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MEMORANDUM**SUBJECT: Soviet Policy in the Present Phase****The Problem: Divergent Premises**

It has emerged from the recent discussion of CIA covert action programs that critics and supporters tend to proceed from quite different premises concerning Soviet policy and the state of the cold war. Generally the critics say that, while such programs may at one time have been useful, Soviet policy, the Communist movement, and world conditions have changed in ways which now make such programs superfluous, perhaps even damaging to US interests.

The Soviets, it is argued, have wearied of cold war. They now recognize that hopes they held earlier in the postwar period for Communist revolutionary advance were misplaced. They are concerned now to give priority to internal development, and in particular to the improvement of living standards in the USSR. Consonant with this, they are interested in a fundamental detente with the West. It follows that, while in prudence the Agency still has an intelligence collecting mission to perform, political action programs associated with the former cold war can now be dismantled.

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Those who do not accept this latter conclusion proceed from a different view of present Soviet attitudes and policy. They believe that the appraisal summarized above is superficial and misleading, that the Soviets remain as committed as ever to cold war aims and methods.

Obviously there may be other reasons why Agency programs should be modified or abandoned. The discussion of this matter is difficult enough, however, without added confusions derived from widely differing assumptions as to the kind of situation now faced by American foreign policy. What follows is our assessment of the Soviet role on the world scene today. It is a major part of the rationale for what the Agency has been doing in the covert action field.

The Soviet Appraisal of the World Situation

It is clearly true that some reappraisal of the world situation, and of the Soviet policies appropriate to it, has taken place in Moscow in recent years. For some time we have not had the flamboyant confrontations which marked Khrushchev's tenure of power. Pressure on Berlin has been abandoned. The boasting and loud threats have ceased, or at least are heard only occasionally from military men rather than from the political leadership.

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Some part of this change is owing to a difference of leadership style between Khrushchev and his successors. Indeed, the latter justified their coup against him in part on the ground that he had a tendency to "adventurist" language and action. And, since 1964, the new leaders have manifested the more sober, restrained, and "business-like" style they promised.

This change in the style of leadership evidently has had much to do with the widespread impression in the West that some major change in Soviet attitudes has taken place. Mild-mannered men like Kosygin seem more benign than loud mouths like Khrushchev. It appears, however, that a number of more substantial factors persuaded Khrushchev's colleagues that he had to go, and that a reappraisal of the Soviet situation and prospects was in order. Taken together, these factors forced the conclusion that "the relation of forces," in the Soviet phrase, was less favorable than had been supposed. This meant that for some interim period policy had to be adjusted to avoid frontal challenges to the West.

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 apparently precipitated this reappraisal, and in a traumatic way. Probably the Soviets had come to believe that their acquisition of ICBM's was overcoming, at least in a psychological sense, the imbalance which had long obtained in strategic power, and therefore permitted higher risks in direct confrontations. Perhaps they believed

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that the Bay of Pigs or the West's reactions to their brazen pressures on Berlin showed a weakening of will. In the course of a crisis which brought a humiliating reversal to the USSR, they found out otherwise. In addition, the unexpectedly rapid buildup of American strategic missile forces in the early 60's underlined the meaning of the Cuba crisis: that the US retained a substantial and growing advantage in strategic power and that greater caution was indicated in estimating the risks of maneuvers involving direct challenges to the US.

The appearance of serious internal economic problems in the early 60's was another factor which called for a reappraisal of the "relation of forces." The vision of Khrushchev's early years faded, that is, that Soviet economic advance would "overtake and surpass" the crisis-ridden capitalist economies, with huge political effect on world attitudes. The Soviet economic growth rate began to decline, while that of the US moved up and most other advanced countries sustained the rapid gains of the postwar period. The result was a widening of the absolute gap between the resources available to the "socialist camp" and those available to the "imperialist camp." In 1963, the historic stagnation of Soviet agriculture combined with unfavorable weather to bring a major crisis, forcing the allocation of limited hard currency holdings to import of food grains instead of the much-desired Western machinery. Several conclusions were obvious for the Soviet leadership: To the extent that power is measured in economic resources, the

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long-term outlook was unfavorable to the Soviets; Soviet economic gains over the West would not for some time be a positive factor for purposes of Communist political struggle; and the priority attention of the leadership had to be devoted to getting the Soviet economy back on the rails, if only for internal reasons having to do with the expectations of the Soviet people.

Another development which led the Soviet leaders to appraise their position as weaker than they had thought was the sharp discord which appeared within the Communist Bloc. By 1963 the slow-burning quarrel with the Chinese Party finally broke out into the open. Mao challenged Soviet conceptions of Communist strategy and Soviet claims to exercise authority over the Communist movement. His dissidence spread to other parties; even the Soviet client states in Eastern Europe seized the opportunity to edge toward some degree of independence. The Soviet leaders realized that their power seemed suddenly less imposing to a world which had long been accustomed to see Moscow preside over a vast and monolithic "camp." They saw that a divided Communist movement was less able to pursue policies aimed at expanding Communist power. They took it as a profound setback that the preeminence in the Communist movement of the "first socialist state," which they had taken for granted for 40-odd years as the cornerstone of their world position, should be challenged. In terms of Moscow's political values, priority had to be given to restoring Communist unity and Soviet authority, or at

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least to containing the damage. For the time being, the contest with the West had to take second place to this.

Finally, there has been one more negative factor which the Soviet leadership has had to enter into its reckoning of Communist prospects. The bright hopes which were entertained in the 50's for the spread of Communist influence in the underdeveloped world, perhaps even for actual seizures of power in some countries, proved premature. Reverses were encountered in several countries where prospects once seemed good -- for example, in Iraq, Indonesia, Ghana, and Algeria. Chinese disruption of Communist and pro-Communist forces dimmed prospects in many countries. Castro's attempts to sponsor imitators in Latin America came to little. Africa seemed a less promising revolutionary terrain than it had about 1960. The front of Third World non-aligned states, which the Soviets had hoped to associate with the Bloc against the West, broke down in consequence of regional quarrels. The Soviets were evidently obliged to recognize that the forces at work in the Third World were more complicated than they had supposed. If the developments favorable to their interests which they had foreseen were to come at all, this could only be over a much longer period.

Thus a number of factors have combined over the last several years to reduce Soviet expectations, factors fundamental enough to compel a reap-praisal of the balance of forces on the world scene, and to demand alteration of Soviet policies. How fundamentally have the Soviets reacted to these

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developments? Some people think fundamentally enough to make possible a new stage in East-West relations, one which could bring a genuine truce on all those many fronts around the world where cold war has been waged. This paper argues below that what has been taking place is merely a tactical adjustment of the kind often before seen in Soviet policy, and that no significant moves toward terminating the cold war are in sight.

The State of Soviet Doctrine

If we look at what the Soviets have been saying in their doctrinal pronouncements in recent years, no evidence of any will to improve relations with the US is manifest. If anything, the hostility and calumny which pours out from Soviet propaganda media is more shrill than ever. Brezhnev has declared that the President's offer to work for an improvement in Soviet-American relations despite the Vietnam war reflects "a strange and persistent delusion."

It is said that the Soviets feel obliged to demonstrate solidarity toward a Communist ally, but their whole course of action toward the Vietnam problem since Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 indicates that they would rather see the war continue than see it end on other than Hanoi's terms. It is said also that Communist polemical rhetoric is a necessary prop to the Soviet regime, and that even if Soviet policy toward the West changed, one should not expect the revolutionary liturgy used at Party congresses and

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on other ritual occasions to change. Perhaps, but in the past the Soviet leadership has always been sufficiently ingenious to devise signals of its altered intentions despite this handicap.

There is an easier explanation of why those in the West who believe in the Soviet desire for detente find so little support in official Soviet pronouncements. It is that the Soviets have not made a simple decision to end the cold war. They have reacted in a more complicated way to the discouraging developments of recent years described above. They have done what men schooled all their lives in looking at political realities in Marxist-Leninist categories could be expected to do. They have not abandoned their doctrinal premises, but they have stretched the time frame of their expectations, and modified their policies to the current realities of power.

Fundamentals remain: American power is a threat and the principal obstacle to Communist advance. The social-economic order in Western society is fragile, and the Western Alliance will finally break down. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America revolutionary turbulence will mount, and Communist opportunities for influence and power will eventually improve. Communist unity can and must be restored against the day when history lurches forward once again on its inevitable revolutionary course. Marxist-Leninist "science" continues to be the only sure guide in the protracted struggle which the very nature of human society imposes.

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In the West most people find it difficult to credit that the Soviets really believe what their dogma says, or at least that their action is actually related to it. The true believer is always incredible to the unbeliever. But it is hard to deny that if the Soviet leaders did not continue to believe most of what their scriptures say, they would, even as a great power with interests and security to defend, pursue a different course in world politics. Except for dogma, there are many ways in which the interests of the USSR as a state could be served by more normal relations with the West. If, as some say, dogma is becoming irrelevant to Soviet conduct, it ought to be possible by now to cite some significant development in Soviet policy which makes this manifest. In fact, what the Soviets actually do remains consistent with their traditional dogma.

This is not to say that change in the outlook and action of a doctrine revolutionary system cannot take place. History says otherwise. But history also says that such change usually takes a very long time, and this seems the more likely in a society in which for centuries the critical spirit has been unwelcome and arbitrary power has been the norm. Unfortunately, moreover, the Marxist-Leninist myths have in 50 years become a powerful cement that helps to hold up the present structure of power. To permit this cement to crumble might topple the whole apparatus over which the Communist elite presides.

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When the Soviets adjust to a new appraisal of the world situation, therefore, they always do so in a tactical sense without questioning their basic premises. Or at least they have acted this way until now, and there does not seem to be anything so drastically dangerous or unpromising about the long-term outlook, as they appear to see it at present, that impels them toward more fundamental change. A look at the main lines of policy that the Soviets are actually pursuing appears to confirm this.

Main Lines of Current Soviet Policy

Internal -- The Soviet leaders have been heavily preoccupied for the last two years or so with economic reform schemes intended to restore the high rates of industrial growth the economy enjoyed earlier. Similarly in agriculture, bold new departures have been outlined to overcome stagnation in output. These measures are clearly controversial within the Party and state bureaucracies and have probably strained the harmony of the collective leadership.

The interesting thing is that no consideration has apparently been given to reallocating the vast resources taken by military programs. If more rapid economic growth as such were desired, the best results could be obtained by heavier investments in the consumer goods industries. Instead, the last few years have seen a rapid buildup of strategic missile forces.

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At the same time, the Soviets remain cool to any serious discussion of arms control, though for political reasons they continue the round-and-round at Geneva. It remains true that over the years all the concrete initiatives to turn down the arms race have come from the American side only. If there is no significant movement in this field, even at a time of some economic stringency in the USSR, it seems a fair inference that Soviet policy is predicated on the assumption that the power competition has to continue. Nothing would symbolize and stimulate a trend toward real detente more dramatically than meaningful progress in arms control.

Vietnam -- The Soviets' attitude has been complicated. They apparently had no part in Hanoi's original decision to resort to armed action. Khrushchev seemed inclined to have the USSR stand aside, but this seems to have been one of the matters that led to his ouster. The new leaders at once reinjected themselves, probably calculating that the risks were limited and the potential gains substantial. They hoped to reestablish Bloc unity and to vindicate their claims to leadership. And they wanted to be party to an action which would demonstrate that the US lacked the capacity and will to prevent a forward movement of Communist forces applying the doctrine of "national liberation" warfare.

The Soviet position now is that the Vietnam war prevents detente. But it was the present leadership which made the choice in 1964 to support Hanoi

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actively, at a time when, in the wake of the test ban treaty, hopes in the West for detente were never higher. Since then, Soviet weapons and materiel have been responsible for much of the American losses in Vietnam, and the USSR gives no convincing sign as yet of any desire to influence Hanoi to seek a reasonable peace. In this as in other matters, the priority in Soviet policy has been given to continued struggle rather than to detente.

This is manifest also in the political use the Soviets have made of the war. Their diplomatic and propoganda effort to isolate the US from its allies and friends over this issue has been intense. This effort, worthy of the worst phases of the cold war, has probably been a main reason for Soviet unwillingness to work for peace.

Europe -- Both the Vietnam war and uncertainties over the future of NATO have provided the Soviets an opening in this area, and they have had a major diplomatic offensive going for the last year. Here the theme is detente, but of a special sort. The aim is to relax the Europeans into believing that they can afford to dilute their ties with the US. The Soviets propose a European security conference without American participation, the main objects of which would be to sanction a German settlement in accordance with Soviet views and to stigmatize and isolate the Federal Republic. If such a conference were held, US influence and interests in Europe would be in serious jeopardy. Fortunately, that seems unlikely, but the maneuver

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indicates that the Soviets, far from seeking a stable European settlement, are still pursuing the same goals in the area where the cold war began more than two decades ago.

Third World -- Despite the disappointments they have had in the under-developed countries, the Soviets still say that the grand strategic key to major new advances for "socialism" lies in committing the poor nations to an alignment with the Bloc against the West. And they keep putting their money on the line in military and economic aid as an earnest of their belief. Extensions of new aid in 1966 were equal to the highest levels of recent years.

There is clear evidence that this aid is still conceived as a political warfare tool rather than as a contribution to world stability. Much of it is military goods to areas where tensions are already high and regional conflicts might be stimulated. Western attempts to discuss agreements to limit arms aid have failed to win a Soviet response. Proposals to the USSR for cooperation with Western donors in order to maximize the effectiveness of economic aid have been rebuffed. Finally, the bulk of Soviet aid goes to the areas of greatest strategic interest to the USSR and to countries where the Soviets believe the eventual political developments may be the most promising for their broader purposes. These criteria explain the priority given to the Middle East and South Asia, and formerly to Indonesia.

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Along with their official aid programs, the Soviets continue on the usual scale all their other activities aimed at denying Third World areas to Western presence and influence. A vast propaganda effort, whose content amounts to a steady campaign of violent political warfare against the West, is still maintained. The apparatus of penetration and subversion has been expanding. While its performance in the Third World has apparently been spotty, this is owing in part at least to countermeasures by ourselves and our allies. The point is, however, that Soviet activities clearly reflect an assumption that the Third World is an arena of long-term conflict with the West.

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In all of the areas discussed above the Soviets are pursuing policies which, according to their own analysis, offer no early prospect of significant advances for Communist power. But these policies are also clearly predicated on the belief that the cold war struggle with the West must continue indefinitely. They appear to be designed mainly to build long-term assets for use in that struggle. Taken as a whole, the policies discussed above indicate that when the Soviets refer to detente, they in fact mean a pseudo-detente which is no more than a cold war holding action against the day when new offensives are possible. Detente for them carries no implication of permanence, nor does it mean, as much Western opinion imagines, a truce which should be used to move toward ending the war.

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Tactics and Methods

Such pseudo-detente helps to engender a climate favorable to Communist political action techniques. In open societies any plausible gestures or words that seem to mean peace arouse hopes and allay suspicions; the collective memory is notoriously short and very forgiving. Political cooperation with Communists becomes respectable again. Pressures mount on governments to take an understanding view of Soviet positions on contested issues.

A climate of this sort exists in many non-Communist countries today, and especially in Europe. It is found in some quarters in this country. It is the result of a combination of circumstances -- the absence since 1962 of any major crisis caused by the USSR, the more restrained style of the present Soviet leadership, the lack of understanding for American policy in Vietnam, the confusions generated by French policy -- all working together against a background of cold war weariness. And it is a climate which Soviet diplomacy, propaganda, and subversion are at work to sustain and to turn to account.

The methods are the classic Communist ones. The aim is to lay hands on the levers of power and influence in non-Communist nations so as to cause their attitudes and policies to develop in desired ways. For Communists operating in open societies, this means apart from penetrating governments, the manipulation of organized opinion and pressure groups.

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Persistent organizational effort is the key, since, as Lenin said, cadres determine everything. The Communists are everywhere a minority and are ineffective without the support of wider groups. In fact, Lenin's model of the revolutionary party required that the Communists remain a small directing elite inside broader formations. Obviously a climate which leads wide sectors of opinion to entertain organized cooperation with the Communists and their supporters is helpful to these tactics.

This is why in recent years, when the climate has been increasingly favorable, the broad or united front has been the preferred form of Communist political action. Opportunities have opened up which were unthinkable when the cold war was colder and the Communists were consequently isolated. And, of course, the prime purpose of front activity is to give support to Soviet foreign policy, which currently means committing as many states and international organs of opinion as possible to an anti-US posture. The result intended is pressure on the US, compounded by disturbances in American domestic opinion arising from a sense of isolation, which would force this government to alter its course in ways advantageous to the USSR.

The resources and effort which the Soviets are today putting into attempts to capture "private" international organizations are greater than ever. The use of KGB personnel, directed agents, and covert funds proceeds on standard cold war lines. Few governments and few national groups active

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in the international field have the resources and know-how to deal effectively with these tactics, even when they realize what is happening. If the US is no longer active in this field, it is certain that the Soviet efforts will be more effective and that the problems of American policy will be magnified.

Thus the challenge posed to American interests and security by the tactics and methods used in support of Soviet policy has not subsided. In fact, the conditions which obtain in the world at present and the particular vulnerabilities to which American policy is now exposed tend to make such methods more rather than less effective. They will not be abandoned by the USSR whatever kind or degree of detente prevails because they are inherent in the whole Soviet theory and practice of politics. The present Soviet leaders obviously believe that these methods have proved themselves in the more than six decades of their Party's power-oriented struggles, and account in large part for the successes of their post-war foreign policy. Only a significant change in the character of the regime itself could alter these established modes of behavior, and this does not seem likely soon.

Conclusion

If the assessment of Soviet policy and intentions given above is correct, as this Agency's whole experience and judgment argues, then the cold war is far from over. It follows that the premises on which we have conducted covert political action until now remain valid. The effectiveness

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of these programs in countering Soviet aims and methods has been demonstrated. They are a proven tool in the kind of world and against the kind of opponent with which American policy must cope for some time to come. The abandonment of such programs would not be reciprocated by the USSR. Its capability to damage our interests and threaten our security would be increased by our retirement from this sector of the great contest, a contest we have not sought but which Soviet policy imposes on us still.

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