

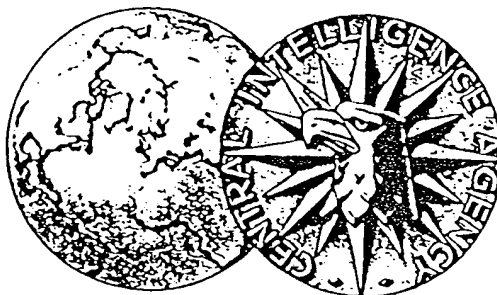
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# THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

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## THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

## SUMMARY

1. For the foreseeable future the USSR will be the only power capable of threatening the security of the United States. The Soviet regime, moreover, is essentially and implacably inimical toward the United States.

2. The power of the USSR to endanger the security of the United States is a consequence not only of Soviet strength, but also of the weakness and instability prevalent in Europe and Asia and of weaknesses in the military posture of the United States. The principal restraint on hostile Soviet action is the greater potential strength of the United States.

3. Soviet strengths and weaknesses and specific Soviet capabilities to threaten the United States and US security interests overseas are set forth within (paragraphs 2-17).

4. In general, the probable basic intentions of the Kremlin for the next decade are:

a. To avoid war with the United States, but to exploit to the utmost, within that limitation, the coercive power inherent in the preponderance of Soviet military strength in Eurasia, relying on the disinclination of the United States to resort to war.

b. To build up as rapidly as possible the war potential of the Soviet orbit, in an effort to equal and surpass, eventually, the war potential of the United States.

c. To wage political, economic, and psychological warfare against the United States and its allies, with a view to undermining their potential strength and increasing the relative strength of the USSR: in particular, to prevent or retard the recovery and coalition of Western Europe and the stabilization of the situation in the Near East and Far East.

d. To exploit every opportunity presented by the weakness and instability of neighboring states to expand the area of Soviet domination by political and subversive means.

5. Although the Kremlin is unlikely to resort deliberately to war to gain its ends within the next decade, it would do so if ever it came to consider such a course expedient, particularly if convinced that time was on the side of the United States. In this respect the situation will remain critical pending the successful accomplishment of US efforts to redress the balance of power. Moreover, there is constant danger of war through accident or miscalculation.

6. In any case, the fundamental hostility of the Soviet Government toward the United States and its formidable military power require, in common prudence, that the United States be prepared for the eventuality of war with the USSR.

Note: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Army have concurred in this report. The Air Intelligence Division, Air Intelligence Directorate, Department of the Air Force has also concurred, but see comments in Enclosure A, p. 10. For a dissent by the Office of Naval Intelligence, see Enclosure B, p. 11.  
The information in this report is as of 13 September 1948.

## THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

### 1. THE PROBLEM.

At the request of the National Security Council Staff, we estimate herein "existing or foreseeable threats to our national security with particular reference to the USSR, including the probable nature and timing of these threats."

For the foreseeable future the USSR will be the only power capable of threatening the security of the United States. The policy of the USSR, moreover, is essentially inimical to the security of the United States and will continue to be, at least as long as the existing Soviet regime remains in power—i.e., indefinitely. The problem becomes, then, one of reviewing the capabilities of the USSR to threaten the security of the United States, directly or indirectly, now or in the foreseeable future.

### 2. SOVIET STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.

*Military.* The most obvious element of Soviet strength is the overwhelming preponderance of power that the USSR can bring to bear at every point within logistical reach of Soviet ground forces. At present, however, the USSR lacks sufficient air and naval strength to project this preponderance of land power overseas. By 1955 Soviet strategic air power will have been greatly augmented and weapons of mass destruction (atomic, biological, and chemical) will presumably be available. Soviet naval capabilities, however, will then still be largely limited to submarine operations.

*Economic.* The Soviet economy, still relatively undeveloped in 1941, was severely damaged by the war. It is presently incapable of supporting a prolonged global war. By 1958, however, it will probably be capable of supporting such a war, although the war industrial capacities of the United States and the United Kingdom combined would still be preponderant in a ratio of approximately 2:1.

Soviet seizure of the industrial capacities of continental Western Europe could greatly enhance the Soviet industrial war potential, but effective conversion of these capacities to Soviet use would probably require at least two or three years. If in the meantime the USSR were obliged to engage in a global war to hold these seizures, the total realizable resources under Soviet control would probably prove unequal to the task.

*Political and Subversive.* Important elements of Soviet strength are the absolute power of the Kremlin within the Soviet state and the Kremlin's apostolic relationship to international Communism through which it commands the allegiance of the faithful throughout the world even against the claims of their respective national states.

The Kremlin, however, does not enjoy complete freedom of action, even within the USSR. With realistic regard for the perpetuation of the regime, it must take into account the present war-weariness of the Russian people, their resentment of prolonged deprivations, the disillusionment spread by veterans returning from the West, and the respect of the Russian people for the superiority of US technology and

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war matériel. It must reckon with the potentialities for subversion inherent in any tyrannical regime, particularly in a country of such ethnic complexity as the USSR. It must consider that resort to war would involve the risk of creating an alternative national leadership armed with real power. It must anticipate the stresses to which the regime will be subjected by the inescapable problem of the succession.

Similarly, Soviet control of the Satellite States cannot be rendered perfectly secure, no matter how complete the Kremlin's control over governments maintained by Soviet force. The forces of individualism and nationalism will continue to exist in those countries; the hostility of their populations toward Communism and toward the USSR can be controlled only so long as active resistance remains hopeless.

The same spirit of individualism and of patriotism militates against Communist penetration of the West. The demonstrated subservience of Communist Parties to a foreign power has severely curtailed their political influence. Should Western Europe be overrun by Soviet armies, the resulting antagonisms toward the USSR and toward Communism would undo such popular appeal as the Communists still exercise. As in Eastern Europe, Soviet control would depend on the presence of superior force; passive resistance would be widespread, and active resistance could be expected in any circumstances that presented a reasonable hope of liberation. Military conquest would prove an inauspicious beginning for the establishment of long-term political power.

### 3. US SECURITY INTERESTS OVERSEAS.

Although the USSR will constantly seek to undermine the economy and polity of the United States, the American continent is relatively immune to sustained direct attack. Inasmuch, however, as US security would be enhanced by the existence of a stable world situation, or by the availability of military bases overseas, the weaknesses and instability prevailing in areas accessible to the USSR constitute weaknesses in the US security position. Should these areas fall under Soviet domination, the eventual result would be an agglomeration of hostile power against which it would be impossible to render the United States secure. Conversely, to restore and develop the normal and potential economic, political, and military strength of these areas would tend to redress the balance of power and ultimately to restrain the aggressive tendencies of the USSR. Thus the United States has vital security interests overseas in areas presently vulnerable to Soviet military or subversive aggression.

## DIRECT THREATS TO US SECURITY

### 4. ECONOMIC.

A basic consideration in Soviet policy is the assumption that a severe economic depression in the United States is inevitable and impending. Although Soviet expectations as to the timing of this event have been disappointed, the basic assumption is still held. Such a depression would be expected to curtail US military strength, to undermine US support of resistance to Communism abroad, and to create political instability in the United States—in short, to provide new opportunities for Soviet

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aggrandizement by means short of war and to facilitate Soviet success in the event of war. There is no reason to suppose that the USSR would await passively a development of such decisive importance. Consequently, it is reasonable to suppose that the USSR is actively interested in the development of indecisive, diversionary situations which will cause the United States to over-extend its commitments and exhaust its resources.

5. POLITICAL.

The Communist Party in the United States is not numerically formidable, but is rather to be regarded as an elite cadre for the manipulation of mass discontent. Its potentialities in this regard are well illustrated by the ease with which it has captured control of the essentially non-Communist following of Henry Wallace. The Communist Party has been relatively unsuccessful, however, in its efforts to win control of US labor, although its prospects in the CIO were once promising and it still exercises control or predominant influence in important unions. Although Communist political capabilities in the United States are now narrowly limited, the Party would be quite capable of exploiting the labor unrest and mass discontent which would exist in the event of a severe depression.

6. SUBVERSIVE.

Apart from its political potentialities, the Communist Party in the United States is presently capable of extensive subversion, espionage, and sabotage. In the event of war its underground elements would prove to be a dangerous fifth column. Communist capabilities in this regard will become more formidable with the progressive development of techniques of biological warfare and with the eventual availability of atomic weapons.

7. MILITARY.

Lacking the requisite air and naval forces, the USSR has no present capability of sustained and decisive direct attack on the continental United States. Long-range air attacks on the Puget Sound area and one-way bomber sorties against any important US target are now possible, but not on such scale as to inflict crippling damage. Submarine operations would seriously interfere with US sea lines of communication.

By 1955 the USSR will probably be capable of large-scale air attacks on most parts of the United States from territory now under Soviet control, using weapons of mass destruction, and of large-scale submarine operations off US coasts, including the launching of short-range guided missiles from submarines. The USSR would then also be capable of airborne operations to seize advanced bases in Alaska and the North Atlantic islands. It is unlikely, however, that such advanced bases could be held against vigorous counterattack. The USSR could not successfully undertake a major airborne or seaborne invasion of the United States as long as major US air and naval forces remained in being.

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## THREATS TO US SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

### 8. CANADA.

The existing and potential dangers to Canadian security are essentially similar to those referred to in the case of the United States, with the obvious difference that Canada is more immediately exposed to Soviet air attack.

### 9. LATIN AMERICA.

Communist capabilities in Latin America are limited essentially to subversion, espionage, and sabotage, in which respects they are considerable. Political control is not regarded as an immediate Communist objective in that area. In any case, Communist political influence is presently declining, and Communist accession to political power is unlikely to occur anywhere during the next decade. Except for possible submarine operations and the eventual possibility of long-range one-way air attack from Alaska, the North Atlantic islands, or West Africa, Latin America is out of reach of direct military attack.

## THREATS TO US SECURITY INTERESTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

### 10. ECONOMIC.

Economic recovery is essential to the restoration of Western European political stability, internal security, and capability of self-defense. Consequently a primary objective of Soviet policy is to frustrate the European recovery program. The means employed—economic, political, and subversive—have varied with the circumstances. The purpose remains constant.

### 11. POLITICAL.

Despite political reverses suffered during the past year, Communist strength and political capabilities remain considerable, especially in France and Italy. There is no present prospect of Communist accession to power by political means in any Western European country. This development, however, was in large part the effect of hope engendered by indications that decisive US support of Western European recovery and independence might be expected. Should this hope turn to despair, Communist political capabilities would correspondingly increase.

### 12. SUBVERSIVE.

The Communist Parties of Western Europe, especially those of France and Italy, retain significant capabilities for subversion, espionage, and sabotage. Communist control of French and Italian labor, though curtailed, is still considerable. Everywhere in Western Europe the hard core of Communist militants would constitute a dangerous fifth column in the event of war.

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## 13. MILITARY.

The Soviet armed forces are conceded a capability, in present circumstances, of overrunning in about two months all of Western Europe except southern Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, and the British Isles, despite logistical difficulties. The occupation of Italy (including Sicily) could be completed in about four months, that of the Iberian Peninsula in about six. Meanwhile Great Britain could be subjected to severe air and missile bombardment. Shipping in the western approaches and the Mediterranean would also be subject to air and submarine attack.

Despite efforts to restore the defensive strength of Western Europe, the present prospect is that, in the absence of decisive US intervention, these Soviet capabilities will still exist in 1958, although the rate of Soviet advance might be slower. By 1958 the scale of possible air and missile attack on Great Britain and of air and submarine blockade will have been greatly increased, weapons of mass destruction (atomic, biological, and chemical) will presumably be available, and a capability of airborne invasion of Great Britain and the North Atlantic islands will exist.

## THREATS TO US SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE NEAR EAST

## 14. POLITICAL AND SUBVERSIVE.

The strategic importance of the Near East to both the USSR and the Western Powers, its proximity to the USSR and remoteness from other Powers, the weakness and instability of indigenous governments, the many bitter local antagonisms and widespread mass discontent render the area extremely liable to Soviet political and subversive penetration. The existing situation with respect to Palestine affords the USSR a particularly favorable opportunity to establish its political influence in the region by playing off Israel and the Arab States against each other and against the Western Powers and to promote its subversive purposes by exploiting the passions which have been aroused. These opportunities will probably continue to exist throughout the next decade.

## 15. MILITARY.

In present circumstances the USSR could overrun the Near East to Jerusalem, Bahrein, and Bandar Abbas in about three months, to Cairo in about six, concurrently with the operations envisaged in Western Europe. The obstacles to be overcome would be primarily logistical. The USSR would also be capable of harrasing air bases in Pakistan by air attack, if need be.

Except as modified by US counteraction, these capabilities will presumably still exist in 1958.

## THREATS TO US SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE FAR EAST

## 18. POLITICAL AND SUBVERSIVE.

The situation in the Far East is increasingly propitious for the accomplishment of Soviet purposes by political and subversive means. The newly established government



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in South Korea could not long survive the withdrawal of US support. Chinese war-weariness and the progressive disintegration of the authority of the National Government may well lead eventually to a settlement of the Chinese civil war on terms favorable to the expansion of Soviet influence and control. In Southeast Asia, Soviet championship of local nationalisms serves to gain native adherence and to prolong and intensify colonial conflicts which both deprive the West of needed strategic materials and act as a drain on Western energies and resources. The vulnerability of East Asia to Soviet penetration may be expected to continue during the next decade.

17. MILITARY.

In the event of war, Soviet operations in the Far East would necessarily be subsidiary to those in Europe and the Near East. Nevertheless Soviet forces, with the support of native adherents, could occupy such continental areas as Sinkiang, Manchuria, North and Central China, and South Korea. By 1955 increased Soviet air power would also permit the invasion of Alaska and of Japan.

CONCLUSIONS

18. PROBABLE SOVIET INTENTIONS.

The probable basic intentions of the Kremlin for the next decade are:

a. To avoid war with the United States, but to exploit to the utmost, within that limitation, the coercive power inherent in the preponderance of Soviet military strength in Eurasia, relying on the disinclination of the United States to resort to war.

b. To build up as rapidly as possible the war potential of the Soviet orbit, in an effort to equal and surpass, eventually, the war potential of the United States.

c. To wage political, economic, and psychological warfare against the United States and its allies, with a view to undermining their potential strength and increasing the relative strength of the USSR: in particular, to prevent or retard the recovery and coalition of Western Europe and the stabilization of the situation in the Near East and Far East.

d. To exploit every opportunity presented by the weakness and instability of neighboring states to expand the area of Soviet domination by political and subversive means.

19. THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR.

Within the next decade the Kremlin is unlikely to resort deliberately to war to gain its ends, in view of:

a. The existing Soviet political, economic, and psychological unreadiness for a protracted war.

b. The prospective increase in Soviet military and economic capabilities during the next decade.

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c. Soviet inability, even then, to count upon crippling the United States at the first blow, and consequent fear of US retaliation and of the greater US war industrial potential.

d. Continuing possibilities of expansion through political and subversive means, and the ideological and personal preference of Soviet leaders for such methods.

e. The relative unsuitability of military conquest as a means for the accomplishment of ultimate Soviet objectives in Europe and America.

f. The actual risks to the regime itself in the prosecution of even a successful war, in the demoralization of forces brought in contact with Western civilization and the aggrandizement of military leaders.

The Kremlin, however, might resort to preventive war if convinced that war on US initiative was actually inevitable and that meanwhile time was on the side of the United States. There is no reason to suppose that the Kremlin presently holds this view, but the situation in this respect will remain critical pending the successful accomplishment of US efforts to redress the balance of power between the USSR and the West. Moreover, considering the bellicose and coercive tactics habitually employed by the USSR, the possibility that war may occur by accident or miscalculation cannot be excluded.

In any case, the fundamental hostility of the Soviet Government toward the United States and its formidable military power require, in common prudence, that the United States be prepared for the eventuality of war with the USSR.

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ENCLOSURE A

COMMENT BY THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, USAF

The attempt to arrive at likely or unlikely Soviet intentions during the period now facing us requires resolution of so many variables and imponderables as to render such a forecast unsound, even dangerous. This applies notwithstanding desires or pressures to divine those intentions. It is likely that the Kremlin has only the one basic intention of gaining its clear-cut objective of world domination by any and all means available. It is also likely that the Kremlin has not yet reached a decision as to whether it is expedient now or at any determined future time to extend the diplomatic war deliberately to armed conflict in order to gain its basic objective.

The final conclusion of the study effectively points out the threats to US security incident to the imminent possibility of the present diplomatic war deteriorating into armed conflict through accident or miscalculation. Nevertheless, the earlier conclusion that ". . . *although the Kremlin is unlikely to resort deliberately to war to gain its ends within the next decade*, it would do so if it came to consider such a course expedient, particularly if convinced that time was on the side of the United States . . ." (*underlining* supplied) implies a greater assurance as to the threat of deliberate military warfare than the slender evidence warrants. At any time during the next decade, changes in world power distribution, such as, material changes for the better or worse in the practical capabilities, desires and reactions of the Western Powers, or those resulting from Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb will require profound re-evaluations by both Soviet and United States planners. Current estimates indicate that the USSR may obtain atomic bombs between 1950 and 1953.

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ENCLOSURE B

DISSENT OF THE OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

The Office of Naval Intelligence dissents with the indicated portions of subject paper and submits its views as follows:

(a) Page 5, <sup>section 2, first sentence</sup> third paragraph (under heading "Political and Subversive")—change to read: "An important element of Soviet strength is that absolute power within the Soviet states rests in the Kremlin. In addition, the Kremlin demands allegiance from governments of satellite states and from Communist parties throughout the world. However, recent evidences of defection indicate that Soviet control of international communism is not always accepted, especially when this control conflicts with nationalistic sentiment."

(b) Page 8, last sentence of section 4 (Economic) — change to read: "Consequently, it is reasonable to suppose that the USSR actively seeks to disrupt US domestic and foreign economic programs."

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NOTICE TO RECIPIENTS OF CIA ESTIMATE ORE 60-48

"Threats to the Security of the United States"  
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Please make the following correction on page 11 - Enclosure B.

Paragraph (a)

After word "Page" delete "5, third paragraph" and insert  
"3, section 2, first sentence".

Paragraph (b)

After word "Page" delete "8" and insert "5".

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29 September 1948

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