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FIRST DRAFT
DCI Lecture for
National War College
3 February 1956

14 January 1956

Assessment of Communist Successes,
Problems and Prospects

After looking over the formidable array of previous lectures and discussions in this course, I have interpreted my own function as one of reflection and speculation primarily. I shall not attempt to repeat matters you have already considered, except insofar as they contribute to a broad assessment of where the Communist Bloc stands and where it is headed, both in its own eyes and in our judgment.

I start with the proposition that there has been no basic change whatever in Soviet objectives. The tactical variations we have witnessed over the last five years, and conspicuously within the past year, have never been beyond the bounds of the traditional Communist theory of alternate advances and retreats initiated by Lenin, and I am sure deeply grooved in the thinking of all the present leaders of the Kremlin.

Indeed, I think it is of crucial importance for us all to avoid any sharp swings in our view of Soviet activity. During the past year, speculation among the public has reached the point of wondering whether what we called the cold war was at an end. Since the second Berlin conference and the recent statements of Soviet leaders, there has been

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some tendency to swing to an opposite view -- that the cold war far from being abandoned will be intensified. The difficulty in preventing such swings in public opinion is a major concern of our policy makers. There should be no justification for them among groups such as yourselves.

Let me then attempt to give a Soviet view of the world situation, which I should think would be broadly shared by all the top men in the Kremlin whatever their personal rivalries or other differences:

First, they must be quite well satisfied with their progress in the development and production of major military weapons. In the nuclear field, they have advanced to the point where, notwithstanding a continuing marked superiority in US striking power, particularly over the next two years, the world generally, and our major allies particularly, believe that a period of nuclear stalemate has already begun. Moreover, as a result of the first Geneva conference -- and notwithstanding the barren results of the second -- the Soviets must be more confident than before that the US will not deliberately precipitate a situation of major conflict in which nuclear weapons would be used. This does not mean that the Soviets are not still deterred by our own massive nuclear power from adventures of their own that would be likely to lead to major conflict. I am sure they are, and that they are convinced of our intention to act if certain lines are crossed or certain boundaries of action exceeded. But they do now have an additional internal feeling of confidence, that "we have it too."

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As to the future, it is clear that the Soviets are going all out to achieve the next stages of military power ahead of us if they can. And in certain fields, notably in medium range guided missiles, we have had disturbing evidence within the past year that they may reach the level of operational capability before we do. I do not infer from this any great, or at least any immediate changes in their intentions with respect to a major conflict or general war. In intercontinental missiles, the race now looks about even. Whatever the relative dates of achievement of the intercontinental missile may be, the Soviets will in any case continue to be confronted by massive strategic air power from bases so dispersed that it is unlikely that they could expect to knock them out. We can never rule out the possibility of a truly decisive surprise attack capability by the Soviets -- and must obviously bend every effort to prevent that coming about -- but I should doubt whether the Soviets are now planning to any major degree on such a basis.

Another major question is whether their growing nuclear capabilities will permit the use of pressure or "blackmail" tactics in support of local aggression and subversion. This is a more likely possibility than an achievement of a decisive surprise attack capability. If the United States and the free world fail to meet Communist expansionist moves effectively over the next five years, this could become indeed the method by which we would be nibbled to death. In present Soviet calculations, however, I think it represents a hope rather than a firm expectation.

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In summary, the Soviet view of the major weapons balance is two fold: (1) that there is a present balance or near-balance sufficient to reduce the risks of major conflict to a low point; (2) that there are hopes that the situation may develop in ways favorable to the Communist Bloc, either by the pressure possibility or by the more remote chance of a later surprise attack capability.

This brings us to the second point, the present status of the cold war struggle.

On this front, the Soviets must consider the prospects for gain to be considerable -- perhaps less than they were in early 1947, and with no major area as ripe for the plucking as North Vietnam stood in early 1953, but on an overall basis presenting great opportunities for the growth of Communist influence.

In the last six months, Soviet intervention in the Middle East and South Asia has revealed a greater tactical flexibility than in the past, and in particular the judicious employment of two Soviet assets, a plentiful supply of obsolescent arms and the ability of a controlled economy to absorb the critical surpluses of underdeveloped countries at a relatively small overall cost. In quantitative terms, we estimate that the aggregate cost of Communist military aid and economic moves in these areas is on the order of 400 million dollars, most of which is in the Egyptian arms deal. Objectively however, those surplus arms really had almost no marginal value at all, and I would have no question that

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the Soviets can maintain and intensify this kind of effort.

When it comes to really useful economic aid, Soviet capabilities are more limited, but may still be adequate for their present purposes. The Soviets can spare a million tons of steel for India over a three year period. They can afford to send commodities to Burma in exchange for rice, which they will divert to meet the pressing food problems of North Vietnam. Perhaps most serious, they do have a supply of technicians, which they can readily train in the local language and then direct to a country where they can effectively serve Soviet interests.

All in all, the Kremlin may well calculate that it has opened up a profitable new front on which it may expect to make real progress.

Meanwhile, among our major allies, especially in NATO, the Soviets must believe that they have been fairly successful in reducing the "cement of fear" in NATO and that, whether or not Khrushchev and Bulganin revert to type in the hostile tone of their utterances, it will remain extremely difficult for these nations to maintain the defence burdens of the 1949-54 period.

Moreover, the Soviets must be well pleased with the results of the French elections and by the talk of "openings to the left" in Italy. If it does nothing more, the renewal of popular front tactics seems sure to exert a continued disruptive effect on these countries. I do not think that popular fronts are imminent in either case, but they are surely a

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stronger possibility than at any time since 1948.

Finally, and in my judgment more immediately important than either Europe or the Middle East and South Asia, there are the two great sore spots of the current Far East picture, the offshore islands and Laos. These are not direct Soviet problems, but there is every reason to believe that the Soviets see clearly the advantages that may come to the Bloc from them -- and they are of course rendering all possible material support to the Communist Chinese and the Viet Minh.

There are a few indications that the Soviets exerted a restraining hand on the Communist Chinese during 1955 on the islands, and also on the situation in South Vietnam. Yet I have little doubt that, to the degree this was done, it was accompanied by an assurance to the Communist Chinese that the taking of the offshore islands would be done more easily, and to greater advantage to the overall cause, if the will of the major European nations could be further softened by the general "peace offensive" -- as has clearly taken place -- if the US could be isolated from its allies, and if the major "third-force" nations, notably India, could be subjected to increased Soviet influence -- as has also taken place. In short, broadly speaking, what has gone on in the rest of the world has been a series of "back-of-the-stove" operations, to be kept going and to be moved up if they came along unexpectedly fast, but that the front burner has been the Far East -- above all the islands and to a lesser degree Laos. In the case of Laos, the Communist moves are

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almost certainly designed largely as a balancing operation to offset the fact that South Vietnam has not developed, or rather deteriorated, as they anticipated when the Indochina agreements were made in 1954. But Laos is no mere token balancer; while its loss to the free world would be less serious than that of South Vietnam, the undermining effect in Thailand -- of which there are already indications -- might in a fairly short time virtually outflank even a greatly strengthened and pro-Western South Vietnam, while the situations in Malaya and Singapore, which have developed more adversely than we expected during the past year -- and with too little sign of effective British counteraction -- would be likely to go completely to pot. Whether these grave Communist threats are realized depends so heavily on US and allied policy that I can go no further as an intelligence officer. Clearly, there are lively possibilities that Communist hopes will be fulfilled in this, their area of maximum present expectation.

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In sum, the Soviet leaders may well feel that they are doing at least as well as they may have expected in the cold war.

Thirdly, in looking at their own internal situation, the Kremlin leaders must find much to be hopeful about. Their over-all economic growth has continued. 1955 was a good year for agricultural quantitative output. The burden of military expense has not yet operated seriously to reduce the large amounts spent for investment, and, although the flow of consumer goods has been held back, the real income of the Soviet citizen is still rising at a rate of % per year.

Even more basically, Soviet scientific and technical training continues to produce ever increasing numbers of competent technicians, and secondary education is being expanded at a rate that will mean that (80%) of Soviet children will receive such education by (1960). In the use of human raw material for narrow ends, there is no question that the Soviet system can produce results.

Moreover, despite the enormous dissatisfactions, particularly among nationality groups, overall morale in the USSR is almost certainly at a fairly high point. Whatever his view of the nature and personal consequences of the system the Soviet citizen appears to be convinced that it works, and this pride constitutes an enormous cohesive force for the present. Moreover, the visits of foreign leaders to the USSR, and the visits of Soviet leaders abroad as they have been reported to the Russian people have undoubtedly contributed to a sense of international prestige and acceptance greater than at any time since the war.

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Fourth, as they look at their relationship with the satellites and Communist China, the Kremlin leaders can see, on the favorable side, continued stability in the satellites, with little reduction in the prospects for effective Soviet control over the next five-ten years under present conditions. Communist China likewise continues a firm ally for the present, and Soviet economic aid to Communist China while substantial, is not in aggregate terms a very large burden on the Soviet economy.

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In summary, as the Soviet leaders look at today's balance sheet, as compared to a year or five years ago, they can see many favorable factors from their standpoint. In the aggregate, they might well conclude that the overall power position of the USSR and the Sino-Soviet Bloc is greater relative to the forces clearly arrayed against it than at any time.

Yet it may be that many of the assets in the balance sheet are not nearly so substantial as they appear, and that even those which may be taken at full value are outweighed by other situations or other aspects of the internal picture. So it is necessary to look closely at the debit sheet -- the problems that the Soviets still confront externally and internally.

The first of these on the external front, is that in no major area of the world has popular support for the Communist form of government

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increased over the past year. The situation in East Germany, and to some extent in the rest of the satellites, has compelled the Soviets to make brutally clear at the second Berlin conference that they have no thought of permitting free elections in East Germany, and that they know the outcome of such elections would be repudiation of Communism. While I do not look for another June 17, 1953, the Soviets have clearly found no way to keep East Germany below the simmering point. Just as one indicator, the number of refugees reaching West Berlin over the past year has been _____, almost twice the level of the preceding year and with a substantial percentage of military-age youths. Soviet controls can reduce this flow, but only at the cost of more repression and more hostility in those forced to remain. Berlin remains a major sore spot to the Soviets and, despite all the harassments, the Soviets can hardly take drastic action against it without involving great risks of a major conflict. The key fact is that East Germany simply is not setting into any kind of satellite mold; on the contrary, to East and West Germans alike, its condition is a complete condemnation of the Communist system.

Similarly, on the other side of the world, whereas it appeared probable a year ago that the Communists might win an all-Vietnam election even if considerable elements of a free election were present (though perhaps not if a prolonged period of impartial administration preceded the election), Viet Minh prestige and influence have been sharply reduced

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by the growing strength of the Diem government in the south, and by the failure to solve the basic food problem in the north. Thus, the prospect of a Communist victory in what the world might have considered a free election no longer appears substantial. If the Communists are to make substantial progress in South Vietnam, they will have to come above ground -- where they can probably be met and where they will in any case reveal their true subversive nature to the unconvinced leaders of India and other key neutralist countries of the area.

Elsewhere in the world, there now appears to be no area where the threat of Communist takeover is as acute as it was in Iran in 1953 or Guatemala in 1954, where the Communists met their match. The Indonesia situation is better than it seemed likely to be a year ago, although still precarious. Latin America has many unstable situations, but there have been encouraging signs that nations such as Brazil have passed through the inoculation phase with respect to the internal Communist threat, and are able to generate -- if we play our hand coolly -- their own corrective forces.

Moreover, even in such countries as Egypt, India, Burma, and Afghanistan, increases in Soviet state influence have not lead to any corresponding increase in internal Communist strength as yet. As they pursue their programs in these countries, the Soviets will confront an increasing dilemma. Without continuing or increasing efforts by local Communist forces, Soviet aid may serve largely to strengthen governments

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that are ultimately anti-Communist. I do not discount the possibility of growing economic or military dependence on the USSR, or that Nehru and Nasr will go somewhat further down the road of cooperation with the Soviets, or the seriousness of the threat posed by the presence of Soviet agents in these countries. It may be that the Soviets can conceal their hand and have the best of both approaches for the time being. But they will be under continual temptation, and perhaps pressure from among the Soviet leaders themselves, to take a stronger line which would cause them to be recognized for the modern imperialists they are.

Similarly, the Soviets have the problem of fulfilling the expectations of the countries they have now undertaken to assist. Things are now in a honeymoon period, which may not last long. The experience of such nations as Argentina and Uruguay with the differences between Soviet promises and Soviet performance suggests the strong possibility of eventual disillusionment with the superficial character of Soviet action. Moreover, in countries such as India where the major initial problem is agricultural productivity, the domestic performance of the USSR hardly suggests that it has much to offer.

In other areas where the Soviets have made apparent progress during the past year, they also confront dilemmas. Tito cannot be further wooed without the danger of inflaming similar "national Communist" sentiments in the satellites, and without creating even more serious dilemmas for the Communist party in Italy, which has been substantially weakened over the

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past year by this fact among others . . . In Germany, the Soviets can push the theme of direct negotiations between West Germany and East Germany to a point, with disruptive effects, but if the West Germans start to take the possibility of such negotiations seriously, they will almost certainly pierce the sham issue of "compulsory NATO membership" and come face to face with the ultimate Soviet position that a unified Germany should not have free elections and should not be free to determine its own foreign policy. Feeler unofficial negotiations between West and East Germany might well result in a very healthy clearing of the air in West Germany and in the strengthening of West Germany's ties to the West.

Despite some minor economic problems, and slight decline in its phenomenal rate of economic growth, the fact is that West Germany continues extremely prosperous and is more and more tied to the West in what should be enduring economic relationships. If we can assist the strengthening of these ties through NATO or through European integration moves, so much the better for us and the worse for the Soviets. And, of course, West German rearmament is underway.

Even in those situations where the USSR has made hay by taking sides in local quarrels -- the Arab-Israeli conflict, Pushtunistan, Kashmir, and Goa -- the Soviet gains from these positions would tend to diminish over time in any case, and the same question of fulfillment of expectations is raised.

In short, even in the situations where one would say the Soviets had

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registered gains, they have in many cases simply cashed small white chips without facing the difficult choices required for the red and blues. In the ebb and flow of the cold war, taken as a whole, the Soviets would hardly feel themselves compelled to correct, even if they could, the historic Communist doctrines of the growth of revolutionary situations, or Stalin's 1952 prophecies of softening and division in the free world -- but neither will they find any clear proof of the validity of these basic beliefs. As to the United States itself, and the alleged "internal contradictions of capitalism," we have had recent evidence that Communist theoreticians are coming to believe that, while capitalism will rot in time, it may take a pretty hefty dose of the acid of Communist disruption to bring on the process.

Turning now to their own internal picture, the Soviet leaders must realize that they have not solved two crucial domestic issues: organizing agriculture and increasing its productivity, and above all the problem of leadership itself.

I have said that 1955 was statistically a good year for Soviet agriculture, and I have little doubt that in the Central Committee meetings now in process, Khrushchev is as zealous in claiming credit for the results of good weather in the Ukraine as he was last year in denouncing Malenkov for the results of bad weather there. The fact is, of course, that Khrushchev's corn and new lands programs had very little to do with this year's results. They are not wholly visionary; some useful techniques

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have been employed, and it was a substantial achievement to obtain even small yields from the new lands in so dry a year. Nonetheless, if another bad year in the new lands were not compensated by an unusually good year in the Ukraine, Khrushchev's bold experiment would be exposed as the risky thing it is. This would not mean that millions of Russians would starve or that the Soviet economy would be drastically slowed down, but it surely would mean serious damage to Khrushchev's political credit and standing.

This brings me to the problem of leadership, which of all the Soviet problems is the one that must hang over the minds of the Kremlin more than any other.

Predictions on the future holders of power in the Soviet Union are among the more perishable items on the intelligence shelf, particularly when made on the eve of a Party Congress. But I think we can be reasonably confident that power has come to reside over the past two years primarily in a small group of a half dozen at the top, but, as a close second, also in the considerably larger Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It also seems clear that for the present neither the Army nor the secret police are in the control of any identifiable individual or group in the top leadership. Rather they have been in substantial measure "institutionalized." The prestige of the military forces is unquestionably greater than under Stalin: they are capable of exerting policy pressure,

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as they almost certainly did at the time of the decision for emphasis on heavy industry a year ago, and they are capable of negative pressure, as was almost certainly demonstrated against the secret police in the removal of Beria. But they do not stand as a separate and manipulatable element of power.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the present situation is that the Central Committee of the CPSU is almost certainly used as a forum, not only for organization and the disposition of personalities, but for the discussion of major policy questions. We know too little about what went on at its meetings last January and July, but the combination of almost total silence during these meetings, followed by an outburst of activity on many fronts, strongly suggests that if decisions were not actually made in these meetings, they were at least not valid until ratified therein.

In this situation, it is of course crucial whether Khrushchev and his friends have obtained or can in the future obtain thoroughgoing control of the Central Committee. The pattern of personal appointments over the past year suggests that he has made efforts in this direction but that these efforts are a long way from fruition.

One is tempted to draw parallels to the rise of Stalin after Lenin's death, and to wonder if we may not be at, say, the 1927 stage of that process, which will proceed eventually to the conclusion of one-man power. It may be that this will be the case. Yet there appear to be striking

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differences between the present situation and the earlier succession problem. Above all, the decisions now taken -- apparently after being thrashed out in the Central Committee -- are vastly more complex and difficult, and the results come home to roost more quickly than in the 1920's. If Khrushchev, or any group of leaders, propose a given policy, either internal or external, that policy is tested promptly and its faults revealed. Moreover, on the internal front, whereas any gain in the 1920's could not be set against a norm, the very confidence the Soviets have gained, in the capabilities of their economy, now means that decisions are judged harshly, by whether they in fact produce the results claimed for them at the time of decision. We are all familiar with the enormous political consequences in a democratic society of even the smallest economic shifts, which may have been in fact little, if at all, the fault, or the credit, of the incumbent government. Obviously, not even the Central Committee taken alone is in any sense comparable to a democracy, but the harshness and immediacy of its criticisms nonetheless may exert a continuing effect in preventing the successful rise of any single, supposedly omnipotent individual.

In short, there is a good case for supposing that the Soviet system may increasingly lack the strong one-person control under which the system was created. This does not mean that the system will collapse in the short or even medium-term. Nor does it mean any conspicuous decline in the skill with which the Soviets conduct at least limited maneuvers in the

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field of external policy: on the contrary, at several times during the past year there has been every indication that Soviet footwork was faster than in the Stalin period. What the continued collective leadership does mean, however, is that world Communism will lack a single ideological voice capable of adjusting basic doctrine to changing demands as Stalin so conspicuously did. And there is at least a strong chance that it will mean over time the development of very substantial differences among the leadership which will tend to diminish the effectiveness of Soviet policy, both externally and internally.

Moreover, in the less likely event that Khrushchev or some other individual should attempt a drastic seizure of power, the countervailing forces are now such as to produce a serious internal conflict.

Meanwhile, the broad structure of Soviet society itself is being drastically changed by the very forces that have contributed to the growth of Soviet material strength and economic power. I do not suggest that industrialization, in itself, is in any way fundamentally at odds with the continuing of a highly centralized and totalitarian form of government -- Nazi Germany is the obvious example of just such a case. Nor is it necessarily true that a more highly educated populace will resist totalitarianism in any short or medium-term period.

Yet, when a people find their living standards substantially increasing at the present Soviet rate, and when that same people is

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undergoing an enormous educational revolution at a rate more rapid than that of any nation in history, these trends must create vast imponderables in the calculations of Soviet leaders. We have had some evidence that the improvement in the sciences has been obtained in part by diminished emphasis on ideology, particularly in the physical sciences and even recently in the once-strait jacketed field of biology. Such trends may well be hard to prevent from expanding to other fields of study, including history.

In simpler terms, it cannot be so easy for a regime to spread wholly false views among a generation 80% of which has received a secondary education.

As you can see, I am not offering firm predictions on these trends. Certainly they cannot develop in a manner that would tend to make the Soviet Union an acceptable member of international society unless Soviet expansion, whether by aggression or subversion or even the growth of marked influence, can be held in firm check. Plainly, that is not now the case. But if Soviet confidence in the exportability of their system can be reduced, it stands to reason that Soviet energies will find increasing outlet and adequate psychological reward in the internal development of their society.

If, then, we ask ourselves what are the prospects for the USSR over the next ten-twenty years, we can be most confident that, barring a major conflict, the USSR will have attained great economic and educational

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advances. Those advances may conceivably be harnessed to the wishes of a still highly centralized and totalitarian government and that government may, through subversion, techniques of influence, or atomic blackmail, succeed in greatly expanding the territories it controls, perhaps even to the point of making our own situation desperate.

On the other hand, Soviet techniques of influence, such as have emerged in the past year, may prove as **transitory** as some of the efforts of the Czars. If this can be done, while at the same time the threat of Soviet and Chinese Communist aggression is reduced, the Soviet internal system could evolve into forms for which I see no real historic parallel but which offer at least the possibility of a Soviet state that will not be at rest or without any aggressive designs, but that can be handled by a continuously vigilant policy on the part of the rest of the world.

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