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6 April 1953

R.S.
This is an excellent Summary + was most helpful to me in preparing my briefing for today
[Signature]
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DCI COMMENT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Significance of Current Communist Tactics

1. It is now clear that the recent acts and statements of the Soviet and Chinese Communist governments mark a change of Communist tactics. The number and nature of these acts, the swiftness with which they have followed one upon another, the prominence given them by the Communist press and radio, the high authority of the Communist leaders involved, and the fact that these unexpected developments began to occur almost immediately upon the death of Stalin all indicate that a change has taken place in the manner of conducting Soviet policy. For the time being the Communists have adopted a conciliatory approach both at home and abroad.

2. The situation is developing so rapidly, and new evidence is appearing so abundantly, that any estimate of the meaning of the new Communist tactics may be out of date before it is written. The entire series of events since the announcement of Stalin's death has occupied less than a month.

3. There is no evidence that the ultimate objectives of the Soviet rulers have changed, or that they have hitherto been misunderstood in the West. The potential threat of Soviet armed forces remains as formidable as before; there is no basis for supposing that the menace of Communism to the free world has diminished, or that the basic hostility of the Kremlin to the West has altered.

4. The change of Communist tactics may indicate no more than that the Kremlin hopes by a series of conciliatory moves involving no substantial concessions to weaken military strength and political cohesion of the Western alliance and to postpone or confuse the decisions of the new US administration. The Soviets have already seized the diplomatic and propaganda initiative by their maneuvers. By continuing to make minor gestures at little expense, such as the release of sick and wounded prisoners in Korea, the repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war and Japanese fishermen, the freeing of [Redacted] the settlement of lend-lease obligations, and similar moves, the Kremlin may expect to keep the new peace offensive alive for a considerable time.

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5. On the other hand, the change in Communist tactics may signify that the Kremlin has decided to make substantial concessions, and to negotiate on some important issues with a view to reaching agreement rather than solely with a view to waging political warfare. The aims of such a policy would be the same as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but in addition this policy would be designed to insure an extended period of calm for building the strength of the Soviet Bloc and for consolidating the power of the new Soviet rulers, while confidently awaiting the inevitable decline and fall of capitalism. This is not to say that the USSR will accede to all Western demands, or that it will press on to a settlement of all outstanding issues. The Kremlin would undoubtedly drive the hardest possible bargains, but it would do so with the intention of arriving at an agreement.

6. On balance we believe that the Soviets have in fact changed their approach to the West, that they intend to make substantial concessions on some points, and to negotiate agreements if possible on various important outstanding issues. In particular we believe that the Communists are now prepared to accept voluntary repatriation of prisoners in Korea and a Korean armistice, provided this can be done in such a way as to conceal the Communist abandonment of principle and provided the West is willing to pay the Communist price. This price will probably seem high to the US, but it will almost certainly be designed to appear reasonable to the allies of the US and to the rest of the non-Communist world. We also believe that while the Korean and related Far Eastern questions are still under discussion the new Soviet rulers are likely to come forward with far-reaching and superficially attractive proposals for the settlement of other problems such as disarmament and German unity.

7. However, this conclusion is based on the premise that the new government of the USSR is united and securely entrenched in power. We do not have enough knowledge of the situation in the Kremlin to be sure that this premise is correct. The events of the past few weeks may indicate that a struggle for power is in progress within the USSR. If such is the case, and coherent leadership does not exist in Moscow, Communist tactics are unlikely to be pursued with consistency and effectiveness, and the future of Soviet foreign policy will become so problematical as to be beyond the possibility of estimate.

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Acting Assistant Director
National Estimates

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