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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 September 1951

SUBJECT: TERMS OF REFERENCE: NIE-45: LIKELIHOOD, CHARACTER,
AND CONSEQUENCES OF A SOVIET ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE
A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS
(as approved by the IAC Representatives)

THE PROBLEM

To assess (a) whether the USSR is likely to shift its tactics and seek a temporary "relaxation of tensions"; (b) how far the USSR might go in this direction; and (c) the probable impact of such a policy on the free world.

DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

We consider that the Kremlin, looking at the world situation, is confronted with three basic policy choices: (a) to seek early general war before the West becomes too strong; (b) to attempt to continue its present cold war pressures; or (c) to seek a "relaxation of tensions" designed to lull the West into a sense of false security and to undermine growing Western strength and consolidation. Accepting the premise that the USSR presumably prefers to achieve its objectives by means short of general war, two broad courses of political warfare remain open to the Kremlin. Since course (b) is already under consideration in various estimates, we believe that first priority should be given to examining whether or not the Kremlin

might feel compelled to make a temporary shift in its present tactics as an even more effective means of achieving its objectives. This third alternative might involve merely avoiding any further risky local aggression, while perhaps intensifying such propaganda efforts as the peace offensive; on the other hand it might go so far as to include ostensible or actual concessions.

We recognize that any such shift would be only temporary, and that the USSR would move cautiously and tentatively in any new direction, constantly probing for weak spots, and proceeding from step to step only as results might seem to justify. We recognize, moreover, that the USSR would by no means abandon all of its aggressive and subversive tactics; that it might adopt a more conciliatory policy only in Western Europe, for example, while continuing to expand in Asia. However, we do believe that it is feasible to define a clearcut possible course of action called a "relaxation of tensions." Finally, we recognize that considerations of timing are important. It may be that the USSR will eventually feel compelled to adopt new and more conciliatory tactics, but that the Kremlin does not yet believe that it has to face this choice. It may be that the Kremlin, while considering such a shift in tactics, simply has not made up its mind.

QUESTIONS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

I. WHAT FACTORS MIGHT FAVOR OR MILITATE AGAINST THE KREMLIN SEEKING A BROAD RELAXATION OF TENSIONS?

- A. Are there any historical and doctrinal precedents for a deliberate policy of relaxation of tensions?

What elements of Soviet doctrine indicate that

temporary relaxation is a part of Soviet thinking? Ebb and flow? Lenin's "one step backward for two steps forward?" How much do the Communists think of the eventual triumph of Communism in terms perhaps of decades rather than the next few years, thus permitting them to accept a temporary shift in tactics?

B. What factors in the Kremlin's view of the world situation might lead to a shift in Soviet tactics?

1. To what extent because of growing Western strength and consolidation might the Kremlin feel that its cold war opportunities were steadily narrowing? To what extent might the USSR consider that its postwar pressure tactics had reached the point of diminishing returns and were generating even more powerful counterpressures?
2. Therefore, might the Kremlin consider that, to achieve its primary immediate objective of retarding the development of Western strength and unity, it should sooner or later resort to a temporary relaxation of its pressures? In other words might the USSR now feel increasingly compelled to shift its course and seek another means of weakening the West? Is the USSR yet at the point where it must seriously consider such a shift?

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C. What objectives might the USSR aim to achieve through a relaxation of tensions?

1. Drive a wedge between the US and the rest of the free world by emphasizing US aggressiveness and exploiting issues with divisive possibilities between the US and Western Europe in particular?
2. Create a false sense of security and thus undermine the impetus behind Western consolidation and rearmament?
3. Prevent, delay, or hamper German and Japanese rearmament and their association with the West?
4. Secure the propaganda advantages of actually appearing as a peacemaker while labeling the US an aggressor?
5. By retarding Western rearmament, perhaps create serious economic strains in the free world?
6. Gain time for further development of Soviet economic and military (including atomic) capabilities?

D. On the other hand, what factors militate against an early change in the USSR's present policies?

1. To what extent does the Kremlin feel committed to a continued hostile, aggressive policy?
To what extent might the USSR feel that the

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Western Powers were going to attack it eventually in any case, and that a relaxation of tensions would therefore be fruitless? Does the Kremlin probably see sufficient further opportunities for exploitation to justify continuation of its present cold war pressures?

2. What opportunities might the Kremlin feel would be denied to it if it sought a temporary relaxation of tensions? Might the Kremlin consider that to carry a relaxation of tensions to the point of achieving substantial results would involve costly concessions that the USSR was unwilling to make? Might it feel that NATO and prospective German and Japanese rearmament can still be forestalled or at least delayed by other means?

II. WHAT INDICATIONS ARE THERE OF A POSSIBLE SOVIET ATTEMPT TO REDUCE WORLD TENSIONS?

- A. What recent Soviet moves and developments might indicate that such an effort is in the offing?
- B. To what extent might the recurrent "peace" offensive be a laying of the propaganda basis for such a campaign?

III. HOW FAR MIGHT THE KREMLIN GO IN IMPLEMENTING "RELAXATION" TACTICS?

Within the broad context of a relaxation of tensions, there is a wide range of implementing actions which the USSR might undertake. At a minimum it might merely close out the Korean war and refrain from further overt aggressive action, while greatly stepping up its "peace" offensive and other propaganda campaigns. On the other hand the Kremlin might realize that for its new policy to have any real impact it must make a whole series of ostensibly conciliatory moves. Finally, the USSR might even consider that in order to achieve certain specific objectives, particularly re Germany and Japan, it would have to make major concessions to the West.

- A. How far might the Kremlin expect to get without any real concessions? What propaganda and other methods might it adopt?
- B. What concessions, such as an Austrian peace treaty or East-West trade concessions, might the Kremlin feel it could make without really weakening its position? Would it be willing to make these sacrifices? How much might the Kremlin expect to gain through such means?

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- C. What far-reaching concessions really involving a loss to the Soviet Union might the Kremlin feel were required to achieve specific objectives, and perhaps to insure the success of its over-all "relaxation" tactics? What sacrifices might the Kremlin have to accept and to what extent might the Kremlin feel able to make such concessions?
1. Re Germany - neutralization
 2. Re Japan
 3. Re disarmament, atomic energy control, etc.
 4. Re general broad issues such as somewhat lowering the Iron Curtain, modifying international Communist activities, etc.

IV. WHAT WOULD BE THE PROBABLE IMPACT OF A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS ON THE FREE WORLD?

- A. What might be the impact of a policy not involving major concessions? What would be the possibilities of driving a wedge between the Western countries? To what extent might the USSR lull the West into a false sense of security and thus undermine the impetus behind Western rearmament?
1. On Western Europe and the NATO alliance?



2. On the rest of the free world?
 - B. What might be the impact of the free world of a broader program involving real concessions?

