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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD

Washington

PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION OF STALIN'S DEATH

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PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION OF STALIN'S DEATH

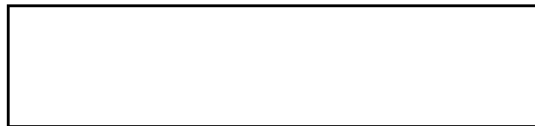
NOTE BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR

This paper was reviewed and revised by the Board at its informal meeting on March 19, 1953, and subsequently approved by vote slip action completed on April 23, 1953. The final text embodies changes drafted by the Working Group (Stalin) and cleared with the member agencies.

In accordance with the instructions of the Board, paragraph 3B of Part II of the draft of March 20 and the CIA Annex have been referred to the Working Group for coordination as agency supporting plans.

The paper is subject to continuing review by the Working Group under its Terms of Reference (PSB D-40/1) which provide that the WGS "will constantly review this plan in light of the developing situation and propose changes when needed".

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Acting Director

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

of ¹/₁ Page

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

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PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

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PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION OF STALIN'S DEATH

PART I - INTRODUCTION

1. Problem

a. The problem is to devise a plan of psychological operations as one part of a comprehensive program for the exploitation of Stalin's death and the transfer of power to new hands in order to make real progress toward our national objectives.

b. No once-for-all psychological plan is possible in the present situation. Psychological operations, like other actions, must be capable of rapid and flexible adjustment to changes in the situation. Therefore, a strong, high-level, continuing interdepartmental working group should be especially constituted to keep psychological plans and operations under continuous review and in harmony with national policy.

2. Basic Considerations

a. Psychological operations by themselves cannot have sufficient impact on the Soviet system to produce those changes which we would regard as real progress toward our national objectives. They can only contribute to the success of diplomatic, political, military, and economic actions taken by the United States Government, or aggravate stresses which emerge within the Soviet system itself. They should be fully geared into a comprehensive program for the exploitation of the situation in the Soviet Orbit created by the death of Stalin and installation in the USSR of a new regime.

b. It is beyond the scope of this paper to say what the elements of such a program should be. However, it has been essential in drawing up

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

1
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

this plan of psychological operations to make certain assumptions about national policy. The assumptions adopted for the purposes of this paper are set forth in paragraph 3 below. If these assumptions are in error, the plan for psychological operations will have to be adjusted accordingly.

3. Assumptions

a. It is assumed that the fundamental objectives of the United States with respect to the Soviet system remain as stated in the relevant National Security Council papers, namely, NSC 20/4, NSC 68, NSC 114, and NSC 135. In essence, these fundamental objectives are:

(1) To bring about a retraction of Soviet power and influence from the satellites and Communist China and thus a reduction of Soviet power and influence in world affairs.

(2) To bring about a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system--which would be reflected above all in the conduct of international relations by the Soviet regime in a manner consistent with the spirit and purpose of the United Nations Charter.

b. It is assumed that the United States Government intends to exploit to the full the opportunities presented by Stalin's death and the difficulties inherent in the transfer of power to make progress toward these ends.

c. It is assumed that the United States Government will undertake a comprehensive program of action--involving whatever diplomatic, political, military, and economic measures are appropriate and are within our capabilities--to make real progress toward our national objectives and that this plan for psychological operations, as revised from time to time, is part of this integrated campaign.

d. In order to utilize fully the unique world position of President

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

2
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSE D-40
April 23, 1953

Eisenhower, it is assumed that the major move in this national campaign will be a Presidential speech delivered at a time when it is likely to achieve maximum effect, outlining a United States program for peace. This will be intended as a serious move which will, we hope, lead to serious negotiations for adjustment of these issues. It follows, therefore, that the move must be treated and built up as a serious effort on the part of the United States to make progress toward a peaceful world.

4. Psychological Estimate of the Situation*

a. It has long been estimated that one of the most promising opportunities to make real progress toward our national objectives with respect to the Soviet system would arise following the death of Stalin. The inescapable necessity of transferring power to new hands, no matter how careful the preparations for it, has created difficulties and uncertainties for the Soviet Union and the Soviet system as a whole which may endure for some time and which may, in due course, result in a severe power struggle in the Soviet hierarchy. We should not be misled by the apparently smooth transfer of power. A despotism can be ruled in the long run only by a despot and history is strewn with unsuccessful efforts to replace a tyrant with a committee. There is a real question whether Malenkov (or anyone else) will be able to bring or maintain all of the power factors under his iron control as Stalin did.

b. Among the facts which have already emerged, the following are of particular significance in developing a program of psychological operations designed to support our national effort to make progress toward our objectives:

- (1) The accession to power of the new regime has been executed in a dramatically rapid and apparently resolute manner.

*This should be read in conjunction with the Special Intelligence Estimate of the situation (SE-39, March 12, 1953)

SECURITY INFORMATION

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

(2) The reorganization of the party and governmental apparatus has some similarities to the organization employed during World War II, which points to an effort to concentrate power in a manageable small number of hands and to present, both internally and externally, an impression of hardness and unity and continuity at the top.

(3) The following three features of the reorganization deserve special mention. First, it continues an effort, under way for some time, to strengthen its control over the military and to bid for its loyalty. Second, the recently criticized internal security apparatus has been consolidated and placed for all to see in the hands of the most experienced and ruthless policeman of them all--Beria. Third, there has been an extensive regrouping and consolidation of industrial and transportation and economic ministries, with control being placed in the hands of a few lieutenants.

(4) The initial pronouncements by the new regime stressed the leading role played by the Great Russian people. The funeral speeches emphasized the multinational character of the USSR. Thus the regime may fear that the non-Russian Republics as well as the satellite states are of doubtful reliability and may have to be held in line by increasingly tight measures of repression. The fact that Stalin was a Georgian and Malenkov is a Great Russian may have symbolic significance in this connection.

(5) Although current "peace" moves suggest that the Kremlin is altering its conduct of foreign and domestic policies, there is nothing at the present time which indicates a fundamental change in the long-range objectives of the Soviet government.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

4
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

c. On the other hand, the very rapidity with which the transfer of power has been effected, the nature of this change, and measures taken by the Kremlin to obtain the good will of the people, together with the unimpressive funeral ceremonies and the brevity of the mourning period for Stalin, and the warnings against "disorder and panic," suggest that nervousness and concern over the stability of the new regime are prevalent at the highest levels.

d. It is probably safe to assume, therefore, that the regime hopes to avoid serious external difficulties until it has consolidated its power or unless a struggle for power develops in such a way that one aspirant or another sees an opportunity to advance his interests by pursuing an aggressive and adventurous course. It is also in the nature of such a new regime that it must try to achieve the appearance of strength and permanence. On balance, therefore, it is concluded that:

(1) The new regime is unlikely to undertake any actions that would lead to general war.

(2) While altering certain lines in the conduct of foreign and domestic policies the new rulers will probably adhere for the time being to the doctrines of Soviet communism.

(3) The new rulers will react promptly, sharply, and perhaps even excessively to any external threats.

e. The new regime may be presumed to be concerned for some time with the problems of:

(1) The loyalty and subservience of the satellite regimes.

(2) Relations with Communist China.

(3) The loyalty of the Army.

(4) Internal security.

(5) The attitudes of minority nationalities in the USSR.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

5
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

(6) Party control of government and police: close ties between party and people.

f. Regardless of its overt attitudes toward the outside world, the new regime is bound to be concerned with the consolidation of its internal position. Serious friction within the regime may nevertheless arise over external issues, and is specially likely to occur in dealing with novel or difficult decisions.

5. Strategic Concept

a. The plan for psychological operations must be drawn up within the context of a strategic concept. Although its formulation is beyond the scope of this paper, it has been necessary to outline the main features of a strategic concept as a basis for the psychological plan. If this concept is revised, the plan for psychological operations will have to be revised accordingly.

b. Aims. In accordance with our fundamental objectives and as the most promising ways of making real progress toward these objectives, our basic aims in the present situation are to use the opportunities presented by Stalin's death and the difficulties inherent in the transfer of power to new hands.

(1) To foster any and all divisive forces within the top hierarchy of the Kremlin with particular reference to the Malenkov-Beria-Molotov-Bulganin situation.

(2) To exploit the basis of schism between the leaders of the Kremlin and major power elements of the Soviet bloc, including the military establishment.

(3) To stimulate divisive forces between the Kremlin and the satellite governments including Communist China.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

6
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

- (4) To maximize the disaffection between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the regime.
- (5) To maximize the division between the peoples of the satellites, including Communist China, and the Soviet regime.
- (6) To maintain and increase unity between the governmental leaders of the free nations.
- (7) To maintain and increase the unity between the peoples of the free nations.
- (8) To follow through successfully in the defense building of the United States and the other free nations.
- (9) To attain a sound economic position for the United States and the other free nations with widespread confidence in President Eisenhower's economic leadership.
- (10) To expose vigorously the motives and pitfalls of any false "peace" campaigns.
- (11) Without contributing to the prestige of the Soviet regime, to combat any wishful thinking in the free world as to the current weakness of world communism.
- (12) To react resolutely to any new aggression.

c. Methods

(1) Main effort: strategy of choice. One of the most significant means of furthering the above aims is to confront the communist rulers with difficult major choices in a way which does not encourage them to close ranks, but which tends to isolate them and divide their counsels, while uniting humanity, especially the free world, with us. The Presidential speech, assumed above, should serve this purpose.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

7
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

(2) Supporting efforts

With respect to the communist world:

(a) We should confront the untried regime with other stimuli apt to provoke internal arguments--e.g., occasions requiring decision, or failures leading to recrimination--but avoid threats or sabre-rattling.

(b) We should plague it with doubts--e.g., about reliability of key individuals and groups.

(c) We should foster internal antagonisms by other suitable means, such as fostering nationalistic feelings.

(d) We should combine "carrot" and "stick" both in direct support of the main effort and in executing the other supporting efforts. An essential feature of the strategy of choice is a "push-pull" situation, combining pressures and inducements which show the disadvantages of a choice contrary to our interests and the advantages of one which is favorable.

(e) Fluctuations in direction and emphasis (e.g., between carrot and stick) should be used as an added means of confusion except where steadiness of tactics is desirable for a special reason.

(f) Probing (see d(2) below).

With respect to the free world:

(g) The most promising ways of furthering our aims with respect to the free world are:

(1) To stress the importance of increased strength and unity by emphasizing the new elements of danger and opportunity in the situation.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

8
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

(2) To manifest a willingness and desire to cooperate in developing unity of effort by the free world. In this connection it will be desirable to approach our allies in a spirit of give and take.

(h) We should exploit the possible weakening of ties between the Kremlin and Communist parties throughout the world due to the absence of any outstanding figure of stature, experience and ideological prowess as the new leader of world communism.

It may be noted that some time may elapse before the divisive forces inherent in the present Soviet power set-up can mature into a severe power struggle. Initial and intermediate actions, therefore, should not compromise the prospects of successful psychological action in the event that the power struggle breaks in the open.

d. Phases

(1) Initial Period. During the next few weeks a serious effort is justified in order to prolong and exploit the condition of nervousness following the sudden transfer of power. A major part of this effort should be to set forth the issues which prevent free world countries and the USSR from achieving a genuine world peace and to place the onus squarely upon the Soviet government for failure to accept U. S. offers to resolve these issues. The Presidential speech is assumed above especially for this reason.

(2) Subsequent Phases. It is most important that initial action be followed by a series of integrated steps. Above all, operations should be prepared to make the Kremlin assume maximum

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

2
of 14 Pages

88115

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

liability if it does not accept the proposals in the Presidential speech. Measures should be taken to germinate the seeds of disunity and to probe for vulnerabilities in the Soviet system. If events develop very favorably, these steps could culminate in a

(3) Climax in which the communist system would break into open internal conflict. This culminating phase in our strategy should begin if and when such conflict seems near. If it never comes, the strategy should still have contributed usefully to our basic purpose.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

10
of 14 Pages

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

PART II

PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

1. General.

a. The importance of psychological pressures in the present situation is of sufficient moment to warrant not only the concentration of all psychological media upon the stated objectives, but also the resolute development of expanded and more effective capabilities. Even more essential, perhaps, is the determination to seize and consistently maintain the initiative through psychological operations imaginatively conceived and dramatically executed. Before it can win the hearts or influence the intellects of its targets, United States psychological strategy must capture their imaginations.

b. The major hope of fulfilling the aims of this plan lies in substantive government acts of psychological significance. The Presidential speech assumed in Part I, para. 3.d. is the keystone upon which the present psychological strategy is based. This assumed speech, and the various official actions which would stem directly from it, need, however, to be complemented by a series of psychologically significant acts. All but a few of the overt and covert psychological programs proposed in the following paragraphs of this section are intended primarily to exploit, prolong and intensify the psychological impact of various political, economic and military actions.

25X1



SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

11
of 14 Pages

88115

25X1

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SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

25X1

3. Overt Information Operations.

a. While the possibilities for rapid increase in capabilities and effectiveness of our overt information programs is limited--the scale of the present effort is already considerable--these programs are also called upon to play a vital role in the implementation of the plan and the need for maximum energy, initiative and resourcefulness in developing the broad tasks listed below is no less great than in the case of covert operations.

b. In the situation with which this paper deals, all governments and all peoples of the world may be assumed to be deeply interested, first, in accurate reporting and interpretation of events in the Soviet Union and their consequences and, second, in the relationship of the United States to the situation and its intentions and its actions with regard to it. Therefore, a primary responsibility falling upon official overt information media is to provide widespread factual coverage and reliable commentary, from original and attributable sources, on developments, including the statement of the President crystallizing the attitude of the United States. This is the essential foundation upon which effective propaganda will rest.

c. Successful use of overt media in the operation will require careful coordination of all media. Of special importance will be the coordination of official statements, inasmuch as such statements are the most effective weapons for overt use. The watch committee envisaged in this plan must be specifically charged with alerting overt media in advance to forthcoming actions and their significance. (For example,

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

PSB D-40
April 23, 1953

should a public statement be intended to launch a "trial balloon," the overt media should be advised in order to give it maximum dissemination.)

d. In propaganda directed to many areas, much should be made of the fact that this is a time for purposeful, determined and united action on the part of the West.

e. With the change in regime, defection deserves a high priority in propaganda. The principal role of overt media in this work is not the direct inducement of defection but such indirect assistance as publicizing defections when they occur and indicating that escapees from behind the Iron Curtain are not returned to captivity.

f. Congressional and public leaders should be consulted with regard to exploitation of the new situation and particularly as to the imperative necessity for maintaining the continued building of defensive strength in the United States and the free world.

g. This plan should be under constant review in light of the developing situation.

4. Supporting Actions.

Appropriate political, military and economic actions consistent with this plan and related to it should also be undertaken.

SECURITY INFORMATION
TOP SECRET

14
of 14 Pages

0 NPS B

100	131	2	241
ABSTRACT		INDEX	
DATE 27 APR 1953			

7