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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

11 July 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: SNIE 11-9-69; CURRENT SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE US

1. The attached draft estimate has been approved by the Board of National Estimates after consideration by the USIB representatives.
2. This estimate has been placed on the agenda of the USIB meeting scheduled for 1030, Thursday, 17 July.

Executive Officer National Estimates	

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SUBJECT: SNIE 11-9-69: CURRENT SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE US

This paper responds to certain specific questions concerning US-Soviet relations posed by DIA on behalf of the Commander in Chief, Pacific. A more comprehensive survey of the principal factors which underlie the USSR's foreign policies and its international aims and intentions was issued earlier this year (NIE 11-69, "Basic Factors and Main Tendencies in Current Soviet Policy," dated 27 February 1969, SECRET CONTROLLED DISSEM).

That Estimate concluded that, short of major changes in the Soviet system at home, the outlook is for chronic tensions in Soviet-American relations. It also concluded that Soviet policy toward the US would probably be characterized by cautious opportunism and limited pressures, perhaps with some increased watchfulness against the development of uncontrolled risks. We retain our belief in the validity of both of these basic judgments. At the same time, we note the development of increased

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Soviet alarm over the future course of relations with Communist China. This alarm is likely at least for a time to have an important impact on Soviet foreign policy overall; specifically, it tends to encourage a somewhat more forthcoming Soviet attitude toward relations with the US and toward particular issues affecting the relationship.

I. THE USSR'S BASIC STANCE TOWARD THE US

1. Soviet hostility toward the US and the West in general was born with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. It was nourished by US participation in the Allied military interventions which followed, and sustained through the 1920's and 1930's by the continuing struggle against "class enemies" at home and abroad. It diminished during World War II, but then reached a high point of sorts in the early 1950's, during the last few years of Stalin.

2. With Stalin's death, official attitudes were tempered somewhat. Under Khrushchev, the notion of capitalist encirclement was discarded. Limited contacts with the outside world, including the US, were permitted, and the line toward the West

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began to fluctuate in intensity and assume a notably ambivalent tone. The US was still evil, but "sober" elements in it were capable, in effect, of good; the US remained the hostile leader of the imperialists, but it was not necessarily seeking war; the USSR was still duty bound to defeat or convert the US, but world peace could somehow be assured if only the two countries could get together. And policies toward the US began to reflect the same kind of confusing mixture, ranging in mood and content from the urgent and provocative to the relaxed and conciliatory.

3. Khrushchev's more conservative successors have sought greater consistency and have tightened and toughened the approach. They emphasize that, as a dangerous and devious adversary, the US is to be both distrusted and despised. Nevertheless, they continue to maintain that it is desirable for the two powers to keep lines open to one another and, like Khrushchev, they still hold out the hope that mutual hostility and suspicion might some day decline.

4. The current attitudes of the Soviet leaders are, of course, conditioned by a general set of ideas, many of them ideologically predetermined. Marxist-Leninist dogma affects the way in which these men analyze the problems that confront

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them and, in general, influences their manner of regarding themselves, their society, and the world at large. It reinforces their feelings of distrust and hostility toward the US and severely limits their ability to approach mutual problems in a flexible mood. Moreover, the Soviet leaders now believe themselves for a variety of reasons to be on the ideological defensive; this has generated a mood of "fearful conservatism" which is likely to affect the tone of Soviet-American relations adversely for some time to come.

5. But despite the undeniable effects of doctrine, non-ideological considerations are playing an increasingly important role in the formulation of Soviet foreign policies. The USSR tends to behave more as a world power than as the center of the world revolution. Thus the Soviets are inclined to establish international priorities in accordance with a more traditional view of Russian security interests and a more realistic view of the possibilities for expanding their influence. The USSR remains a thrusting and ambitious power, concerned to enlarge its world position. But it tempers its ambitions with estimates of opportunity and controls its hostility with measurements of

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power and risk. These opportunity/risk calculations are illustrated by the USSR's conduct in three areas which have figured prominently in Soviet-American contention in recent years: Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

6. Korea. Moscow has for some time sought to win North Korea to a pro-Soviet stance in the Sino-Soviet dispute. This has involved fairly frequent visits to Pyongyang by top Soviet leaders and a substantial Soviet military aid program.* It has not, however, caught the Soviets up in any direct support of adventurous North Korean tactics against the ROK and against the US. On the contrary, we believe that the Soviets have counseled Pyongyang to proceed with caution. Provocative North Korean behavior not only raises the risk of war on the USSR's doorstep, but complicates Soviet policies toward the US, Japan, and China. In any event, Pyongyang's relations with the USSR remain somewhat strained, and Pyongyang's aspirations vis-a-vis the South are not of prime importance to the USSR.

* Soviet military aid to North Korea since 1956 has amounted to an estimated \$770-\$800 million. (The figures here and in the footnotes to paragraphs 8 and 9 represent calculations in US prices.)

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7. There have been reports of Soviet collusion with Pyongyang in the seizure of the Pueblo and the shutdown of the American EC-121. We do not find these reports convincing.* Such behavior would be contrary to general Soviet interests, as described above. It would also seem, in view of the large scale Soviet intelligence collection effort in international waters and air space, contrary to particular Soviet interests as well. We have, in any case, reviewed the evidence specifically concerning the USSR's attitudes and policies toward these incidents and have concluded not only that Moscow was not involved in planning them but that it witnessed both affairs with some considerable discomfiture and apprehension. The text of an

* We have examined the statement on this subject of the Czechoslovak defector, General Jan Sejna, and find it wanting. Sejna was for a time a valuable source of information on the Czechoslovak armed forces and the Warsaw Pact, but his remarks about the Pueblo seizure -- especially those which have appeared recently in the public press -- are in our view highly suspect. His account, for example, of a purported meeting in Prague in May 1967 with Soviet Defense Minister Grechko -- during which Grechko is said to have discussed Soviet plans for the seizure of an American intelligence collection vessel is almost certainly inaccurate. During extended questioning, he had given no hint that any such crucial meeting with Grechko had taken place. In any case, the best available evidence is that Grechko did not visit Prague at all during April, May, or June 1967.

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official classified Soviet Party report on Brezhnev's speech to the April 1968 plenum of the Central Committee, for example, does not indicate that Moscow had prior knowledge of North Korean intentions to seize the Pueblo. It clearly shows that the Soviet leaders were concerned about the possibility of a forcible US reaction, and had advised the leadership in Pyongyang "to exercise restraint, not to give the Americans grounds for expanding the provocation, and to settle the incident by political means."

8. Vietnam. The role played by the USSR in the Vietnam war since 1965 is a more striking and more important example of Soviet opportunity/risk calculations. The opportunity was, by extensive material support to Hanoi, to help bring about a serious reverse for the US and at the same time to contest Chinese influence in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.* The risk was not only of a possible armed encounter with the US in the area but also of a radical deterioration of relations with the US generally, a development which might bring unacceptable costs and

* Soviet military assistance to North Vietnam began on a large scale in 1965 and since then has totaled an estimated \$1.6 billion. It reached a peak level in 1967 -- about \$590 million -- but declined in 1968 (after the suspension of US bombing) to about \$310 million.

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risks at other points of confrontation. Throughout the Vietnam war the Soviets have walked a careful line. They have given material and political support to Hanoi in ways which they believed would minimize the likelihood of dangerous US responses. While until the opening of the Paris talks they adopted a sharply hostile tone toward the US, they also refrained from provoking any crises elsewhere and were willing to pursue negotiations with the US on such issues as NPT. Since the Paris talks began, they have adopted a tone which evidences their hope of persuading the US that concessions to Hanoi would have a beneficial effect on the negotiation of other Soviet-American issues.

9. The Middle East. For the last dozen years or so the Soviets have regarded the Middle East as an area of confrontation with the Western Powers, in particular the US, but they also probably saw it as an area offering much more of opportunity than of risk. Their ties with and material support to the radical

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Arab states were aimed at using these states as instruments to undermine Western influence in the area.* The likelihood of any direct encounter with the US seemed slight. With the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 and the humiliating defeat of their clients, however, the Soviets appear to have acquired a sharpened sense of the risks of their policy. Even now, however, they probably are less concerned about the likelihood of direct confrontation with the US than they are that their considerable investment and influence will be jeopardized either by new Arab-Israeli hostilities or by untoward political developments within the Arab states, especially Egypt. Their moves to work with the US diplomatically are an attempt to contain these risks, though they clearly do not intend to abandon the competition for influence in the area.

* Since 1955, the USSR has poured, or has promised to pour, into the area some \$2.5 billion in economic assistance and roughly \$2.9 billion in military aid. Of these amounts, the three principal radical Arab states -- the UAR, Syria, and Iraq -- have received or been promised over half (some \$1.4 billion) of the economic aid and over 80 percent (\$2.4 billion) of the military aid. The balance has gone to Iran, Turkey, Yemen, South Yemen, the Sudan, and Algeria. All figures are as of 1 July 1969.

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II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE RELATIONSHIP

10. The USSR's calculations of opportunity and risk, its general concerns about its position as a world power, and even its apprehensions about the security of the Soviet homeland, have been greatly complicated by the leadership's growing preoccupation with the problem of China. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that the Soviet leaders now see China as their most pressing international problem and are beginning to tailor their policies on other issues accordingly. They have begun publicly to suggest the need for some form of collective security arrangement in Asia, largely, apparently, in order to contain China. And they have, in addition, taken the position that, because of the China problem, the USSR should generally seek to avoid provoking unnecessary difficulties with the US.

11. The Soviets do not, of course, contemplate any sacrifice of essential positions or renunciations of traditional doctrines; they continue to view the US as basically their strongest adversary; and, indeed, they fear that the US might someday come to work against Soviet interests in collusion with China.

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But they clearly now believe that hostility toward the US and the West should be muted, at least as long as relations with the Chinese remain so tense.

12. The Soviet attitude toward the new administration in the US remains generally circumspect. Provocative acts and statements have for the most part been avoided. There have been standard denunciations of US policies and continuing attacks on "warmongers" in the US establishment, but the President has been praised as well as criticized (though not harshly by name), and it has been said that there are reasonable men in the US who seek peace. Propaganda has on the whole suggested a wait-and-see attitude, perhaps even a mildly optimistic assessment of prospects for an improvement in the relationship.

13. Indeed, despite their many reasons for sober concern about their position vis-a-vis the US, the Soviets seem now to regard this relationship in a cautiously optimistic light. Their relative military strength, especially in strategic weapons, has greatly improved over the past six or seven years. Their influence in certain important countries of the Third World has grown, and

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fear of Soviet aggressiveness has been declining, even -- despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia -- in Western Europe. During the same period, the Soviets have seen domestic stability in the US tested by disorders and severe political discord and have observed increasing signs of public disenchantment with the scope of the US role in international affairs.

14. The USSR has also showed a relatively restrained approach to Western Europe. We do not think that the current campaign for European security signals Moscow's intention to abandon previous positions. On the contrary, the Soviets are at least as anxious as ever to gain recognition of the status quo, i.e., the division of Germany and the existence of a legitimate Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe. But they do not now seem disposed to stress the more controversial aspects of their position, nor do they appear ready to dramatize their views through provocative acts, as for example, in Berlin. At the same time, they no longer emphasize the notion that the US should stand clear of an all-European settlement.

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15. The strongest and most emotional language used by the Soviets is now directed against China, not the US and the other Western powers. This shift in the intensity of feeling about foreign adversaries seems to have been reflected in the USSR's apparently increasing willingness to discuss specific issues with the US. Thus, though the Soviets' view of the US-USSR strategic relationship is overriding, Moscow's current pre-occupation with China has probably had some bearing on its attitude toward the desirability of talks on strategic arms control. Indeed, problems with China may have encouraged the Soviets to look upon arms control measures with growing interest, seeing in them a means to reduce tensions with the US and to bring additional pressures to bear on Peking.

16. In the field of strategic armaments, the Soviets have reached a sort of parity with the US and now must ponder the implications of their achievement. None of the courses open to them can be wholly appealing. An effort to surpass, or even to keep pace with the US in the development and deployment of advanced weapons systems would require enormous expenditures, perpetuate the resource squeeze on the civilian economy, and

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perhaps divert funds from other military programs. And in the process, Moscow could have no assurance that it would be able to compete successfully with US technological prowess. On the other hand, a Soviet decision not to try to keep pace with the US seems highly unlikely; such a course would surrender many of the fruits of past investment and allow the political perils of strategic inferiority -- as the Soviets conceive of them -- to re-emerge. Yet a decision to seek serious arms control measures would not be easily reached. The Soviet leaders are ambitious, opportunistic, and suspicious men. They are unlikely to conclude that a strategic arms agreement is acceptable unless they are convinced that aiming at a superior position is not feasible and that the national interest could be served by a sort of strategic stabilization. On neither count does it seem likely that all the leaders would reach full agreement.

17. Nevertheless, it is still our belief that the Soviets have strong reasons -- perhaps stronger than ever before -- to consider carefully the whole problem of strategic arms control. In the interim since our last estimates, we have seen nothing concerning this subject which would alter this

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judgment.* On the contrary, the USSR's approach to the problem so far this year tends to confirm it. The Soviets have not concealed their suspicions of US motives. Nor have they hidden their discontent with certain US attitudes and statements, in particular US suggestions that there should be a linkage between arms control and other, broader issues. But they have also sought to appear patient about the timing of arms control talks and have tried to convince the US that they have retained a sober -- though not eager -- interest in the negotiation of an agreement.

* See NIE 11-16-68, "The Soviet Approach to Arms Control," dated 7 November 1968, SECRET, CONTROLLED DISSEM, and NIE 11-69, "Basic Factors and Main Tendencies in Current Soviet Policy," dated 27 February 1969, SECRET, CONTROLLED DISSEM.

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