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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

19 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Attached Memorandum for the Director, "A Survey of Possible Soviet Actions," dated 7 June 1963

The attached Memorandum for the Director is forwarded for your information.

Joseph Seltzer
JOSEPH SELTZER
Executive Officer
National Estimates

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

7 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: A Survey of Possible Soviet Actions

1. At the recent NATO meetings in Ottawa the view was expressed by a number of participants that we ought to expect the relative immobility which has characterized Soviet policy since the Cuban crisis to be ended soon by some new aggressive initiative. In a recent NIE the USIB concluded as follows:*

"In the present phase, we think that the Soviets are unlikely either to make serious attempts to resolve cold-war tensions or to undertake a vigorous new offensive against non-Communist positions. Instead, they seem to see the present period as one which can best be used to build up their strength and to fortify existing positions in preparation for future opportunities."

The NIE pointed out, however, that this did not imply Soviet policy would be passive, and that the Soviets would be alert to search out new opportunities and Western vulnerabilities for profitable exploitation. It further warned that Khrushchev probably felt the

* NIE 11-63, "Main Trends in Soviet Foreign Policy," dated 22 May 1963, SECRET.

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need to register an advance which would reverse the trend of adversity that has beset his policies in the last year or so. We could not exclude, therefore, the possibility of some new and audacious move. It is the purpose of this memorandum to consider what moves of this kind the Soviets might undertake, if they were disposed to do so, though it remains our view that no aggressive action is probable.

Soviet Initiatives

2. Berlin, Cuba, and Laos are the most conspicuous areas where Communist ventures could pose hard choices for Western policy. Since Laos and Cuba are the subject of close current scrutiny and reporting they will not be covered here.* Berlin, however, has been quiet and the Soviets and East Germans have given the impression that Communist policy is to accept the status quo for a time. This is also our general estimate. In Berlin the Soviets are less hampered by third party interest than in Cuba and Laos, and are capable of acting without much preparation and without giving warning signals to the West. Moreover, in Berlin the Soviets

* Two forthcoming NIE's are relevant to these problems: NIE 85-63, "Situation and Prospects in Cuba"; NIE 14.3-63, "The Impact of the Sino-Soviet Dispute on North Vietnam and its policies."

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retain some important tactical advantages. It may be that after Adenauer's retirement Moscow will decide to test the mettle of the new Erhard government, perhaps seizing the occasion of some step, in connection with the MLF plans, toward West Germany's further participation in the nuclear armament of NATO. Such a test might tell the Soviets something about the durability of the Bonn-Paris alignment under Erhard, and it might appeal to the Communists as an offsetting counterstroke to the President's visit to Berlin.

3. There are still some moves open to the Soviets which infringe on Western political interests but do not necessarily mean a full-dress crisis. East Berlin has yet to be formally incorporated into East Germany, and various other "vestiges" of four power rule remain as potential targets: the Berlin Air Safety Center, Spandau Prison, the Soviet War Memorial in West Berlin, Western military patrolling in East Berlin, contacts between the Soviet Commander in Germany and the Western commandants in Berlin, and the Allied Military Missions in Potsdam. On a more dangerous level, of course, there is the question of both civil and military access to Berlin, which the Soviets and East Germans could harrass in a variety of ways.

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4. A Berlin crisis is the most direct form of pressure against the Western alliance, but there are other tension-raising moves of a general kind which the Soviets might make. The USSR might resume nuclear testing this summer. Simultaneously, they might break off the Geneva disarmament discussions, perhaps charging in a demonstrative manner that NATO nuclear policies involving West Germany made disarmament discussions meaningless. They might also aggravate tensions by boycotting the current special UN General Assembly meeting on finances. As a special pressure point, the Soviets could become more aggressive on the NATO flanks, in Scandinavia or Greece-Turkey. Action against these areas would probably only be in the nature of verbal menace, but the possibility of specific demands on Finland for defense cooperation cannot be excluded. Finland, in addition to Berlin, is an area where the Soviets can bring a pressure against Western interests in retaliation for a further buildup of West German military strength. President Kekkonen has lately been apprehensive enough of some new pressure in Northern Europe that he took the precaution of coming out for a nuclear free zone in that area, just in case the Soviets raise demands for military concessions from Finland.

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5. New Soviet initiatives need not be limited to political moves. A Soviet attempt to interfere with a US satellite is a possibility. They would be more likely to demonstrate their technological and military prowess in an enterprise which carries less risk of engagement with the West. For example, if nuclear testing is resumed, the Soviets might explode very high yield weapons. Or the Soviets might test an orbital nuclear weapon which is probably within their near-term capabilities.*

Soviet Opportunities

6. Even without such Soviet initiatives, there are critical areas in the world where situations could develop even without Soviet initiative, but into which they might inject themselves in an aggressive way. Southeast Asia and the Middle East are currently areas of instability and tension which could be turned to the Soviet advantage. Soviet support and encouragement of an expansionist and belligerent Indonesian policy could be explosive, particularly as the Malaysian situation moves toward a climax. Political opportunities for the USSR in the Arab world are numerous

* This possibility will be discussed in a forthcoming paper, NIE 11-9-63, "Soviet Capabilities and Intentions to Orbit Nuclear Weapons."

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and range from the more traditional form of penetration through economic and military aid, shaping up currently in Algeria, to the more sensitive situations such as Arab-Israeli tensions, further buildup of the Soviet military presence in Yemen and the political incitement of the Kurds.*

7. While there are a number of such situations, in the past the major openings for Moscow have been largely the unanticipated turn of events, such as the Congo, Cuba, the Iraqi revolt of 1958, Guinea, and Ghana. At the present time the incipient revolts in the Portuguese colonies, the racial tensions in Central Africa, and the border disputes in East Africa hold some promise for a Soviet intrusion and exploitation.

Internal and Bloc Developments

8. What initiatives the Soviets might take or how they would respond to opportunities could be greatly affected by changes in the top leadership or decisive developments in the crisis in international communism. Our current judgment is that Khrushchev's essential authority remains intact, although he was apparently under

* A much fuller discussion is given in: Our Memorandum for the Director, "Principal Opportunities for the USSR in the Arab World," dated 6 June 1963, SECRET.

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some pressure from his colleagues in recent months and some restraints may have been placed on his freedom to arbitrarily decide policy questions. It is possible that we have underrated the tensions in the Kremlin. If so, Khrushchev might seek some foreign political coup to strengthen his dominance in the leadership.

9. Probably the most pressing current issue for Moscow is the forthcoming negotiation with the Chinese Communists. We do not foresee any resolution beyond the most fragile compromise and we doubt that either side would make important concessions to achieve even this modest settlement. We strongly doubt that the Soviets would undertake new, risky ventures merely to placate China, mainly because the Soviets have probably concluded that such concessions have little long-term effect on the course of the dispute other than to whet the Chinese appetite for power and influence in the Communist world. In the maneuvering which is bound to accompany a protracted discussion between the two parties and within the movement, the Soviets might raise the level of anti-Westernism to strengthen their hand in the talks, or the Chinese

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might aggravate some issue (the offshore islands, Sino-Indian border, Laos) to confound the Soviets.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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