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*Chow*

15 June 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO/SP  
NIO/GPF  
NIO/USSR

FROM: Fritz Ermarth

SUBJECT: Soviet Strategy for Winning Nuclear War

kindly calls to our attention the following passage in a commentary by Soviet Central Committee functionary V. Zagladin about the historic deficiencies of Soviet foreign and military policy, which -- it is now permitted to assert -- generated large but avoidable costs and risks for the USSR. Regarding military strategy, Zagladin notes, "...we proceeded for a long time, for too long, from the possibility of winning a nuclear war."

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There are several interesting things about this passage. The author does not specify the precise time period of which he is speaking, but it is clear from the overall content of the article that he is talking about the whole Brezhnev era at a minimum. The language "proceeding from the possibility" connotes the steady pursuit of a goal that is deemed available in principle and worth pursuing, but difficult, elusive, perhaps always receding, and costly. This is the way the majority of the US strategic intelligence community described Soviet strategy after about 1975.

A number of comments seem in order:

First, it is gratifying to some of us to have Soviet authorities now admitting -- on this among many other topics -- who was right in some rather heated Western debates in the past.

Second, some of the Western voices which, in the past, claimed the Soviets "could not be pursuing warwinning superiority" because it made no sense, or whatever, are still on the air regarding current and future Soviet claims and behavior. Those voices should now be judged on their past record.

Third, many Soviet voices -- very probably including Zagladin -- misrepresented Soviet strategy on warwinning in the past, especially after 1976 and the Tula speech. The only reason his afore-cited statement is itself credible is that a) it is self-deprecatory albeit serving Gorbachev's interests, and b) more importantly, it is supported by lots of evidence from Soviet behavior and classified documents.

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Conclusion: Soviet public statements about military strategy and doctrine always mean something. But we should be cautious in the future as we have been in the past about concluding that they mean literally what they say.



Fritz

Attachment:  
Zagladin Article

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*FRITZ -  
INTERESTING  
ARTICLE - I ATTACHED  
COMMENT ON  
DOCTRINE  
-Tom*

T31681

Mon Jun 13 15:00:36 1988

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087  
-(SEE 022)

Mon Jun 13 14:21:08 1988

USSR: ~~ZAGLADIN ARTICLE~~ ~~RIGHT POLICY~~

TAKE 1 OF 5 -- ZAGLADIN ARTICLE

PM1306145188 MOSCOW PRAVDA IN RUSSIAN 13 JUN 88 SECOND EDITION P 6

(V. ZAGLADIN ARTICLE UNDER THE RUBRIC "WE DISCUSS THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE THESES": "FOLLOWING A COURSE OF REASON AND HUMANISM"; PASSAGES WITHIN SLANTLINES PUBLISHED IN BOLDFACE)

(TEXT) THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE THESES, WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION BY THE WHOLE PARTY AND, ESSENTIALLY, BY THE WHOLE PEOPLE, CONTAIN TWO KINDS OF POINTS. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY SUM UP THE PAST 3 YEARS OF RESTRUCTURING, WHILE ON THE OTHER THEY OUTLINE WAYS TO FURTHER DEVELOP AND DEEPEN IT. IT IS A PROFOUNDLY SELF-CRITICAL DOCUMENT WHICH RUTHLESSLY EXPOSES THOSE PHENOMENA OR PROCESSES WHICH ARE HINDERING THE RENEWAL OF SOCIETY. AT THE SAME TIME, IT FORMULATES CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS WHOSE REALIZATION WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO SMASH THE BRAKING MECHANISM WHEREVER IT OPERATES. THIS REVOLUTIONARY-CRITICAL METHODOLOGY PERMEATES ALL PARTS OF THE NEW DOCUMENT, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY A PROGRAM DOCUMENT, AND EACH OF ITS 10 SECTIONS.

UNDERSTANDABLY, THE MAJORITY OF THE THESES ARE DEVOTED TO INTERNAL POLITICAL QUESTIONS AND TO THE CHIEF TASKS OF FURTHER IMPROVING OUR SOCIETY. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY ALSO RAISE PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN POLICY. WHY? ABOVE ALL, BECAUSE RESTRUCTURING ITSELF HAS ACQUIRED OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND HAD A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL ATMOSPHERE. THIS IS NOW ACKNOWLEDGED BY EVERYONE. AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, BECAUSE RESTRUCTURING, AS THE THESES POINT OUT, "NEEDED A FOREIGN POLICY THAT WOULD PROPERLY EXPRESS ITS HUMANIST NATURE." THE RENEWAL OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVITY HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CHANGES WHICH ARE TRANSFORMING OUR WHOLE LIFE.

THERE IS A QUESTION WHICH SOVIET PEOPLE, AS WELL AS PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, HAVE ALWAYS ASKED THEMSELVES IN ALARM: IS THE THREAT OF WAR AND NUCLEAR CONFLICT INCREASING OR DIMINISHING? THE THESES PROVIDE A CLEAR, PRECISE, AND UNAMBIGUOUS ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION: "THE DIRECT THREAT OF A WAR INVOLVING THE MAJOR POWERS HAS DIMINISHED." THIS IS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME IN A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF YEARS THAT OUR PARTY HAS DRAWN THIS CONCLUSION, WHICH IS UNDERSTANDABLY OF AN EXTREMELY CRUCIAL NATURE. IT RESTS ON THE VISIBLE, TANGIBLE REALITIES OF THE WORLD SITUATION, WHICH IS GOING THROUGH A PROCESS OF IMPROVEMENT.

YES, THE RESTRUCTURING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HAS BEGUN. HOW HAS THIS BEEN ACHIEVED? THANKS TO WHAT? FOR NOT SO LONG AGO WE WERE SPEAKING OF A SHIFT TO MORE LASTING PEACE AS SOMETHING DESIRABLE AND NECESSARY BUT DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE AND SEEMINGLY REMOTE.

IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT OUR COUNTRY WAS NOT STRIVING TO SECURE

*next!*

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Mon Jun 13 15:03:50 1988

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-TAKE 2 OF 5 -- 087 (ZAGLADIN ARTICLE)

Mon Jun 13 14:29:47 1988

///DID NOT EXIST.

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(TEXT) WE DID, OF COURSE, SPEAK OF THE DIVERSITY AND THE CONTRADICTORY NATURE OF THE MODERN WORLD. NEVERTHELESS, WE WERE FAR FROM FULLY AWARE OF IT. THUS, WE FREQUENTLY SAW DIVERSITY JUST AS A SOURCE OF COMPLEXITIES AND DID NOT NOTICE THAT IT PROVIDES BROAD SCOPE FOR MUTUAL ENRICHMENT WITH OTHER PEOPLES' EXPERIENCE. THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONTRADICTIONS OF WORLD DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR TIME -- OLD CONTRADICTIONS WHICH HAVE LONG BEEN IN EXISTENCE BUT ARE CONSTANTLY BEING RENEWED -- ALSO WAS NOT ALWAYS CORRECTLY EVALUATED. AND WE NOTICED SUCH A VERY IMPORTANT NEW CONTRADICTION AFFECTING THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF CIVILIZATION'S EXISTENCE AS THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF ALL OF MANKIND AND THE INCREASING EXACERBATION OF GLOBAL PROBLEMS ONLY WHEN THE WHOLE WORLD WAS ALREADY SPEAKING OF IT.

WE ESSENTIALLY DID NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE MODERN WORLD, THIS VERY IMPORTANT FEATURE OF ITS CONTEMPORARY STATE (ALTHOUGH WE ENCOUNTERED ITS CONSEQUENCES LITERALLY AT EVERY STEP, ABOVE ALL IN OUR FOREIGN ECONOMIC TIES). AND SOMETIMES WE PERCEIVED THE THOUGHTS OF PARTICULAR AUTHORS ON INTERDEPENDENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ALMOST AS CUNNING INTRIGUES BY THE CLASS ENEMY. YES, OF COURSE, IMPERIALIST FORCES TRIED, ARE TRYING, AND WILL TRY TO USE THE OBJECTIVE INTERDEPENDENCE OF COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES TO STRENGTHEN THE NEOCOLONIALIST WEB, FOR EXAMPLE, AND TO SUBORDINATE WEAKER STATES TO STRONGER ONES. HOWEVER, THIS IS JUST ONE ASPECT OF THE MATTER. THE OTHER IS THAT INTERDEPENDENCE OPENS UP BROAD PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS OF COOPERATION AMONG ALL COUNTRIES AND CREATES NEW AND UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THIS COOPERATION.

OURS WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO SPEAK OF THE NUCLEAR THREAT. WE WERE THE FIRST TO ADVANCE THE DEMAND FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THIS THREAT AND THE PROHIBITION OF ATOMIC AND THEN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AND WE WAGED A DOGGED STRUGGLE OVER DECADES TO ACHIEVE THOSE NOBLE ENDS. HOWEVER, WE WERE NOT ALWAYS LOGICAL IN THIS. ON THE ONE HAND, WE SPOKE OF THE DEADLY THREAT OF NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE WHILE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WE PROCEEDED FOR A LONG TIME, FOR TOO LONG, FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF WINNING A NUCLEAR WAR. THESE POINT OUT: "IN SEEKING MILITARY STRATEGIES IN THE PAST WE DID NOT ALWAYS USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE THE STATE'S SECURITY BY POLITICAL MEANS AND, AS A RESULT, ALLOWED OURSELVES TO BE DRAWN INTO AN ARMS RACE WHICH COULD NOT FAIL TO AFFECT THE COUNTRY'S SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL POSITION."

I COULD SPEAK OF MANY OTHER THINGS -- OF OUR NOT ALWAYS ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO IMPERIALISM'S PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS, OF A CERTAIN UNDERESTIMATION OF EUROPE'S ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, AND OF INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TOWARD STATES ON OTHER CONTINENTS -- ASIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN STATES, FOR EXAMPLE. I COULD ALSO MENTION THE IMPERFECT METHODS OF OUR POLICY, WHICH DID NOT ALWAYS OPPORTUNELY