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SPECIAL ESTIMATE 46

THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN
POSSIBLE US COURSES OF ACTION WITH
RESPECT TO COMMUNIST CHINA AND KOREA

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 15 December 1951.

THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN POSSIBLE US COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNIST CHINA AND KOREA

THE PROBLEM

To estimate (a) the effect on Communist China of certain possible US courses of action, and (b) the Communist reaction to these courses of action.

ESTIMATE

1. Expansion of the Korean War by Imposition of a UN Embargo on Shipping and Exports to Communist China

a. A UN embargo on shipping and exports to Communist China, if effective, could reduce Communist Chinese seaborne imports substantially. However, if exports were permitted to Port Arthur and Dairen, and if exports from Hong Kong and Macao were not embargoed, the effect of the embargo would be largely nullified. In addition, to avoid large loopholes, the embargo would have to include (1) restrictions on exports to non-cooperating nations of goods which might be transhipped to Communist China; (2) the cancellation of charters and the prohibition of the sale of merchant ships to Soviet Bloc and other non-cooperating countries; and (3) movement regulations such as refusal of clearance, black-listing, and other pressures applied on a world-wide basis.

b. Although these controls, if effectively implemented, would be sufficient to intensify the existing serious economic strains in Communist China, their impact would be long term and would not, in themselves, force the Chinese Communists to end the Korean war or threaten the stability of the Chinese Communist regime.

c. It must be expected that the Soviet Bloc states would not respect this embargo and that some other states would give only nominal cooperation. The payment of premiums by Communist China would stimulate evasion of the embargo. While it is impossible to state with precision the importance of these loopholes, they would serve to diminish the desired effects of the embargo.

d. The Communists could further partially overcome the effect of these measures by employing more of their ships in the China trade, even though such dislocation of Soviet Bloc shipping might impose serious problems for the Soviet Bloc. The USSR would also endeavor to expand overland shipments to Communist China.

e. Therefore, a UN embargo on exports and shipping to Communist China is unlikely, by itself, to reduce Communist Chinese imports substantially.

2. Expansion of the Korean War by Naval Blockade of Communist China

a. Effective interdiction of Communist Chinese seaborne imports would require a naval blockade (including an embargo) of all Chinese Communist seaports, including Port Arthur and Dairen. It would be essential to

prevent the use of Hong Kong and Macao as transshipment points for trade with Communist China.

b. Such interdiction would intensify the existing serious economic strains in Communist China, but would not in itself force the Chinese Communists to end the Korean war or threaten the stability of the Chinese Communist regime:

c. The Chinese Communists would be unable to counter such interdiction effectively, but would probably employ mine warfare against the blockading ships and might employ aircraft and submarines.

d. The USSR would endeavor to offset the economic effects of the embargo and blockade by expanding overland shipments to Communist China. The USSR would refuse to recognize the legality of the blockade. It would probably undertake to escort Soviet shipping into Port Arthur and Dairen and might undertake to escort Soviet shipping into other blockaded ports. It might resort to the covert use of submarines and mines against blockading ships. Enforcement of the blockade might well create incidents which would heighten international tensions, but we believe the Soviet reaction to such incidents alone would not result in the USSR initiating general war.

3. Limited Expansion of UN Air Operations in Order to Protect UN Forces in Korea from the Consequences of the Growing Communist Air Threat

a. Sustained UN air attacks against Communist aircraft and air bases in Manchuria in the immediate vicinity of the Yalu River could seriously impair the Communist capability to extend their air superiority over larger areas in Korea and thus to threaten the position of UN forces in Korea by air attacks.

b. The Chinese Communists would react by dispersing their aircraft and bringing to bear their maximum air defense capability. They would also attempt to increase their air action against UN forces, installations, and ships in the Korean area.

c. The USSR probably would not openly invoke the Sino-Soviet Treaty, but would prob-

ably react by committing additional Soviet forces to the air defense of Manchuria and North Korea despite the continuing risk of general war.

4. Further Expansion and Intensification of UN Military Operations in the Korean War

a. Sustained and unrestricted UN air attack on Communist military targets in Manchuria and North Korea, combined with large-scale UN ground operations in North Korea could seriously impair the Communist military capability to maintain their position in Korea.

b. We believe that the Chinese Communists would react initially by attempting to increase air action against UN forces, installations, and ships in the Korean area.

c. The USSR would probably react immediately by giving support short of commitment of its own ground forces and short of overt commitment of Soviet air forces to combat over UN held territory, but including the commitment of additional elements of its own air forces to action in and over Manchuria and North Korea.

d. If the Communists should find that these measures were proving insufficient to permit them to maintain themselves militarily in Korea, the USSR would probably intensify its aid. This aid might well include the introduction of "volunteer" forces. It might even include the employment of Soviet forces to such an extent that a *de facto* local war between the US/UN and the USSR would exist in the Far East. At every stage, however, the Kremlin would probably endeavor to keep open the possibility of ending the conflict by political negotiation if the global interests of the USSR would be served by disengagement.

5. Expansion of the Korean War by Employment of Nationalist Military Forces

The Chinese Nationalist Forces could not be effectively used for offensive action against the Chinese Communist mainland unless the present US program for equipping and training these forces were greatly expanded, and unless the US were willing to provide not only

logistic support for an invasion but substantial air and naval support as well. Even so, Chinese Nationalist ground forces could hardly be ready for an invasion operation before mid-1952, and Chinese Nationalist Forces as a whole are not likely to be ready in sufficient strength for a large-scale invasion operation before 1953. Certain small units of the Chinese Nationalist Army are already capable of effective employment in small-scale hit-and-run landing operations. After a lesser amount of preparation the Chinese Nationalist Army could be employed effectively in Korea. Certain selected divisions could be made effective in a relatively short time for rotational service on the Korean peninsula.

6. Expansion of the Korean War by Utilization of Non-Communist Guerrilla Forces Already in China

The Chinese Communists have succeeded in greatly reducing the strength of guerrilla forces throughout China and these forces do not now have a significant operational capability. Even if guerrilla capabilities were developed, the guerrillas could be employed effectively only in conjunction with other courses of action directed against Communist China.

7. Expansion of the Korean War by a Combination of Several Courses of Action Considered Above

a. An intensification of UN operations in Korea and an expansion of the war to include bombardment of Manchuria and an interdiction of Communist China's seaborne imports, if successful, would probably have the following effects on Communist capabilities: (1) the Chinese Communists would be unable to continue large-scale operations in Korea; (2) lines of communication in Manchuria would

be disrupted; (3) Communist China would be forced into an increased dependence on the USSR for military supplies and other critical imports; (4) Chinese Communist capabilities for military operations in Southeast Asia would be reduced substantially; and finally (5) an increase of Soviet commitments in the Far East would reduce Soviet capabilities elsewhere.

b. The USSR would almost certainly expand its aid to Communist China in response to these US courses of action. This aid would probably include increasing commitment of Soviet air defense elements in Communist China and North Korea. If the Communists found that such measures were proving unsuccessful in countering the US effort, the USSR would probably intensify its aid. This aid might well include the introduction of "volunteer" forces. It might even include the employment of Soviet forces to such an extent that a *de facto* war between the US/UN and the USSR would exist in the Far East. At every stage, however, the Kremlin would probably endeavor to keep open the possibility of ending the conflict by political negotiation if the global interests of the USSR would be served by disengagement.

c. It is recognized that precise information on enemy intentions is rarely available and that enemy counteraction under the various circumstances here considered cannot be predicted with complete accuracy. However, all aspects of the Soviet problem considered, we believe it unlikely that the USSR will deliberately choose to precipitate global war because of the implementation of the courses of action examined in this estimate. Nonetheless, the possibility of war by miscalculation cannot be discounted during a period of high international tension such as would result.