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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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January 11, 1984

INFORMATION

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
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RELEASE OF THIS DOCUMENT
DATE: FEB 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT C. MCFARLANE

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JSM*

SUBJECT: CIA Study on Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of
Armed Confrontation with the United States

I believe the attached study (Tab I) is right on target as regards all its major judgments. Specifically:

--The Soviet leadership is not overly nervous about the immediate prospect of armed confrontation with the U.S.;

--They are however very nervous about the prospects five to ten years down the road--not so much of a confrontation as such, as of a decisive shift in the balance of military power which would require them either to back down or accept the risk of confrontation. They genuinely fear our technological capacity and probably doubt that they could keep up if we went flat out. And just trying to keep up will put enormous pressures on their shaky system.

--Of all the regional disputes, they are probably most nervous about the Middle East, primarily because of the proximity of our forces there. In their eyes, they have acted prudently by not challenging directly our military actions in Lebanon. Israeli or (worse in their eyes) U.S. strikes on Syrian territory would be harder for them to tolerate--but they would probably do so. Still, they do not want to be faced with the choice.

*Administrative
rescriptions
to be sure
over drawn*

One element which is not elaborated in the paper deserves attention. That is, the nature of Andropov's internal rule, as it is shaping up. I see increasing signs that it is in fact a sort of neo-Stalinism, with the emphasis on discipline and police controls, combined with pronounced Russian nationalism. These trends stem primarily from internal factors and Andropov's own personality, but have implications for foreign policy. In fact, we may have, in Andropov, a Soviet leader who has a policy stake in the appearance of tension, since it makes it easier to mobilize the population if the latter is convinced that there is an external threat. Therefore, while Andropov may be very careful not to provoke a real confrontation, he may see little merit in relaxed tensions for their own sake (as Brezhnev clearly did).

Tab I CIA Study

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