

Page Denied

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied



Washington, D.C. 20520

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

July 25, 1978

MEMORANDUM

TO: Distribution

FROM: S/ART - E. Rowney (P)

SUBJECT: Akhromeyev Visit

The following are the main points I picked up from Akhromeyev and Chervov during their recent visit.

On Sunday, July 11, at the Soviet Embassy, I talked for about 15 minutes with Akhromeyev. He said his principal impressions of visit were:

- 1) The patriotism of the U.S. military and citizens. "Americans, like the Soviets, love and will fight for their country.")
- 2) The resourcefulness, competence and candor of the American soldiers, sailors and airmen.
- 3) The sophistication of American equipment ("America has high-tech weapons.").
- 4) A perception among Americans that the USSR is a real threat. ("We admit we're a potential threat, but you see us as a real threat.")

On Monday, July 12, at the Council on Foreign Relations, Akhromeyev delivered a carefully worded speech, long on generalization and short on specifics.

His main points, in my opinion, were:

- The USSR wants to avoid a nuclear war.
- Prior to 1985, the USSR underestimated the intensity and depth of U.S. concerns over human rights.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
DECL:OADR

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-

- Since 1935, the Soviet military has attempted to lower the perception in the West that the Soviets are expansionist and a direct threat.
- "The U.S. is our potential enemy."
- "U.S. naval bases have us surrounded."
- "We admit an advantage in tanks and artillery, but NATO has an advantage in ant armor and combat aircraft" (sic).
- "Warsaw Pact and NATO have roughly the same number of troops, but NATO has the larger mobilization base."
- "The Soviet military pays as much attention to 'accidental launch' as does the U.S. military."
- "It is wrong to think in terms of U.S. vs. USSR, we must think in terms of NATO vs. Warsaw Pact."
- Question: "What degree of compliance with ABM does the USSR want from the U.S.?" Answer: "The December 10, 1987 statement; abide by the ABM Treaty as signed in 1972."
- Question: "What is the USSR military doing differently in exercises?" Answer: "We strive, via counter offenses, to give the politicians 20 days to reach a political solution." (Comment: From my subsequent conversations with Akhromeyev and Chervov, I understand this to mean that the Soviets will augment their defenses against our attack with counter offenses. However, they want to do it in such a way as to not provoke us into a nuclear response.)
- Question: ""Will you confine your counterattacks to conventional forces?" Answer: "We will resort to whatever force is necessary." (Comment: ominous.)
- Question: "How does Soviet civilian leadership fit into military decisions?" Akhromeyev talked around the subject. He said that top civilians pay attention to military advice, but fundamental decisions are reached by consensus in the Politburo.
- Asked to elaborate on the 20 day pause, Akhromeyev said that -- like in boxing -- they must not only put up a defense, but administer counter blows.

CONFIDENTIAL

-3-

- Akhromeyev said their first concern in a conventional war is avoidance of nuclear war. The second is our six million vs. their four million mobilization base.
- Question: "How much Soviet GNP is allocated to defense?" Answer: Akhromeyev talked around the subject. He did say, however, that Gorbachev gives him what he needs.
- Akhromeyev said we shouldn't look for cutbacks in Soviet military in the short run. "Be patient," he said, "it will happen in the longer run."
- Akhromeyev returned several times to the theme: "You surround us carriers and with air naval bases."
- Akhromeyev denied that the Soviets support insurgents in Ethiopia and Nicaragua. "We have only five military advisors in Nicaragua." (sic)
- The Soviets will continue to support states which advance "socialism." (sic)
- "The central problem between the U.S. and the USSR is to reduce the perception in the U.S. that the Soviets are a real threat."
- Gorbachev's main problem, Akhromeyev said, is economic reform. "He will do this along lines laid down by Karl Marx."
- Question: "'What is the main lesson the Soviets have learned from the Afghanistan experience?' Akhromeyev's answer: "That we will be out by 1 February 1989."

All in all, it was a skilled presentation to which the audience gave him a standing ovation.

After the speech, Akhromeyev told me he worked hard preparing for his session with the Council on Foreign Relations which he considered the most important event of his visit. When I asked him if he really believed NATO would attack first, he said, "That is what we've been taught from little up. Your conduct during our revolution and the German attack in World War II reinforces our teaching." When I told him the Nazis were a common enemy in World War II and asked him about the help we gave the USSR during the war, he said we allowed the Soviets to be bled white. "I'll never be able to forget," he said, "the siege of Leningrad."

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-4-

Akhromeyev said it would probably take a new generation of Soviet military leaders to bring about a change of attitude toward the U.S. "It will take military leaders of Gorbachev's generation."

Chervov asked me how I thought Akhromeyev's speech went over. I said it was long on generalities and short on specifics. I asked him, "Do you really believe NATO has the capability or intention to attack the Warsaw Pact?" Chervov answered, "You don't have the capability on the ground, but you do in the air and on the sea." "As for intentions, while we in the military deal in terms of capabilities, we are indoctrinated to believe you have hostile intentions against Socialist (sic) countries."

I probed Chervov about Akhromeyev's "20 day pause." "The problem we face," he said, "is to play to a tie. We need to employ counteroffensive attacks but want to avoid giving you an excuse to use nuclear weapons. "The use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. will automatically unleash a nuclear response. This," he said, "must be decisive."

Chervov confirmed that the Soviets will not get a smaller share of the GNP as a result of their pull-out in Afghanistan. "We have large technological gaps to fill," he said, "and these will be expensive."

Chervov said the visit was not only useful to Akhromeyev but "caused the scales to drop off the eyes of the top military people he brought with him." His concluding note: "We in the USSR have to work harder on our defensive doctrine. So far, we have only vague ideas about it."

Distribution

General Powell
General Burns
Dr. Gates
Ambassador Lehman
Ambassador Cooper