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REVIEW OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN  
THE LIGHT OF THE GENEVA  
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# REVIEW OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF THE GENEVA FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

## THE PROBLEM

To assess current Soviet foreign policy in the light of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference and recent Soviet moves in other areas, particularly in the Middle East.

## THE ESTIMATE

1. The stalemate at the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference, taken together with recent Soviet moves in the Middle East and South Asia, has been widely interpreted in the Free World as evidence of a renewed hardening of Soviet policy. Soviet policy has been seen as turning its back upon the prospects of peaceful settlements opened by the Summit meeting and launching itself again upon the path of intensive cold war. We shall examine in this paper whether such a shift in Soviet policy has in fact taken place, and the motivations for recent Soviet behavior.

### I. THE USSR'S DEFINITION OF THE "SPIRIT OF GENEVA"

2. In inquiring whether Soviet policy shifted between the first and second Geneva meetings, it is important to be clear on what significance the Soviet leaders did and did not attach to the Summit meeting and the series of "conciliatory" maneuvers which preceded it. We have previously estimated, and still believe, that the Soviet leadership actually desires the "reduction in international tensions" which it has proclaimed as the object of its policy. By a "reduction in international tensions" the Soviet leaders meant the establishment of a tacit understanding that issues in dispute between the Bloc and the West would not be

allowed to lead to a general East-West crisis involving serious danger of general war.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Soviet leaders almost certainly did not expect that a reduction in tensions and the "spirit of Geneva" which was its manifestation would bring about an early settlement of major issues between the Bloc and the West. Our previous estimate made it clear that no concessions by the USSR on such vital issues as Germany and disarmament would be forthcoming, and stressed that the main aim of Soviet policy in the negotiations would be to insure continuing acquiescence in the territorial status quo in Eastern Europe. At the same time, the Soviet leaders gave no assurances at the Summit meeting that they would abandon the pursuit of their own objectives, whether in Europe or elsewhere. On the contrary, they made it entirely clear that they would permit no discussion of International Communism or of the status of the Satellites, and that the USSR would persist in its effort to obtain withdrawals of American power and influence.

<sup>1</sup> We believe that the motives for this attitude discussed in NIE 11-13-55 were correct and that they are still operative. See especially paragraphs 11-17 of NIE 11-13-55, "Soviet Foreign Policy in the Light of the Summit Conference," dated 4 October 1955.

4. The intransigent stand which Molotov took at the Foreign Ministers' meeting did not represent any departure in substance from positions which were implicit at the Summit meeting. The Heads of Government did not explore these positions to the point where they were fully exposed; when this was done at the second Geneva meeting the USSR's basic positions were revealed to be unchanged from what they have been for some years past. The fact that the stubborn personality of Molotov was associated with the presentation of the Soviet stand perhaps heightened the impression of intransigence. In fact, however, the essentials of Soviet policy were identical on the two occasions, and the widespread impression that Soviet policy had hardened was due in the main to unwarranted popular expectations of a softening trend which did not develop.

5. The more active Soviet policy which was developed in the Near and Middle East and South Asia in recent months, in particular in connection with the sale of arms to Arab states and the attitude and statements of the Soviet leaders during their current trip in South Asia, has also been seen as a retreat from the "promise" of the Summit meeting. However, nothing that was said by the USSR at the Summit meeting gave any promise that the Soviet leaders would abandon their effort to combat Western influence in areas touching Soviet interests, and in fact there is hard evidence that deals such as the Egyptian arms deal were planned prior to the Summit meeting. Previous estimates have stated that the USSR would step up its activity in the Middle East in response to Western moves to organize defense in that area. From the Soviet point of view, the progress made by the Northern Tier concept since the spring of 1955 has been a stimulus to Soviet intervention. The particular form this intervention has taken was not foreseen in previous estimates. We still believe that the USSR does not intend to push that intervention to the point of provoking a major crisis with the Western Powers, but its actions have already gone far toward provoking a major crisis within the area, and

have strained relations between the major Western Powers and certain Middle Eastern states.

## II. SOVIET TACTICS AT GENEVA

6. Our previous estimate anticipated more flexibility in Soviet negotiating tactics at the Foreign Ministers' meeting than was actually shown. The effect of such flexibility would have been to avoid quite so heavy a setback to the "spirit of Geneva" and to have blurred the impression of intransigence which the Soviet negotiators did in fact give. Except for some effort by Molotov to avoid the more bitter recriminations which marked previous Big Four meetings and some attempt at the end to save the conference from the appearance of complete breakdown, the Soviets did little to foster a Western belief in the USSR's desire to end the cold war.

7. We believe that the Soviet leaders had some positive reasons for wishing to make a demonstration of firmness at the recent negotiations. They apparently feel that, although they do have some internal problems, these are manageable and present no compulsion for compromising their stand on issues in dispute with the West. On the whole, the Soviet leaders probably regard the future course of the world struggle with confidence. They came away from the Summit meeting reassured that the West does not intend to employ its power to force Soviet concessions, and they believe that in the absence of a military showdown the general development of the world situation will be favorable to them. Given this confident state of mind, they apparently wished to make it entirely clear, especially in view of the wide speculation in the West about their internal weakness, that there can be no progress toward settlement of outstanding issues if it requires them to make any significant concessions. They probably also felt under some necessity to make clear to the Satellite regimes, especially to East Germany, that the existence of these regimes would not be endangered for the sake of an agreement with the West.

8. With respect to the first item on the Foreign Ministers' agenda, the question of European security and Germany, a stalemate at this conference probably was seen by the Soviet leaders as advantageous. One of their principal current objectives is to demonstrate to the West Germans that there can be no hope for fulfillment of aspirations for reunification by way of Four Power negotiations. The Soviet leaders probably calculated that failure of this conference would be a long step toward convincing the West Germans, and the East Germans as well, that the Western "position of strength" will not be effective in obtaining Soviet agreement to reunification. This they probably hope will have the effect of impeding West German rearmament, and of persuading the West Germans to enter into separate negotiations with East Germany and the USSR which might lead to abandonment of their ties with NATO. Ultimately, the USSR hopes for reunification on terms which would be favorable to a Communist takeover.

9. On the disarmament issue, it was made even clearer that the USSR is unwilling to accept any comprehensive inspection system satisfactory to the West, and is particularly opposed to the President's proposal for aerial inspection. The Soviet counter arguments continue to rest on demands for a ban on nuclear weapons and for reduction to agreed force levels. However, the Soviet position on disarmament may not have been fully revealed at Geneva. For example, the possibility of disarmament and inspection on a restricted area basis, as contained in the Eden plan, was not fully explored at the conference. It is still possible that the USSR would find such a scheme acceptable, especially as it would, if applied in Germany, win a tacit Western acceptance for continuing the division of the country. Aside from this, however, Geneva showed that the Soviet position had to remain fixed because the Soviet leaders are unwilling to contemplate the kind of comprehensive inspection upon which the West has insisted.

10. On freedom of contacts, the USSR was primarily interested in breaking down Western strategic trade controls, while the West presented a comprehensive program for greater

freedom of information. Some Western proposals the USSR was certain to refuse, and did so, since acceptance would have involved steps toward ending the isolation of the Soviet and Satellite peoples which the regime clearly regards as essential. On other proposals, the USSR indicated agreement in principle or suggested bilateral negotiations, but no agreements were actually concluded. Nevertheless, the USSR showed itself prepared to continue and even expand the kind of controlled program of contacts by delegations which serve a propaganda purpose and acquire useful information. In short, while Soviet policy cannot accept Western principles of freedom in contacts between nations, it probably does not intend to return to the extremes of post-World War II isolationism.

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF GENEVA FOR FUTURE SOVIET POLICY

11. It is evident that the Soviet leaders have no intention in the foreseeable future of moving toward a settlement of the major issues between them and the West. They recognize that they could do so only by making important concessions. This they not only feel under no compulsion to do, but in the case of Germany almost certainly believe that to make concessions would be dangerous to their Satellite empire. The confidence which the Soviet leaders show in taking this position may be based in part on the impression of Western intentions they received at the Summit meeting. Their confidence must have been reinforced by their recent progress in the development of large-yield nuclear weapons.

12. Unless there should be a major deterioration of the international atmosphere, the USSR is unlikely for some time to press seriously toward resumption of Four Power negotiations. There have been many signs, however, that it intends to direct intensified efforts toward bilateral negotiations with US allies and uncommitted states in the Middle East and Asia. The object of such efforts would be to work toward the sapping of Free World alliances and the isolation of the US.

The Soviet leaders may even believe that eventually the US itself will be willing to negotiate bilaterally.

13. The Soviet leaders probably recognize that to pursue such efforts successfully it will be necessary for the Bloc to refrain from major military aggression. Overtly, they will probably continue their efforts to demonstrate that the USSR's intentions are peaceful while at the same time stressing that it is the Western Powers which are backsliding from the "spirit of Geneva." While there will remain various points of critical friction in Berlin, the Taiwan Strait, and Indochina, and perhaps elsewhere, we believe on balance that the USSR does not intend to allow a general East-West crisis of major proportions to grow out of these situations.

14. It is apparently the Soviet intention to give heavy attention to the Middle East and South Asia. The sale of arms and the extensive offers of technical and economic aid which have been made there are new departures for Soviet policy, and demonstrate the flexibility of its current leadership. The Bloc has certain advantages in competing with the West for influence in these areas. It can play upon the endemic suspicion of the former colonial powers and the widespread admiration for the rapid pace of Soviet economic development. It is in a better position than the West to absorb certain important raw materials exports of some of these countries, and presumably has ample stocks of obsolescent arms to provide one means of payment. It is now offering credit on easier terms than the West finds feasible.

15. Whether or not the Bloc can develop such a program on a significant scale will depend upon the availability of resources within the Bloc, for which the economic development of the Bloc, especially of Communist China, and the Bloc's military programs will be competitors. The competitive challenge offered by the West will also be a factor. It is too early to judge how far such a program may be developed or even if the present offers will be fulfilled. We think it unlikely, however, that the USSR is engaged merely in a campaign of propaganda promises, and more probable that the Soviet leaders are determinedly entering upon a campaign of "competitive coexistence."

#### IV. CONCLUSION

16. Previous estimates have stated, and recent developments including the Foreign Ministers' Conference confirm, that the objectives of the post-Stalin regime remain the same as those of its predecessor — to increase the power and improve the security of the Communist Bloc, to prevent the marshaling of the Free World's power against the Bloc, and to expand the Communist sphere. The present regime has developed policies designed to achieve these objectives by means which are less obviously aggressive than before. It hopes thereby to improve its reputation for peaceful intentions. Meanwhile, the Soviet leaders believe that by persistent and vigorous diplomacy, propaganda, economic penetration, and subversion, especially in areas where the Free World is vulnerable, they can gradually alter the balance of power and influence in their favor.

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