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ROOM NO.	BUILDING	

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 13 June 83
TO: NIO/WE		

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #4257-83

10 June 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Chairman, National Intelligence Council *HSR*

FROM : Harry C. Cochran
Special Assistant for Warning

SUBJECT : Soviet Perceptions of the Stakes in NATO's
INF Deployment

1. The Soviet leadership has deeply engaged its prestige and credibility in the drive to block INF deployment or at least make it politically impossible for the governments of basing countries to deploy anything approaching the full complement of 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles. Moscow's campaign has incurred commitments to respond with potentially risky countermeasures whose ultimate consequences the Soviets can neither foresee nor fully control.

2. The Soviet leaders are playing for high stakes. They have been emboldened to invite a test of strength and political will with the U.S. by their assessment of prevailing trends in Western European public opinion on the wisdom of NATO's INF decision and on relations with the two superpowers. They have focused their political strategy on manipulating the fundamental reality that in Western Europe the Soviet Union is now regarded as less of a danger than the specter of nuclear war. This reading of sentiment in Europe has led the Soviets to gamble on the assumption that the governments of the five basing countries, and Bonn in particular, will either be unwilling and unable to proceed with full deployments on schedule or will be obliged to press the U.S. for a postponement of the schedule as long as the Geneva talks continue.

3. Moscow's assessment of the political vulnerability of NATO's dual-track decision underlies its judgment that the USSR stands to gain much greater political-strategic advantages from an impasse in the INF and START negotiations than from serious initiatives to narrow differences and open the way for compromise agreements. Soviet political tactics therefore have been calculated to saddle the U.S. with responsibility for the stalemate and to stimulate skepticism in Western Europe about

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S E C R E T
1

S E C R E T

Washington's real intentions in the talks. Thus, Andropov declared on 21 December 1982, "It appears that Washington is out to block an agreement and, referring to collapse of the talks, to station its missiles on European soil in any case."

4. Soviet tactics reflect considerable confidence that INF deployment can be defeated or at least held to a minimum without having to make any reductions in the SS-20 force. Beyond this short-term goal, the Soviets believe the defeat or indefinite postponement of deployment will generate an unprecedented crisis of confidence in the Atlantic Alliance and stimulate what Moscow perceives as existing tendencies toward double isolationism, with Western Europe and the U.S. both shifting to more independent and increasingly incompatible policies. The ultimate outcome of this process, in Moscow's scenario, will be a pervasive disenchantment in Congress and American public opinion with the European allies and an eventual reduction or withdrawal of U.S. forces in Western Europe. In sum, the Soviets perceive the INF contest as providing long-sought leverage to induce a geopolitical realignment rooted in divergent transatlantic economic interests that will increasingly alienate Western Europe and the U.S. from each other and gradually draw Europe into greater political, economic and security dependence on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Soviet Motivations

5. The offensive character of the Soviet anti-INF campaign outlined above is balanced by four essentially defensive motivations:

a. There is the obvious military problem posed by the Pershing II's accuracy and short flight-time to targets in the USSR. The Soviets recognize these missiles will create new and possibly unmanageable threats to the security of their strategic strike forces and national command and control systems, including the safety of senior party leaders.

b. INF deployment threatens to nullify the political-strategic advantages that derive from the nuclear preponderance in Europe the USSR has achieved since SS-20 deployments began in the mid-1970's. As a result of the "Prague Spring" crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviets have regarded an unassailable regional preponderance as vital for maintaining their political-military hegemony in Eastern Europe beyond challenge and for deterring possible NATO moves to exploit internal upheavals or vulnerabilities in Poland, East Germany and other Warsaw Pact states. Soviet anxieties during the Polish crisis of 1980-81

S E C R E T

2

S E C R E T

underscored Moscow's perennial suspicion that the U.S. and West Germany, in particular, would attempt to capitalize on crises in Eastern Europe to alter the post-World War II political and territorial status quo and disrupt the USSR's strategic glacis. The Soviets therefore attach the greatest importance to ensuring nuclear and conventional superiority in Europe as a guarantee of their capability to intervene militarily in Eastern Europe if necessary and to deny NATO the capacity to capitalize on internal crises or deter Soviet intervention. INF deployment, in Moscow's view, would at least erode this vital capability at a time when economic stagnation and public discontent in Eastern Europe provide fertile ground for a spread of the "Polish bacillus." The prospect of over 100 Pershing II's in West Germany almost certainly has deepened Soviet anxieties about the East German regime's stability in the face of declining living standards, a growing peace movement, and the example of the Solidarity era in Poland. East German party leaders regard the peace movement as a potential political opposition similar to Solidarity, and the Soviets undoubtedly share East Berlin's concern that repressive measures against peace activists and the Lutheran clergy might trigger widespread outbreaks of anti-regime violence that would invite West German intervention.

c. Soviet leaders fear that INF deployment will alter the prevailing political psychology on defense issues in Western Europe and check trends which they view as a potential source of a favorable change in the global "correlation of forces." The decisive factor shaping these trends, in Moscow's judgment, has been growing public perceptions of an irreversible change in the superpower balance of strategic power and political will that has seriously weakened, if not neutralized, the American nuclear guarantee of Western Europe's security. In the Soviet assessment, the political consequences of the USSR's achievement of global strategic parity and clear nuclear and conventional predominance in Europe have been reinforced by the fallout from the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, the U.S. failure to respond forcefully to the OPEC cartel in 1973-74 and 1979, and the debacle in Iran. The Soviets believe the cumulative effect of these events has been a decline in Western Europe's confidence in the U.S. ability and will to defend its allies and the emergence of an accommodationist psychology and policy drift. The fact that Moscow

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

exaggerates the political-strategic significance of what it interprets as growing nuclear pacifism in Western Europe and a desire for a durable accommodation with the East does not reduce the great influence of this assessment on Soviet calculations and intentions. In his speech to the Central Committee plenum last November, Andropov asserted, "Today, as never before, the peoples come to the forefront of history. They have gained the right to have their say and their voice will not be muffled by anyone. They are capable of removing, by vigorous and purposeful actions, the threat of nuclear war, safeguarding peace and hence life on this planet." This rhetoric reflects policy assumptions that could induce Soviet misjudgments about the strength of anti-INF sentiment in Western Europe and the vulnerability of NATO governments to Soviet threats and inducements.

d. Finally, the Soviet leaders' conviction that INF deployment may neutralize the advantages secured by the USSR's regional nuclear preponderance in dealing with both Eastern and Western Europe also applies to their assessment of the threat INF poses to the global political-strategic balance and therefore to Soviet prospects in relations with the U.S., China and Japan. The Soviets claim that the detente of the 1970's was made possible only because of a change in the global correlation in the USSR's favor. It is unlikely that they would have judged it politically possible or safe to negotiate the SALT and other agreements with the West in the 1970's if the achievement of rough strategic parity had not induced the U.S. to recognize the USSR's status as a superpower.

6. Apart from the perception of the strictly military threat presented by the Pershing II's, the other three motivations reflect the fact that the Soviets' resolve to block INF deployment and thus maintain their nuclear superiority in Europe is primarily political in nature. All Western European targets covered by the SS-20's could be covered by the Soviet Union's central strategic systems. From the standpoint of Soviet high political strategy, the SS-20's serve essentially as a means to overawe Western European publics and governments, protect the USSR's capacity to intervene with impunity in Eastern European crises, and maintain the Soviet claim to full superpower equality. If nuclear preponderance in Europe were nullified by INF deployments, the Soviet leaders would be genuinely concerned that this would deprive them of the capacity to enforce unquestioned hegemony in Eastern Europe, promote the political neutralization of Western Europe, and protect the credibility of

S E C R E T

4

S E C R E T

their pretensions to global equality with the U.S. The gravity of these perceived stakes in the contest over INF deployment will oblige the Soviets to make good on their repeated warnings that, if deployments proceed, "the Soviet Union will take timely and effective countermeasures" to consolidate its defense capability, including deployment of "corresponding new strategic systems" and measures "having the territory of the United States itself in view."

Possible Soviet Initiatives to Forestall INF Deployment

7. As the period of final decisions approaches for NATO basing countries next fall, the pace and intensity of Soviet threats and inducements will accelerate. The principal targets will be Bonn and Washington. In Moscow's view, the Kohl government's attitude will be decisive because if Bonn yields to domestic and Soviet pressures, for example, by urging postponement of the deployment schedule, the other four basing countries would find it virtually impossible to proceed with their deployments. The U.S. will be the main target of new Soviet proposals and ostensible concessions which will be cast in terms known to be unacceptable to the Administration. The Soviet aim will be to elicit repeated American rebuffs which can be used to demonstrate that Washington is intent on deployment at any cost and that the U.S., in Brezhnev's words, is an "absolutely unreliable partner" in negotiations. Andropov declared last February, "It is precisely this unrealistic position of the U.S. that has blocked...progress at the talks in Geneva...The U.S. does not want to look for a mutually acceptable accord with the Soviet Union and thereby deliberately dooms the Geneva talks to failure."

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Soviet Reactions to Initial INF Deployments

11. If Moscow's campaign of inducements and threats fails to forestall initial deployments, the Soviets would move promptly to implement the three countermeasures specified in the 28 May government statement. The initial objective would be to energize strong public reactions in Western Europe and to capitalize on

S E C R E T

8

S E C R E T

expected massive demonstrations at basing sites in the hope of compelling target governments to halt deployments and pressure the U.S. to make concessions in the Geneva talks. The Soviets would calculate that the U.S. will be unwilling to make significant changes in its position and that this would trigger a major public backlash in Europe. The Soviets might then declare that INF deployments had created a "qualitatively new situation" and hint that they were considering early withdrawal from both INF and START negotiations. Gromyko declared in February that NATO governments "cannot but know that by deploying its new missiles the American side would actually undercut the nuclear arms talks."

12. Specific Soviet actions beyond the three countermeasures would depend on Moscow's assessment of the strength of negative reactions to INF deployments in Western Europe and the Third World and on its reading of Washington's intentions and capacity to respond effectively to Soviet initiatives. If Bonn and other basing governments were perceived to be backing down on further deployments, and if this wavering produced recriminations between Western European capitals and Washington, the Soviets would be tempted to seize the opportunity to launch a wide-ranging political offensive to capitalize on the West's disarray. The Soviets, for example, might take some of the following actions:

25X1

-- After demonstrating their resolve and ability to neutralize the political-strategic effects of INF deployments on the East-West balance, the Soviets might move to accelerate the

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

process of "normalization" of relations with China by making limited concessions and providing more vocal support for China's positions on issues in dispute with the U.S.;

-- INF deployments would remove previous inhibitions on more assertive Soviet actions in the Middle East and the Third World. This could mean a willingness to take higher risks in supporting Syria, the PLO, and Muslim leftists in Lebanon. Depending on trends in the Central American power struggle and on Moscow's reading of U.S. intentions, the Soviets might adopt a much higher profile in extending greater political and military assistance to the Sandinistas, backed by propaganda pressure and diplomatic initiatives aimed at placing the U.S. and Honduras on the defensive. If the Sandinistas appeared to be losing ground against the insurgents, the Soviets might be prepared to defy Washington by authorizing the Cubans to transfer MIG fighters and other offensive weapons to Nicaragua. In addition, Moscow could encourage Castro to deploy Cuban combat units to defend the Sandinista regime and support its cross-border operations against Honduras.

-- The Soviets might attempt to exploit South African and UNITA offensives in Angola to force a showdown by sharply expanding military assistance to Angolan and Cuban forces, perhaps by mounting a dramatic airlift, and by providing Soviet officers to command a counteroffensive against the South Africans.

Conclusions

13. The Soviets have developed comprehensive and detailed plans for a strenuous response to INF deployment. They apparently briefed their allies on these plans at a mid-March meeting of ten senior party secretaries from the Warsaw Pact states and Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and Mongolia. Marshal Kulikov, commander-in-chief of Pact forces, declared on 6 April that Pact leaders had "taken decisions to further strengthen the defense capability of all member countries" at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Prague last January.

14. In view of the Soviet leaders' conviction that very high political and strategic stakes are involved in NATO's INF plans and that the outcome of this contest will have a profound influence on the global balance in the indefinite future, initial INF deployments almost certainly will trigger Andropov's "inevitable chain reaction." Provocative Soviet and Bloc

S E C R E T

10

S E C R E T

"countermeasures" may set in motion a sharp escalatory cycle of actions and reactions that could precipitate a debilitating polarization of political forces in West Germany, outbreaks of public disorder in East Germany and Poland, and abrupt shifts in the INF positions of Bonn and other basing countries. These events could hardly fail to generate serious strains and divergences in transatlantic relations, and both superpowers could well find themselves confronted by powerful centrifugal forces that would be difficult to manage.



Harry C. Cochran

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S E C R E T

11

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NIC #4257-83
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S E C R E T
12