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11 December 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Probable Soviet Reaction to Full-Scale U. S. Mobilization

1. The USSR is aware that its policies are causing mounting concern in the U. S. and, at least since the outbreak of the Korean war, are producing increasing U. S. military preparations. An announcement of plans for full-scale U. S. mobilization, therefore, would hardly come as a complete surprise to Soviet leaders, and such a possibility has probably been considered by Soviet planners.

2. If the USSR intends deliberately to provoke global war in the near future (within six to eighteen months), an announcement of full-scale U. S. mobilization probably would result merely in an adjustment of the Soviet time-table. The USSR would time its attack to take advantage of its optimum relative preparedness, and to precede the date at which U. S. mobilization measures began to produce major results.

3. If the USSR neither intends itself to provoke global war in the near future, nor expects the U. S. to do so, an announcement of full-scale U. S. mobilization probably would not immediately affect Soviet plans. Since the possibility of such a U. S. move must have been anticipated, the announcement would, in itself, hardly cause the Kremlin immediately to alter its estimate of U. S. intentions. Soviet leaders probably would take advantage of the period between the U. S. announcement and the first concrete results of the program to study its effects and implications. During this period the USSR probably would intensify its own military preparedness efforts, and would intensify its efforts to divide and weaken the Western Powers by:

- (a) Playing upon the war fears of the Western Europeans, and thus attempting to alienate them from the U. S.;

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- (b) Extending "peace" overtures and diplomatic feelers for four-power conversations, for separate Soviet accords with individual Western nations, and for disarmament discussions in the UN;
- (c) Inspiring industrial disturbance and possibly sabotage in U. S. and Western European defense, transportation and communication industries; and
- (d) Possibly directing further local Communist aggression in the Far East or elsewhere.

If, despite the foregoing Soviet measures, and despite the many other obstacles to effective U. S. mobilization upon which the Kremlin probably relies, the U. S. program promises materially to improve the relative U. S. power position, and the Western Allies appear united and firm, Soviet tactics may shift materially. Under these conditions, the Kremlin might:

- (a) Ostensibly soften its policy, and perhaps offer material concessions to the West in order to reduce international tension, forestall the completion of the U. S. program, disrupt the U. S. economy, and gain credit for the USSR as the champion of peace;
- (b) Attempt to seize the initiative by launching an immediate Soviet attack on the U. S. or its allies, in the belief either that a U. S. decision to attack the Soviet Union had been reached, or that the successful completion of the U. S. program would constitute an intolerable obstacle to the attainment of Soviet objectives.

4. If the USSR does not intend deliberately to provoke global war in the near future, but estimates that the U. S. is likely to do so, an announcement of full-scale U. S. mobilization might result in a Soviet attempt to seize the initiative by an early attack on the U. S. or its allies, as the alternative to making concessions which would reduce this likelihood.

WALTER B. SMITH
Director

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