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SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE

THE PROBLEM

To assess current Soviet foreign policy in the light of the Summit Conference.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Since Stalin's death, and especially since early 1955, the Soviet leaders have been increasingly active in seeking a gradual reduction in the tensions of the cold war. At the Geneva meeting in July and since, the Soviet leaders, while revealing no change in their positions on disputed issues, have cultivated an atmosphere of amicability. (Paras. 6-7, 9)

2. We believe that a number of factors have been at work to produce this change in the Soviet posture. One of these was the succession of a new leadership which apparently believed that Stalin's conduct of Soviet policy had hardened Western determination to resist further Communist advances and created a rearmed alliance of the Western states. The fact that this process brought finally a move to include a rearmed West Germany in NATO almost certainly gave the Soviet leaders serious concern and accelerated the change in Soviet conduct. In addition, we believe that a growing realization of the dangers of nuclear conflict convinced the Soviet leaders that it was necessary to minimize risks of general war, at least until they had narrowed the gap in nuclear warfare capabilities. At the

same time, the great cost of modern weapons was apparently forcing difficult choices in the allocation of resources so that if the USSR did continue heavy military expenditures, as it could do, it would probably have to pay a price in reduction of the high rates of economic growth which have been a principal aim of Soviet policy. Finally, the Soviet leaders apparently believed that a reduction in international tensions would open up rifts in the West and bring a decline in the Western defense effort. (Paras. 12-13, 15-17)

3. We conclude that the Soviet leaders have not abandoned their long-range aims. During the current phase, however, they have embarked on a policy aimed at a general easing of cold war tensions and apparently pointed toward these main objectives:

a. To reduce the threat of nuclear conflict arising from continued tensions, particularly during the period of their nuclear inferiority;

b. To give time for the USSR to continue its military build-up and to deal with its economic problems; and

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c. To open new opportunities for dividing the Western Powers, undermining Western strength, and extending Communist penetration of the free world. (Para. 18)

4. The nature of the motivations discussed above suggests that the Soviet leaders have adopted the new policy as more than a short term tactical shift. Soviet policy has in the past, however, shown itself capable of sudden reversals. Such a reversal could again occur if the present policy failed to achieve its expected results, or if it led to developments prejudicial to Soviet interests. On the whole, we are inclined to believe that it is the present intention of the Soviet leaders to continue their current policy for some time. (Para. 19)

5. At the coming Four Power meetings the USSR will probably try to convey an impression of flexibility on the issues under discussion without making significant departures from its present positions. In

order to mask the rigidity of its position on Germany, the USSR will almost certainly attempt to focus attention upon the question of European security. The Soviet leaders may imply a willingness to compromise on the form of a security agreement, but the purpose of any Soviet proposal would be to bring about the collapse of NATO. On disarmament, the Soviet leaders, without themselves agreeing to unrestricted inspection, will probably try to commit the West to fixed levels of armament and, by continuing to press for a ban on nuclear weapons, will try to limit Western freedom of action to employ such weapons. They may, however, agree to tentative and exploratory steps to test the effectiveness of inspection in limited areas. They will make much of the issue of increased contacts between nations, mainly with a view to undermining Western trade controls and to lending support to the general propaganda line of their present policy. (Paras. 22-26)

DISCUSSION

I. THE RECENT "CONCILIATORY" TREND IN SOVIET POLICY

6. Since the death of Stalin, the Soviet leaders have been increasingly active in seeking a gradual reduction in the tensions of the cold war. The latest phase was initiated in early 1955 with the USSR's sudden change of policy with respect to an Austrian peace treaty. After Bulganin's favorable reaction in March to the idea of a Four Power meeting of heads of government, the USSR made a series of conciliatory gestures. They included an apparent willingness to accept some important aspects of the Western position on disarmament, a marked decline in the use of hostile and fear-mongering themes in domestic and foreign propaganda, and a more normal handling

of diplomatic contacts. In addition, the USSR attempted to improve its position with respect to individual countries, as in the re-establishment of "normal" relations with Yugoslavia. By the time of the Summit meeting, even the special abuse reserved in Soviet propaganda for US motives and policy had virtually ceased.

7. Despite the atmosphere of amicability which the USSR cultivated, the positions on substantive issues which it put forward at the Summit meeting revealed no significant departure from those previously held. On the major issue of Germany, the long-sustained pretense that the USSR desired German unity at an early date was frankly abandoned. In the discussion of European security, Bulganin made clear Soviet insistence that security

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