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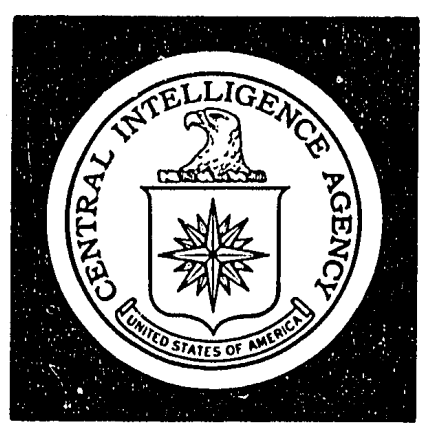
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Intelligence Memorandum

Current Soviet Foreign Policies

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30 October 1970
No. 1480/70

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
30 October 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Current Soviet Foreign PoliciesSummary

Since the Soviet Government formally announced its readiness to negotiate on strategic arms limitations in June 1968, matters have not stood still on the many international fronts where Moscow's foreign policy is engaged. Relations with China worsened rapidly in the next year and subsequently have leveled off at a new low. In Europe, the Czechoslovak crisis has come and gone, and a major thaw has occurred in Soviet - West German relations, which in turn has led to a new round of Berlin negotiations. A stormy succession of events in the Middle East has affected the policies of all concerned. Meanwhile Soviet military programs have rolled steadily forward, including not only continued R and D activity and construction programs for ICBMs and ballistic missile submarines, but also the advent of Y-class submarine patrols in the Atlantic. It may therefore be useful to examine the evidence that the Soviet Union may now be embarked on a new course in foreign policy and, in the light of that examination, to speculate upon how the USSR will approach the next SALT round in Helsinki.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of Strategic Research and the Office of National Estimates.

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1. As a general rule, major changes in Soviet foreign policy are rare. Usually, sweeping alterations wait upon a shift of leadership or a truly critical external event; Stalin probably had to die before the USSR could decide to break out into the third world, and the Cuban missile crisis was necessary to put an end to Khrushchev's policy of unremitting pressures. The Soviets, of course, have a general view of their aims and like to see themselves as having a consistent and well-coordinated policy. In practice, however, they are inclined to handle their policies separately, treating each on its merits and seeking to protect and promote their interests in each individual area. In the present context, in fact, they see efforts to link separate problems as a trap designed to maneuver the USSR into foregoing advantageous courses of action, or to inveigle it into pressuring friendly states like North Vietnam and the UAR to do so, in return for little more than promises that their interests will be considered in other problem areas.

China

2. But if substantial over-all changes occur only rarely in Soviet foreign policy, there are occasions, nonetheless, when one issue becomes important enough to affect significantly the USSR's handling of other problems. In recent years China has become such an issue. The Soviets have been obliged to acknowledge to themselves that the Sino-Soviet relationship is one of fundamental enmity. The massive Soviet build-up, which has more than tripled Soviet troops along the frontier with China since 1965, is one manifestation of this acknowledgment. Another is the vigorous Soviet efforts to isolate China both internationally and in the Communist movement. Although the Soviets probably hope that a post-Mao leadership will temper Chinese hostility, they are far from counting on this and realize that a harmonious future relationship is highly unlikely.

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3. There is convincing evidence that the Soviets have felt it necessary to draw from this the conclusion that they would be wise to compose their relations to a certain extent with other states, primarily the US and West Germany. The guiding principle in this effort is the need to prevent others from collaborating with China or from exploiting the rift to Soviet disadvantage. Moscow remains as unwilling as ever to make concessions beyond the requirements of this principle. The China factor probably has contributed significantly to the Soviet decision to conduct SALT in a business-like fashion and to the wholeheartedness with which Moscow has taken up the opportunity offered by Brandt's election in September 1969. It has not, however, led the Soviets into making substantial concessions in either area. Nor has it forced them to curb their efforts to expand their influence in the Middle East simply to secure an agreement with the West. Moscow has been working to avoid a simultaneous heightening of tension on both its eastern and western flanks precisely in order to avoid being forced to make significant concessions to either adversary. In this context, the maturing of SALT and the advent of the Brandt government in West Germany came at a propitious time.

4. The China factor may yet drive the USSR further in these directions in the future. During 1970, however, it seems to have lost some of its force. The Peking talks that began last October and the vague and unformalized accommodation that has developed along the frontier since then have kept the border areas free of fighting. Soviet propaganda, while not retreating on substantive matters, has avoided the high polemical pitch that formerly served to keep the quarrel in the forefront of international affairs. Moscow has taken other steps, such as the return of an ambassador to Peking, to ease tensions and to give the appearance of relaxation in relations with Peking.

5. More important, the USSR's fears about how other countries might react have not been realized. The West has not found ways to exploit the Sino-Soviet rift. China itself suspended the Warsaw talks with the US as a result of the Cambodian intervention. Bonn seems to have decided

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not to jeopardize its rapprochement with Moscow by flirtations with Peking [redacted]

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[redacted] Although Peking's revived diplomacy and attempts to break out of its international isolation may create new problems for Moscow, the Soviets at the moment are less preoccupied with the China problem than they were before.

6. As a result, the Soviets have conceded no more to the West than was necessary to maintain momentum toward agreements in which they have an inherent interest. And they have perceived no special reason to practice restraint in their strategic programs or to forsake the pursuit of their own interests in various areas out of any deference to Western sensitivities.

The Middle East

7. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Middle East. The Soviet aim in this area, simply stated, is to maintain and extend the USSR's position in the Arab states. Soviet interest in a settlement is entirely subordinate to this objective. In the light of Israeli policy, Moscow sees no point in damaging its standing with the Arabs by pressing them to make concessions, and it has seen considerable need to improve UAR military capabilities.

8. Confronted last January with Israeli air raids that were hurting Nasir politically and embarrassing the USSR as his protector, Moscow embarked on a bold military build-up intended to deny Israel the freedom to strike at targets in Egypt. During a three-month period, the Soviets created a protective barrier of SA-3 and SA-2 missiles around the principal Egyptian civilian and military targets, augmenting it with sophisticated radars and antiaircraft artillery. [redacted]

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9. By the end of May, the defenses had been expanded to cover most of the Nile delta [redacted] Even before the US-arranged cease-fire took effect on 7 August, the

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Soviet air defense line had been extended to the Suez Canal area and had begun to take its toll of Israeli aircraft. As to the standstill provisions of the US proposal, the Soviets probably reasoned that the chances were very low that discussions would soon lead to a settlement acceptable to their clients, and that a stronger military position was not only an urgent present necessity but would even, in some future round of negotiations, increase those chances.

10. The US has entered into Soviet calculations throughout this period primarily as a channel for pressuring the Israelis and as a military threat if uncontrolled escalation should get under way. On the military front, the Soviets have advanced steadily in 1970 but always by stages, pausing after each small advance to satisfy themselves concerning possibly dangerous US reactions before making the next move. They hope that the US will not respond by becoming more aggressive or less forthcoming in other, non-Mideast matters, but they are not prepared to let this possibility restrain them from meeting the requirements and using the opportunities that arise on the ground there. It is almost certain that Moscow did not urge the Syrians to invade Jordan and that the Soviets did subsequently advise withdrawal, but in neither case were they acting solely out of concern for US attitudes; they simply judged that inter-Arab fighting and a possible Israeli or US military move were detrimental to the USSR's own interests. Particularly now, when the USSR must devote overriding priority to securing its position in post-Nasir Egypt, the Soviets will be unwilling to lean on the Arabs to bring a settlement nearer.

Naval Deployments

11. This same unwillingness to forgo opportunities out of regard for Western sensibilities and concerns is evident in the increasing display the USSR is making of its capabilities to project its military power abroad. Over the past few years, the Soviets have undertaken a broad range of military activities at a distance from Soviet borders. This trend is the outcome of long-standing programs of military construction, primarily naval, that have now begun to have an international impact. The

build-up of the Mediterranean Squadron, for example, has not only forced the littoral states to accord the Soviet Union a greater weight in their political calculations, but has probably contributed to Moscow's confidence that it could engage in direct and large-scale assistance to the air defense of the UAR without running unacceptable risks. In other areas, Soviet naval cruises and visits are meant to underline the USSR's status as a global power, entitled to have its voice heeded and its influence felt in all quarters. With additional major combat vessels now under construction, it is clear that the Soviet Union intends to expand its presence even further in the years ahead.

12. It was not to be expected that the USSR, having made large investments in earlier years, now would forgo the payoff of using its naval power in these ways out of concern for alarmed reactions in the West. But the case of Cienfuegos, although it fits into this trend, has a special further importance. Knowing that submarine support facilities in Cuba would touch a highly sensitive US nerve, the Soviets approached the venture with a series of probing naval visits before they began to install facilities for their own use there. Now that the US has objected, the USSR has disclaimed any intent to build a Soviet base and has attempted to give substance to its disclaimer by moving its submarine support ships to another Cuban port. This development coincided with a rising level of acrimony in Soviet and US statements about each other's motives, and it is possible that this climate contributed to the USSR's decision. It is much more likely, however, that factors specific to the situation, and in particular the local military superiority enjoyed by the US, determined Moscow's choice.

Latin America

13. Elsewhere in Latin America, the Soviets have moved cautiously. Presumably, they have done so both out of concern over the exercise of traditional prerogatives of the US in the area and out of an awareness that previous exploits have often led more to trauma than to triumph. They have evidently concluded that a serious effort to promote radical

economic and political change throughout the area would be premature. In recent years, Moscow appears to have opted for a long-range policy of image building in Latin America, designed both to survive the constantly changing alignment of political forces there and to avoid major commitments of Soviet prestige and resources.

14. This does not mean that opportunities will be neglected or that the Soviets will be inactive. On the contrary, Soviet overtures to the military regimes in Peru and Bolivia provide ample proof that Moscow will continue to work for improved relations where it can, stretching certain political and ideological tenets to accommodate these ends where necessary. In any event, the Soviets do not seem to be in any hurry as has been recently illustrated by Soviet handling of the current situation in Chile.

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[REDACTED] Evidently, Moscow considers that too early an embrace of the new government might lead to unwanted actions by either the US or domestic political forces in Santiago.

Europe, Germany, Berlin

15. Soviet policy in Europe is, from a Western perspective, on quite a different tack. But here too the USSR is pursuing long-standing national interests. In its response to the Federal Republic's Ostpolitik and its pressure for a European security conference, Moscow is working toward the time-honored goals of gaining acceptance of the postwar status quo and reducing the American role on the continent.

16. The former goal has been largely accomplished by the conclusion of the Soviet - West German bilateral treaty of 12 August 1970. The West Germans, by the terms of this treaty, committed themselves to "respect" the existing borders of all European states and to raise no territorial claims now or in the future. In this context, the treaty specifically refers to Poland's Oder-Neisse border and the frontier between the Federal Republic and East Germany thus taking into account the major postwar territorial changes in Eastern Europe.

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17. Moscow's latter objective, that of reducing the American role and presence on the continent, is still far from realization. Nonetheless, the Soviets can take a certain amount of satisfaction from the fact that the West European perception of the USSR as a political and military threat has been gradually diminishing. Moreover, Moscow probably calculates that further movement toward detente with West Germany, parallel approaches to other West European states (such as that which has already occurred with Pompidou's France), and an eventual conference on European security will dispel even further these concerns. As this trend develops, the Soviets probably judge that the basis for the American position in Europe will further weaken.

18. The needs of the Soviet economy, and particularly the desire to have greater access to Western technology, have also figured in Moscow's political gestures toward Western Europe. Soviet economic planners are evidently setting considerable store by an expansion of trade with the West and on an infusion of Western scientific and technical expertise. Moscow has already moved to take advantage of the favorable political climate brought about by the treaty with Bonn and by its recent flirtation with France, approaching West German and French firms with new offers of contracts intended to arouse the competitive instincts of Western entrepreneurs. Moscow's hopes, however, are probably unrealistic because the barriers to increased business dealings in the past have been more economic than political. The Soviets have need for long-term financial credits, and potential trading partners have been either unwilling or unable to satisfy Soviet requests.

19. Together, these European goals are worth a certain price. The Soviets have already paid some of it by accepting West Germany as a respectable state and by shelving East Germany's maximum demands for immediate recognition by Bonn. Soviet propagandists, faithfully echoed and in some cases preceded by the East Europeans, have shifted from attacking Bonn's "revanchist" aims to stressing the "peace-loving" and "progressive" tendencies of the West German rulers. Heretofore, fear of Bonn has probably been as effective in cementing the Eastern alliance

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as fear of Moscow has been in the West, and the Soviets are therefore giving up an effective political instrument.

20. It is in Berlin at present, however, that they are being asked to pay a real and immediate political price in the form of guarantees of civilian access and acceptance of a legitimate West German role in West Berlin. They probably will be willing to pay some of this price, but--as evidenced by their tactics to date--no more than the determination of the Western powers requires. They have insisted, for example, on the virtually complete dismantling of the West German political role in the city. They are evidently making demands of this sort in hopes that the Western powers will give way under pressure from a West German Government anxious to preserve the momentum of its Ostpolitik. This is a delicate calculation, however, as the Soviets try to outwait their negotiating partners and to assess which side can more afford to contemplate a setback in the process of European detente.

SALT

21. The Soviet leaders do not easily understand why others should take umbrage when they find the USSR promoting its own interests in all these areas. Even if they acknowledge to themselves that they may have cut a few corners, as in the standstill violations in the Suez Canal zone, they are stung by charges of duplicity and resent the imputation of a sinister or deceitful pattern to their various undertakings. Hence their stout rejection of such charges, both out of genuine indignation and out of a desire to show that they cannot be placed upon the defensive by verbal assaults.

22. In their countercharges, however, the Soviets continue conspicuously to exclude SALT from the current polemical exchange. It is left to low-level propagandists to sustain an intermittent criticism of US good faith by pointing to ongoing US weapons programs. Accusations from the other side that Soviet behavior elsewhere bodes ill for the success of SALT are passed by in silence. This suggests that the Soviets wish to approach the next round in Helsinki on its own merits and not to allow SALT to become a function of some other problem or some larger pattern.

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23. As to how they view its merits, there is no evidence that the Soviets will approach the negotiations with any greater urgency than they have displayed to date. Semenov was careful to reserve the Soviet position on all points in his final statements at Vienna, and he probably will do the same at the outset in Helsinki. For their next move, the Soviets can choose between two tactics. On the one hand, they can present their own proposal, possibly their Basic Provisions of 20 April embellished with a few key numbers; this approach would have the advantage of getting back on the table a number of items, such as controls on forward-based aircraft and non-transfers to third countries, which do not appear in the US plan. (The Soviets may allude to recent US charges over Cienfuegos--as indeed one propagandist has already done--to punctuate their concern over forward-based systems.) Alternatively, they can concentrate upon the US position and continue, as at Vienna, to chip away at it in hopes of inducing further movement on various points.

24. Whatever tactical approach the Soviets decide upon, however, they will probably draw closer to those aspects of the US proposal that they have already noted were to their liking. These items might include the equal and unitary ceiling on missiles and bombers, reliance on national means of verification, and the limitation of ABM deployment to defense of the national command authority (NCA level). A quantitative agreement limited to matters such as this would allow Moscow to proceed with new weapons systems and qualitative improvement of existing programs. The Soviets are already going ahead, for example, with a new submarine-launched missile that has twice the range of the missile carried by Y-class submarines and with the development of improved re-entry vehicles and penetration aids for their ICBM force.

25. Because of the peculiarities of the future political schedule in Moscow, Soviet behavior at Helsinki may tell us something new about how they view the importance and urgency of an agreement. It is unlikely that they will be able to reach major decisions on the issues involved in the first quarter of 1971. This is because preparations for the Party Congress in March--primarily the coordination of the

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five-year plan and the jockeying for political position that a Congress inevitably generates--will make this a poor period for the taking of hard and disputatious decisions. Anticipating this, the Soviet leaders may send their delegation to Helsinki next month with instructions that genuinely advance the pace of negotiations. If they do not, it would probably mean that they foresee little movement from their side before the middle quarters of 1971, and therefore intend to use the intervening period to press the US on issues of specific Soviet concern.

26. The tactics of Soviet timing depend in considerable part on how the Soviets view the ABM question. The Soviets have already unofficially indicated that they would like to firm up at Helsinki an understanding on ABM limits, probably at the NCA level. They believe that, the more they can get Washington to regard this matter as settled, the less leverage the US will then be able to bring to bear on the negotiations concerning offensive systems. If this tactic fails, then the Soviets will have to make a key judgment: whether a period of slow progress, during which they could be closing the MIRV R and D gap and perhaps adding to their lead in ICBMs, could be managed in a way that would keep the US from forging ahead in the ABM field, perhaps even to the point where the Safeguard system was no longer subject to negotiation.