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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

22 October 1958

Noted by DUA  
28 Oct 58

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Attitude on Discussion of Various Instruments of  
Surprise Attack

1. This memorandum deals with two questions: (a) What US means of possible surprise attack are of greatest concern to the Soviet leaders?; and (b) What Soviet means of possible surprise attack would the Soviet delegation be most reluctant to discuss? These questions are closely related to issues discussed in the O/NE staff paper of 9 September "Probable Soviet Positions at a Technical Conference on Measures to Avert Surprise Attack" and the latter should be read in connection with the present memorandum.

2. The Soviets' willingness to discuss in detail various weapons systems will probably depend on how they weigh the following five considerations:

- (a) genuine concern over the threat from any US system;
- (b) extent to which a discussion of particular weapons systems

would require Soviet disclosure of secret information or of  
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weaknesses;

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- (c) whether discussion of various weapons systems might give the USSR clues as to US thinking on future weapons systems;
- (d) potentiality for propaganda exploitation of the US position at the conference and subsequently, and avoidance of matters which the US could exploit in propaganda;
- (e) relation to preferred Soviet surprise attack inspection systems i.e., an effort to stack the deck toward the kind of agreement they really want to achieve.

On the basis of these considerations, we make the following estimate of the Soviet attitude toward discussion of various instruments of possible surprise attack.

3. Long-Range Ground-Launched Missiles. The Soviet leaders probably believe that they have an advantage in long-range missile development and strength, and they will therefore be cautious about giving the US any opportunity to single out neutralization or limitation on missiles. They may, however, take a longer term view of the probable future US capability in intermediate and intercontinental missiles. In any case, they will probably agree to the discussion of control over missiles only if this subject is tied to long-range bombers and bases. They will probably expect us to raise the subject, and will seek to leave the initiative for introduction of technical specifications to us, so as not to disclose details of their own program which might assist us.

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4. Long-Range Aviation. The Soviets will emphasize controls and restrictions on long-range aviation in view of the heavy US reliance on this arm, and their relative lesser reliance upon it. They will probably stress the dangers of unintentional triggering of war by a beserk pilot, by accidental dropping of a bomb on foreign territory, by misjudging as an enemy act the accidental dropping of a bomb on one's own territory, to a penetration of his airspace or mass flights "toward" an enemy's territory, thus "compelling" that power to take countermeasures, etc. These arguments will be used to focus attention on limitations governing foreign basing and overflight of other countries, flight near or toward another power, and the like. They will also probably have an interest in exploring purely technical inspection-control measures to assist them in reaching a conclusion on what these would involve; the history of their own past disarmament proposals has reflected an evident wavering on this point, probably in part because they are uncertain just what it would involve in terms of inspection activities.

5. Tactical Aviation. The Soviets will probably tie controls over tactical aviation to zonal areas of inspection and limitation of forces. In general, as in most other cases, they will probably argue that it is not the tactical aviation or other system, but the nuclear munitions, which make controls so necessary. Hence, they will probably stress nuclear-free zones, especially in Central Europe, with control over tactical air (as

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well as ground) forces within such zones.

6. Ground Forces. The Soviet disarmament proposals of the last three years, insofar as they have dealt with measures to avert surprise attack, have stressed inspection of facilities for large-scale movement of ground forces: railway junctions, large ports, and motor highways. This insistence will probably be maintained, even though it is a vulnerable propaganda position to emphasize these to the exclusion of airfields and missile sites. One reason is that it accords with the Soviet view that large armies would be involved even in a general nuclear war. Also, it is consistent with the Soviet political line on disarmament thus far, that invasion across frontiers with large bodies of troops is a form of surprise attack requiring controls and weapons limitations. This stand supports their campaign for a nuclear-free, limited-forces, and inspected area in Central Europe -- which we believe to be one of the chief objectives of the Soviets in the forthcoming conference. The Soviets will probably be sensitive to any revelation of their ground force strength and deployment, and they will therefore seek to avoid other than technical inspection discussions.

7. Missile-launching Submarines. It is difficult to estimate the Soviet position on this topic. They are believed to be developing a capability in weapons of this type. While this subject may not be

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introduced by them, they will presumably agree to discussions but try to limit them to controls at naval bases, and perhaps to agreements on non-navigation in certain areas near the other side's territory.

8. Other Naval Forces. It would be logical for the Soviets to seek controls over aircraft carriers, since they have none and we do. Again, suggested controls would probably take the form of limitations on deployment, and non-carrying of nuclear weapons to prevent such accidents as those discussed in connection with long-range aviation. They might advance the idea of similar limitations for other conventional or missile-launching surface vessels.

9. Earth Satellite Vehicles. It is possible that the Soviets will advance a new proposal for control over space vehicles overflying other countries in a formulation which would not limit missile test or other firings over home territory. There is no certainty of the Soviet estimate of the value to them of reconnaissance satellites, but there is evidence of their concern over US planned and possible use of such vehicles for reconnaissance and for bombardment. Aside from the fact that such a proposal would be good propaganda, if implemented it would deny the US future improvement in intelligence. On the other hand, while the Soviets would presumably gain much less from a reconnaissance vehicle, they would probably wish to avoid giving the US an opportunity to raise the possibility of a

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UN or internationally-run disarmament inspection satellite. Moreover, at present they are probably willing to contemplate only limited zones of inspection in Central Europe and possibly in the Far East. While some forms of inspection, such as aerial overflight, can be either universal or limited to special danger (or "pilot") zones, and might therefore be acceptable to the Soviets for discussion, an inspection system using satellite vehicles covering very broad areas might be considered to place pressure on them toward more comprehensive controls than they presently intend.

10. Other Means of Surprise Attack. As we have noted, the Soviets are likely to attempt to place particular stress on nuclear munitions and warheads of all kind as the principal danger in surprise attack. This will not, however, provide a basis for real conference discussion as the Soviets are aware.

11. While it is not likely that the Soviets will raise the question of intelligence and warning systems -- surely a key matter in detecting surprise -- it cannot be excluded that they may do so. Should they raise questions of electronic and other specialized collection techniques, they probably have materials which would support a new popular campaign against forms of activity previously little known to world publics. Also, in recent internal propaganda, the Soviets have raised the issues of


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alleged US interest in clandestine entry of small nuclear weapons, US use of balloons for reconnaissance, and foreign attache contacts with the civilian population for espionage purposes. One or more of these subjects might be raised, the last indicated perhaps in terms of defining severe limits on the role and movement of inspectors for any disarmament agreement.

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