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HR-70-14
4-18-2012

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RADIO PROPAGANDA REPORT

SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON TACTICAL ATOMIC WEAPONS AND LIMITED WAR

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PER E.O. 12958
Date: 9-17-99
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FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

Current Developments Series

CD.78

1 October 1957

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8 OCT 1957

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PROPAGANDA REPORT
1 OCTOBER 1957

SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON TACTICAL ATOMIC WEAPONS AND LIMITED WAR

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SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON TACTICAL ATOMIC WEAPONS AND LIMITED WAR

Summary

Only one Soviet commentary so far has reacted to the suggestion in Secretary Dulles' FOREIGN AFFAIRS article that development of tactical atomic weapons may reduce Western dependence on all-out nuclear retaliatory power to deter limited Communist aggression. Beamed to Japan on 22 September, four days after the article appeared, that commentary adhered to the line used in Soviet propaganda since January 1955: There is no guarantee that localized use of a small atomic weapon will not lead to use of bigger weapons and expansion of the war theater; there is no meaningful difference between "tactical" and "strategic" atomic weapons.

1. The first Soviet discussion of tactical atomic weapons came a month after the December 1954 NATO decision to base the defense of Europe on atomic weapons. Major General Talensky, chief editor of the authoritative theoretical journal MILITARY THOUGHT, wrote in the January 1955 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS that the West was trying to draw a false distinction between tactical and strategic use of atomic weapons and to class tactical atomic weapons among conventional arms. This, he said, was a stratagem to deceive the masses and justify the atomic arms drive by "legal casuistry." Talensky warned that U.S. territory would inevitably be included in the zone of hostilities in a new world war. He argued that atomic weapons of all kinds are by their very nature weapons of mass destruction and hence cannot be equated with conventional arms. Major General Isayev elaborated Talensky's arguments two months later in NEW TIMES.
2. Marshal Zhukov's XX CPSU Congress speech contained the only Soviet discussion of tactical atomic weapons during 1956. Zhukov said American strategy based on "tactical" use of atomic weapons was erroneously calculated to deflect atomic blows from U.S. industrial centers. In almost exactly the same language Talensky had used a year earlier, he warned that it is "now impossible to wage war and not suffer retaliatory blows."
3. Mass propaganda on tactical atomic weapons was introduced in April 1957. Moscow gave wide publicity to the 12 April West German scientists' statement labeling today's "tactical" weapons as powerful as the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Zhukov, still the only top Soviet leader to have broached the question, told West German newsmen and the Swedish paper NY DAG that there was no effective difference between tactical and strategic atomic weapons. The 27 April Soviet note to West Germany, echoing Major General Isayev's 1955 NEW TIMES article, warned that use of "so-called tactical" atomic weapons would "inevitably lead to the use of all types of nuclear weapons."

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4. On the question of the "clean" bomb, a related question in that it involves containment of the effects of nuclear bombing, Khrushchev himself has spoken out forcefully. Three times during his July 1957 tour of Czechoslovakia, he scoffed at the clean-bomb idea as "a bromide, a means to lessen vigilance." Routine propaganda since June this year has called the clean bomb a "fraud" invented by U.S. circles who do not want to ban nuclear tests. 1.
5. The concept of "small wars" that could be kept localized was first discussed--and rejected--by Moscow at the time of the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt. It has again been discounted in propaganda on the current Syrian crisis. The question of limited atomic war was first broached in March--in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, also the vehicle for the first discussion of tactical atomic weapons. Establishing a line that has been sustained to date, the journal called the concept of small nuclear wars "a big lie" concocted to block agreement on banning all nuclear weapons. In the 21 August IZVESTIA, Kudryavtsev said the concept was invented when it became clear to American generals that the massive-retaliation doctrine posed "the gravest dangers to the United States." The false reasoning of these generals, he said, is that the United States can wage aggression without endangering its own territory. 2.

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SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON TACTICAL ATOMIC WEAPONS AND LIMITED WAR

Introduction

1. Reaction to Dulles Article Consistent with Past Line

There has been no authoritative Soviet discussion of Secretary Dulles' 18 September article in FOREIGN AFFAIRS, in which it is suggested that development of tactical nuclear weapons may reduce Western dependence on all-out American nuclear retaliatory power for deterrence of limited Communist aggression. Moscow's first authoritative comment on the Secretary's introduction of the massive-retaliation doctrine, in his 12 January 1954 address to the Council of Foreign Relations, appeared one week later--an IZVESTIA article signed "A General in Retirement." The article was not a direct answer to Dulles' thesis; Moscow did not extensively discuss the United States' planned reliance on nuclear power until late March of that year.

The current Dulles article was picked up promptly in a Home Service broadcast on 19 September, but the commentator addressed himself exclusively to the Secretary's comments on the Middle East. A broadcast to Japan three days later did acknowledge the article's discussion of a new United States' nuclear strategy but did not indicate that it may have constituted a revision of the massive-retaliation doctrine.

The commentator repeated the standard Soviet line that talk about "clean tactical nuclear weapons" is intended to confuse the public and "free the hands of those preparing for a war with mass-destruction weapons." He reiterated the argument, used sporadically in Soviet propaganda over the past two years, that there is no guarantee that a small war can be contained. And he cautioned that once a limited war begins expanding, "countries will probably use any kind of atomic and hydrogen bombs at their command."

2. Context of Propaganda on Tactical Weapons, Small Wars

Soviet propaganda has played up the "dirty" nuclear weapon and the threat of a "big" or global war to advantage. Insisting that there is no distinction between tactical and strategic weapons, that both are "mass-destruction" weapons, it has kept subtleties and qualifiers out of its oversimplified propaganda appeal to the United States' allies about the danger of any kind of military involvement, and it has kept intact its appeal to the uncommitted countries about the danger of radioactive fallout from nuclear test explosions and the danger of letting any kind of war get started anywhere.

Repeated warnings about the massive destructive potential of nuclear weapons--all nuclear weapons, without gradations--as well as about the tremendous casualties that could result from nuclear war and the dangers to human health from radioactive fallout have been routine components of the USSR's campaign to ban the bomb and suspend nuclear testing.

Insistence that there is no guarantee of a small war being contained has gone along with the disparagement of "tactical" nuclear weapons. Against the background of its general propaganda effort to undercut Western

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military alliances and neutralize their members, Moscow contends that even the use of the smallest nuclear weapon in an initially local war can lead to the employment of more powerful bombs and then to all-out nuclear war.

A. Tactical Versus Strategic Nuclear Weapons

1. 1954 NATO Decision Occasions First Soviet Comment

The NATO powers' December 1954 decision to defend themselves by means of atomic weapons--defined by Moscow as a decision to prepare an atomic war--occasioned the first Soviet discussion of tactical as against strategic atomic weapons. In an article in the January 1955 issue of the journal INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS--reprinted in the 1 February LITERARY GAZETTE--Major General N. Telensky, chief editor of MILITARY THOUGHT, refused to recognize any effective difference between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. He argued that the destructive power of present-day tactical means of atomic attack "...is hardly less than the power of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945."

All Nuclear Weapons "Equally Barbarous": Talensky established the basic argument to be used in all subsequent Soviet discussions of strategic and tactical atomic weapons, calling them "equally barbarous weapons of mass destruction which would spell death to millions of people."

The Talensky article appeared during Moscow's propaganda campaign against ratification of the Paris Agreements, a campaign featuring warnings of the grave dangers of atomic war to "small, densely populated countries." Talensky wrote that "for the peoples of Europe in particular," there is no difference in the tactical and strategic use of atomic weapons. Modern war, he said, is not the war of the 18th or 19th century when the theater of operations covered relatively small areas. He went on to charge that aggressive imperialist elements were stressing a non-existent--"or in any case non-essential"--difference between the two types of weapons in order to mislead the masses fighting against atomic war preparations, "in order to make it easier to prepare and unleash such a war by creating the impression that at least tactical atomic weapons do not differ from conventional arms."

Though Talensky concentrated on the dangers to Europe from atomic war--the countries of Western Europe "will be the ones to suffer first and most of all"--he did assert that "of course the United States, too, will suffer." "The American atom-maniacs," he said, "have no grounds for considering that if they precipitate atomic war, the territory of the United States will remain invulnerable. In a war against a strong adversary, it is impossible in our days to count on striking blows at the enemy without being subjected to counter-blows which might be of even greater impact." His warnings presaged the subsequent even more confident statements that there is "no place on earth where an aggressor can hide," that the Soviet Union can deliver a retaliatory blow "to any point on the globe."

Use of Tactical Weapons Would Lead to Use of Strategic Ones: Major General Isayev, writing in the 26 March 1955 NEW TIMES, reiterated Talensky's contentions and added a new argument: There is no guarantee that the use of tactical atomic weapons will not lead to the use of strategic ones. "On the contrary, use of tactical atomic weapons would greatly increase the

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likelihood of the use of strategic atomic weapons." He insisted that "any use of atomic weapons must inevitably lead to a devastating general atomic war."

The Talensky and Isayev articles did not signal any general propaganda effort to disparage tactical atomic weapons. Only one follow-up broadcast, to North America on 12 April, repeated the arguments advanced by Talensky and Isayev. The commentator added that American propaganda began to advocate the "small atomic weapons" theory after public opinion in all countries condemned Washington's intention to use atomic weapons if war breaks out. This was Radio Moscow's only commentary on the subject during 1955.

2. The CPSU Congress: Zhukov Revives Tactical-Weapons Issue

Marshal Zhukov at the XX CPSU Congress was the only one to discuss the issue in Soviet propaganda during 1956. He said that "in the utterances of U.S. military and political figures there appears the thought that American strategy must be based on use of atomic weapons, as it is stated, 'for tactical purposes'--that is, within the framework of operations on the fields of battle in theaters of military action." He used the Talensky-Isayev argument that U.S. leaders sought the chief application of atomic weapons on European territory, "far from the industrial centers of America."

In dismissing "these ideas of 'cunning strategies'" Zhukov used almost verbatim the argument advanced over a year earlier by Talensky: "It is not now possible to wage war and not suffer retaliatory blows. If one wants to deliver atomic blows on an enemy, then he must be prepared to receive the same, and perhaps more powerful, blows on his part."

3. April 1957: Inception of Mass Propaganda on Tactical Weapons

Moscow did not introduce the question of tactical versus strategic atomic weapons into mass propaganda until more than a year after the Congress. The subject was not broached in January 1957, in the early stages of the propaganda campaign against the stationing of U.S. atomic units abroad. It was taken up about four months later, when a broadcast to Norway took issue with a Norwegian parliamentarian's contention that a distinction could be drawn between tactical and strategic atomic weapons by categorizing the former as defensive and the latter as offensive weapons. The Soviet commentator insisted that there is "no such dividing line." He documented the point by citing "certain newspapers" as having alleged that the smallest atom bomb has one-quarter the power of the first atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima, which "caused the deaths of 300,000 human beings as sacrifice." He calculated that a so-called tactical atomic missile could therefore lead to the loss of 75,000 lives and asked how this could be considered a defensive weapon.*

The 12 April 1957 appeal of West German scientists against equipping the West German army with atomic weapons occasioned widely broadcast comment publicizing their description of tactical atomic weapons:

* This is the only instance of explicit acknowledgment by a Soviet commentator that there are smaller atomic weapons than the original one. The usual practice is to say that the smallest bomb today is at least equal to the original one. Occasionally, the smallest bomb today is described as bigger than the original one.

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One tactical atomic bomb or atomic missile has a destructive power equal to that of the first atom bomb which destroyed Hiroshima. But inasmuch as there is now a large amount of tactical atomic weapons, their destructive effect will be much stronger as a whole. These bombs are regarded as "small caliber" bombs only in comparison with the already existing strategic bombs, primarily hydrogen bombs.... Today one tactical atomic bomb can destroy a small town.

4. Issue Again Raised by Zhukov to West German Newsmen

Following the publication of the West German appeal, Marshal Zhukov again broached the question of tactical atomic weapons. At a 19 April Polish Embassy reception for Premier Cyrankiewicz, he told West German journalists that he could not see any important difference between the destructive power of "so-called" strategic and tactical atomic weapons. According to the East Berlin radio, he said that "tactical atomic weapons do not constitute a mere further stage in the development of artillery but possess a more dangerous power of destruction than the strategic weapons of former days."

This new description was not publicized by Moscow. And initially Moscow did not report the interview with the Swedish paper NY DAG the next day in which Zhukov also denied that there was an operative distinction between tactical and strategic atomic weapons. East Berlin quoted him as saying that "such a distinction is an attempt to deceive the public."

Almost a month later, a Soviet broadcast to Sweden did discuss the NY DAG interview and reported additionally that Zhukov asked: "How can one speak of a tactical atom bomb if this bomb now has a power five times as great as that dropped on Hiroshima?"

Although the Soviet military elite has publicly discussed such aspects of nuclear war as the importance of surprise attack and the role of atomic weapons in a modern war, only Zhukov has explicitly discussed tactical versus strategic atomic weapons. The only other reference by a Soviet marshal to the issue appeared in Marshal Vershinin's 8 September PRAVDA interview, which mentioned in passing the West German scientists' assertion that one tactical atomic bomb could now destroy a whole town.

Zhukov is also the only Soviet Presidium member to have publicly contrasted strategic and tactical atomic weapons. Only one official Soviet statement, the 27 April 1957 note to West Germany, has made any reference to tactical atomic weapons. In language reminiscent of Zhukov's, the note denied that they are "nothing but improved artillery." It contained the first official Soviet statement to the effect that the use of "so-called" tactical atomic weapons "would inevitably lead to the use of all types of nuclear weapons with their tremendous destructive force"--the argument advanced two years earlier by Major General Isayev.

5. Distinction Between Tactical Weapon and "Tactical" Use

While Moscow has refused to acknowledge a distinct category of tactical atomic weapons, Soviet military spokesmen have on numerous occasions referred to the use of atomic weapons "on a tactical level." One military spokesman--like some of the routine propaganda--has used the term "tactical atomic weapons" in discussing the use of atomic weapons for tactical purposes. Marshal of Tank Forces Rotmistrov wrote in KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA on this year's Tank Day that

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the appearance of atomic weapons and particularly their utilization on a tactical level does not fail to influence the features of the contemporary military operations of armed forces. Under conditions of the application of tactical atomic weapons, the importance of tank forces has increased. The tank forces more than any other branch of the land forces are able to utilize the effect of atomic blows against the enemy and also to counteract such blows from the enemy.

6. Ridicule of the "Clean" Nuclear Bomb

Moscow has been outspoken on the related question of the "clean bomb"-- which, if successfully developed, could effectively nullify the Soviet propaganda line that test explosions must be stopped because of the dangers to human health from radioactive fall-out. Although Soviet propagandists have never coupled the "clean" bomb with tactical atomic weapons, their attacks on both have been consistent with the position that all nuclear weapons are potentially weapons of mass destruction, no less dangerous by virtue of their composition or of how they are initially put to use.

The first Soviet reference to the "clean" bomb appeared in an interview with Academician Letavet in the 1 September 1956 issue of the English-language NEWS. Asked about AEC Chairman Strauss' "intimation" that there was no danger of radioactive side effects from H-bomb tests in his statement on U.S. high-altitude H-bomb tests in June, Letavet answered: "Admiral Strauss suggests that America has produced a 'clean' bomb which does not threaten to contaminate the atmosphere and affect the health of hundreds of thousands of people by its fall-out." Letavet rejected Strauss' claim and cited the high degree of radioactivity recorded in Japan during U.S. tests at that time. The interview was not broadcast, and there was no further mention of the clean bomb until this June.

Broadcasts to all--though primarily foreign--audiences in late June began ridiculing the clean-bomb idea after Moscow reported that U.S. scientists Teller, Mills and Lawrence were "engaged in conjuring tricks and promises to deliver a bomb which is completely 'clean.'" Moscow has called the clean bomb a "fraud," an attempt to confuse the world public, an "invention" contrived to make plausible United States' refusal to agree to a test ban.

Khrushchev, not on record with any statement about tactical atomic weapons, scoffed at the idea of a clean bomb in three speeches during his visit to Czechoslovakia this July. On 11 July, in the course of extemporaneous remarks at the Prague Stalingrad plant, he ridiculed President Eisenhower's talk about a clean bomb as a contradiction in terms, "in essence a bromide, a means to lessen vigilance." These remarks were carried by the Czech Home Service but omitted in the Soviet version. He disparaged the clean-bomb theory again in his 13 July speech in Ostrava, although without reproving the President personally. Those remarks were carried in the Soviet Home Service. He mentioned the clean bomb in passing in his speech in Plzen two days later, again without mentioning the President. But he did not discuss the question during his August visit to East Germany. No other Presidium member has broached it at all.

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B. The Concept of Limited or Small Nuclear Wars1. Danger of Small Wars Becoming Global

Discussion of the danger of minor wars leading to major or global ones was introduced into Soviet propaganda last fall, although the wars were not specified as nuclear ones. Even before the outbreak of hostilities against Egypt, Bulganin's 11 September letter to Eden cautioned: "I think you will agree with me on the point that at present, as in the past, minor wars can grow into large ones with all the grave consequences resulting from this for states and peoples." During the hostilities in Egypt, in his 5 November letters to Eden and Mollet, Bulganin warned that "war in Egypt may spread to other countries and develop into the third world war."

During the recent Syrian crisis, Moscow similarly expressed concern lest aggression against Syria spread to other areas. Following routine propaganda to the same effect, Bulganin's 10 September letter to Turkish Premier Menderes warned that an armed conflict in the Middle East "would not be limited to that area alone." Gromyko made a similar statement in his 20 September U.N. General Assembly address.

Among the Soviet military elite only Marshal Vasilevsky has addressed himself to the question of small versus global wars. In the 14 August RED STAR, he charged Admiral Burke with spreading false illusions about the possibility of limiting any war to a "small" one which could be "localized" in any desired place.

2. Impossibility of Containing Atomic War

It was not until March this year that Moscow discussed at length the specific question of limited atomic wars, a question directly related to that of tactical versus strategic atomic weapons. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, the vehicle for the first Soviet assessment of tactical atomic weapons in January 1955, was also used for the first full-length discussion of the possibility of containing an atomic war. In the March issue V. Kamenev dismissed Western talk about small atomic wars as a "big lie" concocted to "lull public vigilance and prevent agreement on the only 'rule' of atomic warfare acceptable to the people--its unconditional and categorical prohibition."

In the 25 April NEW TIMES, Major General Boltin claimed that even some American military writers say it will be impossible to restrict the scope of atomic war.

An article in NEW TIMES on 27 June introduced a new argument: The point and purpose of all the clamor about "little war" tactics is to intimidate the small nations, to "bully them into compliance by using the threat of atomic devastation."

A spate of routine propaganda attacking the U.S. thesis of "small" nuclear wars appeared in August, in broadcasts both for foreign and domestic consumption, shortly after the publication in the United States of Henry Kissinger's book "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy." Moscow has not mentioned the book, but the August comment seemed calculated to reiterate Soviet rejection of the views on tactical weapons and small wars which Kissinger expounds.

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The most authoritative comment during this period was Kudryavtsev's article in the 21 August IZVESTIA. After noting that "boastful" American generals realize that implementation of the massive-retaliation doctrine contains "the gravest dangers for the United States," he charged that new forms of nuclear aggression were sought and "that is how the theory of 'small' or 'limited' nuclear war was created." The logic behind this theory, he said, is that a limited nuclear war will not result in danger for American territory.

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Calling such reasoning "nonsensical," Kudryavtsev reviewed all the previous Soviet arguments concerning small wars and nuclear weapons:

- a. World wars as a rule have sprung from so-called local wars, and at a time when there were no nuclear weapons.
- b. As for the accuracy of tactical nuclear weapons, all those who have any information on this subject hold the same view--that all nuclear weapons, whether strategic or tactical, are mass-extinction weapons whose use would result in a tremendous number of victims.
- c. By proclaiming their new theories, the U.S. ruling circles strive only to "justify the existence of a barbaric means of mass extermination of people."

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These were essentially the arguments used in the Japanese-language commentary reacting to Secretary Dulles' FOREIGN AFFAIRS article. They have been recapped in only one other commentary since the Dulles article appeared, a Vasilyev talk to Germany on remilitarization under Adenauer. Vasilyev said that

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under present circumstances, even a local military conflict in which tactical atomic weapons are used will lead to the use of all kinds of nuclear weapons, including hydrogen bombs. West Germany--situated on a small territory in the heart of Europe--can in such a case, with the existence of various kinds of atomic and hydrogen weapons and the means to carry them, become an atomic desert. Playing with fire never leads to anything good.

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