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21 October 1966

STAFF NOTE

SUBJECT: Current Moscow Meeting

NOTE

The attached staff note by [] was prepared in haste this morning just before his departure on TDY. Its substance was to have been presented orally at the Board and Staff meeting this morning but scheduling problems interfered.

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Please note that paragraph ^{five} ~~four~~ suggests that an important statement on volunteers for North Vietnam may be issued by the Moscow conferees.

B. A. D. 10/21/66

RWS

GROUP I
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S-E-C-R-E-T

1. Since Monday, a meeting of party chiefs and defense ministers from Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Mongolia has been going on in Moscow. This meeting was unscheduled and there has been no announced agenda. Some facts suggest some urgency in convening it. Gomulka, who has been visiting the USSR, rescheduled his departure. Polish Defense Minister Sychalski arrived after the Gomulka delegation. And a more convenient and appropriate occasion for such a gathering would seem to be the 7 November celebrations. Most speculation, informed and otherwise, has the meeting focusing on China and Vietnam.

2. Also under discussion is a shift by Hanoi in the direction of negotiations, or new efforts by the Soviets and East Europeans to persuade the DRV to moderate its present line. The Czechs, Rumanians, and Bulgarians have all recently returned from trips to Hanoi. Gromyko recently took the line with the President that Moscow's influence in Hanoi should not be underestimated, but offered no clue as to what would happen if the US did stop bombing. On the other hand, there has been no sign from Hanoi that it intends to moderate its position. In addition, the Soviet October Anniversary slogan on Vietnam is much harsher than last year's.

S-E-C-R-E-T

3. The Moscow conclave follows Brezhnev's trip last month to Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia where the Soviets put new fire in their campaign to muster support for their view of developments in China. Moscow seems intent on making the most of China's difficulties to enhance its own position in the Communist world. It obviously sees a tide of opinion running against Peking. Recent speeches by Brezhnev and Kosygin are the hardest hitting against China's present leadership since the days of Khrushchev.

4. Vietnam remains the touchstone. Moscow's accusation for some time now has been that China has failed in its international duty to participate in joint action in defense of North Vietnam. Kosygin went so far as to say that the Chinese have prolonged the war by their actions. The Russians probably feel that the mere fact of the meeting highlights the solidarity of the USSR and its allies in support of Hanoi. The likely outcome is some sort of joint statement on Vietnam, with very definite anti-Chinese overtones, similar to the Warsaw Pact declaration last July. No multilateral party condemnation of Peking is likely. Moscow and its allies will look at the present scene in China more in sorrow than in anger. The USSR's goal remains fixed on the isolation of the present Chinese regime. The opposition to any "conference" on China by such parties as the Rumanians and the Poles circumscribes Moscow's actions.

- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

5. However, one good possibility is that the meeting will produce some new and more forthright statement on the question of volunteers for the DRV. All of the recent Eastern European visits to Hanoi have concluded in communiques which bring this subject up. On 15 and 16 October in the USSR, young Communist organizations held mass rallies stating a readiness to go to Vietnam if it became necessary. In this situation, the presence in Moscow of the Cubans is quite relevant. They have been outspoken on the question of volunteers. Foreign Minister Roa on 18 October at the United Nations spoke out on the issue. There is also some indication that the question of volunteers was a topic of discussion on Brezhnev's trip to Eastern Europe last month. Any such statement could say that additional contingency plans have been made with the DRV on the question. It might even declare the presence in North Vietnam of some Soviet, East European, and Cuban citizens. The statement would probably still make the question of volunteers contingent on the DRV's request. And the statement would have the value of contrasting the joint commitment of Moscow and its allies to support Hanoi with the obstructionist tactics of Peking -- noticeably silent on the question of "volunteers" for the DRV.



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