps because they are intended to deal only with the European theater.

It could be that the Pact is debating the question. In mid-1968, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] termed "unacceptable for us" the NATO concept of successive escalation from tactical nuclear weapons to strategic weapons. This may reflect Pact doctrine (as the CIA study suggests) or it may reflect [REDACTED] as opposed to a Soviet view of the desirable doctrine.

It may be possible to gain an insight into the Pact capabilities to wage a successful limited nuclear war in Central Europe. It would be possible, for example, to compare available information on Pact tactical nuclear forces to the number and location of NATO targets east of the Rhine which could be engaged by these forces and assess the effects of a Pact pre-emptive strike on NATO's tactical (and theater) nuclear capabilities east of the Rhine. The capability of Pact tactical nuclear forces to survive a NATO first strike (limited to tactical targets in Central Europe) should also be examined.

It may be that with the current balance of nuclear forces in Central Europe, a de-coupling strategy, to be successful for the Pact, requires the Pact to pre-empt NATO.

3. Crisis Instability. The CIA study indirectly suggests that a European nuclear confrontation may be highly instable, in view of (a) the NATO doctrine of controlled escalation, which relies on nuclear forces to deter or defeat large-scale conventional attacks, and (b) the corresponding Pact emphasis on pre-emption coupled with their assumption that NATO will use nuclear weapons first.

The CIA study again underlines the urgent need for better understanding on our part of the implications of the choices available to us for reducing instability. [redacted]

Pact Intelligence Assessments of NATO Exercises

At your request, I have obtained copies of the [redacted] Warsaw Pact intelligence evaluations of NATO exercises. These documents are attached at Tab D. They are all notable for their detailed examination of these NATO exercises and insight into NATO's alert procedures and selective nuclear release procedures.

Given this sort of information on NATO, it is quite plausible to me that the Pact has a better understanding of our doctrine revealed in exercises, procedures, etc. than it is possible to obtain in Washington. This may well be important since it is not unlikely that planning within the NPG and by the U. S. commands in Europe may well be inconsistent with the doctrine as seen from Washington. For this reason, I think it would be useful for the U. S. intelligence community to do an evaluation of NATO exercises along the following lines:

- A detailed description of a number of recent NATO exercises.
- An evaluation of NATO's tactical nuclear doctrine as revealed to the Pact by these exercises and the related plans and procedures of the Alliance.
- An evaluation of the Pact's understanding of these NATO exercises and our doctrine.

The purpose of this study would be to identify differences between the Pact and NATO's perception of NATO's explicit and implicit nuclear doctrine. A memorandum to Dick Helms on this subject is enclosed at Tab A.

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HK

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9

In addition to better understanding of our doctrine and the Pact perception of it, there are a number of questions raised in the CIA document identified above the need to be answered. I will ensure that this further work is done and the DIA is given a full opportunity to give its views on CIA's work in this area.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the enclosed memorandum (Tab A) to Dick Helms.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF WARSAW PACT SCENARIOS FOR WAR IN CENTRAL EUROPE
(Continued)

<u>Source</u>	<u>Date of Info</u>	<u>Period of Tension</u>	<u>Mobilization Date (M-Day)</u>	<u>Beginning of Hostilities (D-Day)</u>	<u>NATO Offensive Halted</u>	<u>First Use of Nuclear Weapons (by NATO)</u>	<u>First Use of Nuclear Weapons (by Pact)</u>	<u>Warsaw Pact Major Offensive</u>	<u>Reinforcement Actions</u>
Exercise	1968	--	D-3	M+3	D+2	D+2	D+2 1/	Prob D+3	---
Exercise	1969	About 3 months	D-6	M+6	D+1	*	D+4	D+4	Troops arrived from the "interior" on D+4
Exercise	1969	--	D-12 (secret)	M+12	D+2	D+3	D+3 1/	D+3	No mention
Exercise	1970	Not avail.	Not avail.	Not avail.	Not avail.	D+1	D+1 1/	Not avail.	3 new Soviet armies from the Baltic MD, the Belorussian MD, & the Kiev MD were transferred to the GDR through Poland
Exercise	1970	Not avail.	D-4	M+4	Not avail.	Not avail.	Not avail.	Est. D+3	Not avail.

* Upon receiving data that NATO was about to employ nuclear weapons, the Pact decided to deliver the first strike.

1/ The USSR employed nuclear weapons in response to a NATO nuclear attack in all these exercises.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF WARSAW PACT SCENARIOS FOR WAR IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Source	Date of Info	Period of Tension	Mobilization Date (M-Day)	Beginning of Hostilities (D-Day)	NATO Offensive Halted	First Use of Nuclear Weapons (by NATO)	First Use of Nuclear Weapons (by Pact)	Warsaw Pact Major Offensive	Reinforcement Actions
IRONBARR	1961	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Reinforcement from USSR committed M+10 to M+12
Exercise	1961	Short?	D-2	M+2	D-Day	H-Hour, D-Day	D-Day	D-Day	Unknown
Exercise	1965	5 Days	D-4	M+4	D+2	D+2	1/	D+2	One army from USSR committed on D+3
Exercise	1966	More than 9 days	D-6	M+6	D+2	D+2	1/	D+2	After D+3 ✓
Exercise	1967	About 12 days	D-4	M+4	D+1	D+1	1/	D+3	Fronts from Western USSR begin arriving after D+3
[redacted]	1968	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Carpathian Front to begin arriving in Czechoslovakia M+3

1/ The USSR employed nuclear weapons in response to a NATO nuclear attack in all these exercises.

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