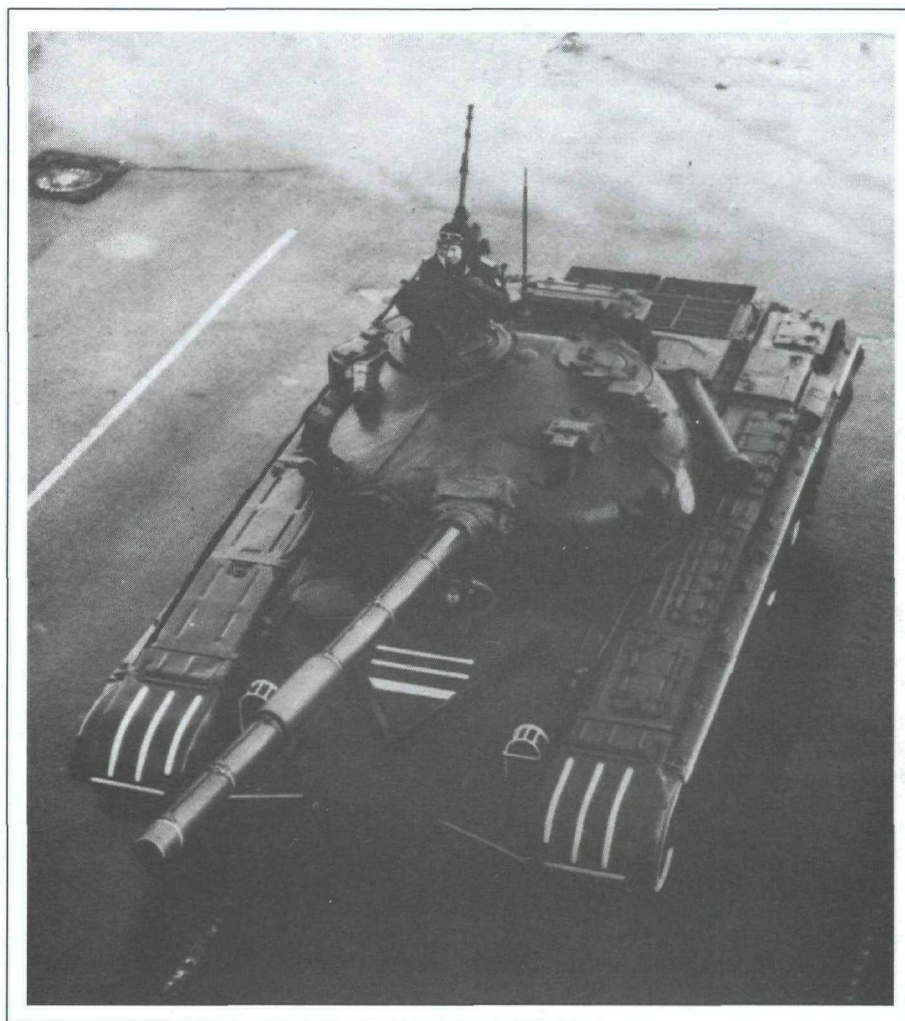


Origins of CIA's Analysis
of the Soviet Union, 1947-1991



Origins of CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union *Author's Comments: Donald Steury*

Berlin, the political flashpoint of the early Cold War, was a catalyst for the development of a strategic analysis capability in CIA. The end of World War II found the Allies in an increasingly tenuous quadripartite occupation of the city, which was complicated by its position deep inside the Russian occupation zone. As the wartime alliance fragmented, the continued Western presence in Berlin assumed a growing importance to the stability of the Western alliance: first, as a concrete symbol of the American commitment to defend Western Europe; and, second, as a vital strategic intelligence base from which to monitor the growing Soviet military presence in Germany and Eastern Europe.

The continued division of the city offered no such advantage to the Soviet Bloc. Inevitably, the Kremlin came to regard the Western garrisons in Berlin as a more-or-less permanent challenge to the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Germany and Eastern Europe. Consequently, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin initiated a series of provocations and military demonstrations early in 1948 in an apparent effort to force the Western Allies out of Berlin. By March, the US Military Governor in Germany, General Lucius D. Clay, was sufficiently alarmed to warn Washington of "a subtle change in Soviet attitude which...gives me a feeling that (war) may come with dramatic suddenness."¹

Clay apparently had intended only to warn the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) of the need for caution in Central Europe, but the telegram caused considerable alarm in Washington. At the behest of JCS Chairman General Omar N. Bradley, the supervisory Intelligence Advisory Committee ordered CIA to chair an ad hoc committee to examine the likelihood of war.² The result was a series of three estimates (documents 1, 2, and 3) that examined and dismissed the possibility of a planned Soviet assault on Western Europe in 1948-1949, despite the escalating Soviet saber-rattling over Berlin. Although the estimates were brief, each reflected a relatively sophisticated and broadly-based understanding of Soviet national power. The analysis contained therein went beyond the military dimensions of the problem to analyze the political and economic implications of the issue. Together, the documents indicated a need for an independent analytical capability in Washington.

A fourth estimate, ORE 58-48 (document 4) provided a comprehensive assessment of the Soviet Union's potential to wage war. A highly controversial estimate at the time, this document nonetheless further validated ORE's role as a source of overarching analyses.

¹ William R. Harris, "The March Crisis of 1948, Act I," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 10, No. 4, Fall 1966, p.7 (National Archives and Record Administration [NARA] Records Group 263).

² *Ibid.*, p.10.

The Berlin crisis sharply demonstrated the need for regular review of Moscow's war potential. With the reorganization of CIA in 1950-1951, this responsibility was formally given to the newly created Board of National Estimates (see SE-16, document 5).

Throughout much of the 1950s, CIA's analysis of the Soviet Union continued to be hampered by the lack of solid intelligence on Soviet military developments. Until the first remote sensors (such as the U-2 and the CORONA reconnaissance satellites) were deployed, CIA's analysis often was based on fragmentary sources at best. An essential component of the reorganization of CIA's analysis was the comprehensive review of the available intelligence on the Soviet Union completed in 1953 (document 6).

ORE 22-48

~~TOP SECRET~~

POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SOVIET MILITARY ACTION DURING 1948

Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee *

THE PROBLEM

1. We have been directed to estimate the likelihood of a Soviet resort to direct military action during 1948.

DISCUSSION

2. Our conclusions are based on considerations discussed in the Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

3. The preponderance of available evidence and of considerations derived from the "logic of the situation" supports the conclusion that the USSR will not resort to direct military action during 1948.

4. However, in view of the combat readiness and disposition of the Soviet armed forces and the strategic advantage which the USSR might impute to the occupation of Western Europe and the Near East, the possibility must be recognized that the USSR might resort to direct military action in 1948, particularly if the Kremlin should interpret some US move, or series of moves, as indicating an intention to attack the USSR or its satellites.

* This estimate was prepared by a joint ad hoc committee representing CIA and the intelligence agencies of the Department of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The date of the estimate is 30 March 1948.

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE STRATEGIC VALUE TO THE USSR OF THE CONQUEST
OF WESTERN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST (TO CAIRO)
PRIOR TO 1950 *

Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. To analyze and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages that would accrue to the USSR if it should elect, prior to 1950, to overrun the European continent and the Near East (to Cairo), with a view to determining whether or not the strategic position thus acquired would be sufficiently strong *per se* to induce Soviet leaders to adopt such a course of action.

ASSUMPTIONS AND FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. The USSR has the military capability of overrunning Europe (excluding the UK) and the Near East to Cairo in a short period of time.

3. The Western Powers would undertake immediate counteraction, including maximum employment of US air power, using the atomic bomb at least against Soviet targets.

4. A substantial part of the merchant and naval ships belonging to the countries which were overrun would manage to avoid falling under Soviet control.

5. A large part of the Near Eastern oil facilities and installations would be seriously damaged or destroyed prior to evacuation by present operators.

6. The Western Powers, through naval blockade, would effectively cut off commerce between continental Europe on the one hand and the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and Southeast Asia on the other.

7. In addition to the assumptions enumerated above, the basic problem of analyzing the Soviet position following the occupation of the areas in question must be considered under two broad alternative assumptions:

a. That the USSR obtains a negotiated peace shortly after the occupation of these areas.

* This paper was prepared by a joint ad hoc committee representing CIA and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. It has been concurred in by the Directors of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, and Navy. The dissent of the Director of Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, is appended as Enclosure B.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

b. That, after the occupation of Western Europe and the Near East as far as Cairo, the USSR is faced with a continuing global war with the US and its allies, involving ultimate US invasion of Soviet controlled territory.

(The first assumption is necessary because Soviet leaders might elect to exercise their current military capabilities in the belief that, after Soviet occupation of these areas, the US public would not support the continuation of a war to liberate the European continent, and because, under the assumption of a quick negotiated peace, the Soviet position would differ greatly from what it would be if the USSR were forced to sustain the weight of a continuing global war.)

8. The position of the UK following Soviet occupation of the European continent would obviously have an important bearing upon the basic problem, particularly under the assumption in 7 b above. If the UK were either occupied by the USSR or completely neutralized, US capabilities for counteraction, particularly through naval and air operations, would be reduced. If, on the other hand, bases for US Naval and air operations from the UK remain tenable, substantial continuing damage could be inflicted upon the Soviet war potential, and shipping along the European coast would be largely interdicted.

9. An effort has been made in this paper to develop the maximum number of factual data with reference to the basic problem. This has been possible to a considerable degree with respect to the economic, scientific, and military factors. In the final analysis, however, we are still to a large extent dependent upon "the logic of the situation" and upon deductions from the pattern of Soviet behavior for our conclusions as to the possibility of direct Soviet military action.

DISCUSSION

(See Enclosure A)

CONCLUSIONS

10. If the USSR could obtain a negotiated peace shortly after the occupation of Western Europe and the Middle East to Cairo, the potential economic, scientific, and military advantages to the USSR would appear to be very substantial, but the USSR would not begin to reap significant advantages for a period of from two to three years after the completion of the occupation.

11. The occupation of Western Europe and the Middle East, however, would involve the Soviet leaders in grave political risks.

12. We believe that, in spite of the prospect of substantial tangible economic, scientific, and military gains, the Soviet leaders would consider these political risks so serious a threat to their own positions of power and to their ultimate objective of a Communist world that they would be unlikely to undertake this operation—even under the assumption of a negotiated peace—unless they anticipated an attack or became involved in military action through accident or miscalculation.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

13. An analysis of the economic and military position of the USSR under conditions of continuing global war against the US and its Allies prior to 1950, indicates clearly that the total realizable resources under Soviet control would be inadequate for the defense of the conquered areas.

14. We conclude, therefore, that neither the recognized military capability of over-running Western Europe and the Near East to Cairo, nor any strategic advantages to be gained thereby are of themselves likely to induce Soviet leaders to undertake this course of action prior to 1950.

15. It is emphasized that the foregoing conclusions are based on an effort to weigh objectively the various considerations with respect to the stated problem and do not reflect an over-all estimate of Soviet military intentions prior to 1950.

~~CONFIDENTIAL SECRET~~

ORE 22-48 (Addendum)

~~TOP SECRET~~

POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SOVIET MILITARY ACTION DURING 1948-49

Report of Ad Hoc Committee¹ Reviewing the Conclusions on ORE 22-48

THE PROBLEM

1. We have been directed to estimate if the events of the past six months have increased or decreased the likelihood of a Soviet resort to military action during 1948-49.

BASIS FOR ESTIMATE²

2. Available intelligence bearing on the stated problem is too meager to support a conclusion that the USSR either will or will not resort to deliberate military action during 1948-49.

DISCUSSION

3. Our conclusions are based on considerations discussed in the Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

4. We do not believe that the events of the past six months have made deliberate Soviet military action a probability during 1948-49. They have, however, added some weight to the factors that might induce the USSR to resort to such action. It is considered, therefore, that the possibility of a resort to deliberate military action has been slightly increased.

5. However, the developments of the past six months which constitute setbacks to the Soviet international position have had the effect of adding to the pressure on the USSR. This pressure increases the possibility of the USSR resorting to diplomatic ventures which, while not constituting acts of war or even envisaging the likelihood of war, will involve an increased risk of miscalculations that could lead to war.

¹This estimate was prepared by a joint ad hoc committee representing CIA and the intelligence agencies of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The date of the estimate is 27 August 1948.

²The Office of Naval Intelligence concurs generally in the discussion, as contained in the Enclosure.

However, ONI feels that the "Basis for Estimate" as stated is not valid. Evidence of Soviet intentions is meager, but such intelligence as is available does not indicate a resort to deliberate military action. If the position is taken that the intelligence available cannot support conclusions one way or the other, any conclusions drawn from such a basis of estimate are of doubtful value for U. S. planning.

Therefore, ONI feels that the conclusions stated in ORE 22-48, as modified by ONI comment, are still valid. ONI concurs, however, that the events of the past six months have increased slightly the possibility of military action through miscalculation as stated in paragraph 5 of subject report, and would include under miscalculation the possibility that minor military incidents might expand into uncontrolled conflict.

~~TOP SECRET~~

ENCLOSURE

DISCUSSION

1. Reference is made to ORE 22-48. In general, and except for such modifications as follow, it is considered that the discussion and conclusions thereof are still valid and are, particularly in respect to the economic and political factors involved, still generally applicable to the immediate future.

EVENTS WITHIN THE SOVIET ORBIT WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR
RESORT TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

2. In the USSR itself, we find no reliable evidence of military, economic, or political developments of sufficient importance to warrant any revision of our previous conclusions.

3. In the Eastern European Satellites, signs of nationalist sentiment, of mass peasant antagonism to Communist agrarian policies, and of dissension in Communist ranks, have suggested the growth of wavering loyalties and resistance to central direction from USSR. The defection of Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party is our most striking evidence for the existence of an unstable situation. There is no doubt that this situation has caused concern in the Kremlin. While the USSR might consider the use of force to correct this situation, and general war might result, we think such a decision unlikely unless the Soviet leaders believe that the issue has reached a point where it seriously threatens their control of the Soviet orbit. At such a time the risk of war might seem preferable to the risk of losing control. There is no reliable evidence, however, that this point has been reached.

EVENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR RESORT
TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

4. The following events in Western Europe may have brought about some change in Soviet strategic thinking:

- a. The positive effort of the US to recreate economic and political stability through the European Recovery Program (ERP).
- b. The increasing firmness of the Western Powers toward Soviet-Communist expansion, with the growth of military solidarity among Western European nations.
- c. The initial steps to establish a Western German Government.
- d. The failure of Communist tactics in Western Europe.

5. In ORE 22-48, we stated that "the opportunities for further Soviet gains through the exploitation of economic, political and social instability, while recently diminished, are by no means exhausted." These opportunities probably appear to Soviet analysts to be still further limited in Western Europe. While it can be argued that an increasing reduction of opportunity may be an inducement to early Soviet military action, it is

~~TOP SECRET~~

possible that the events noted above have added to the strain on the Communist political control of Eastern Europe and therefore contributed to the weaknesses discussed in paras. 2-3 above. It is considered that the USSR, although confronted with resistance to Communist expansion in Europe, is still capable of exploiting existing political and economic instability, and is therefore more likely to continue to employ these means than to accept the risk of direct military action in the immediate future. Although Europe will remain the major objective, strategic areas elsewhere are also available for profitable exploitation.

EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR
RESORT TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

6. Since Soviet leaders view, and Communist Parties are indoctrinated to regard the US as the chief bulwark of capitalism, and hence the major antagonist of the USSR, the strategy and tactics of the Kremlin are probably strongly influenced by an analysis of US capabilities and intentions.

7. Until recently, it has been supposed that Soviet planners were assuming a severe economic crisis in the US by the end of 1948, and that from this would follow a progressive weakening of US power potential. In turn, the political and economic recovery of Western Europe would be inhibited. It now appears possible that this assumption is being revised, and that Soviet planners now assume that US economy will continue productive and prosperous so long as it enjoys the export markets provided by the European Recovery Program.

8. It appears probable that Soviet leaders will be forced to admit a miscalculation of factors in US domestic politics which they earlier considered favorable. Neither the isolationists, the pacifists, nor the Wallace "Progressives" have seriously undermined popular support of a firm US diplomatic line or of adequate US defense proposals. Opinion with respect to US foreign policy has not been fundamentally split along partisan lines. Never before, in peacetime, has US opinion been so uniform on a question of foreign policy.

9. In ORE 22-48, we stated that "Soviet leaders may have become convinced that the US actually has intentions of military aggression in the near future." Recent events may have somewhat strengthened Soviet conviction in this respect. The passage of a peacetime Draft Act, the continued development of atomic weapons, the general acceptance of increased military appropriations, the establishment of US bases within range of targets in the USSR, the activities of US naval forces in the Mediterranean, and the movement to Europe of US strategic airforce units are instances in point. We think it unlikely, however, that these events have actually led Soviet leaders to the conclusion that positive US aggression must be soon expected. It is considered that they are more probably taken to mean that the ultimate conflict with the capitalist system will be resolved by force rather than by the methods of "cold war." While the danger of an early Soviet military move, made in calculated anticipation of this ultimate conflict may be slightly increased by these circumstances, we do not estimate that such a move has become a probability.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

10. Soviet analysts, examining these evidences of US intentions, might conclude that they can no longer assume the early disintegration of the capitalist world, and that US military potential, now low, will steadily improve and will ultimately be accompanied by an improvement in the military potential of Western Europe. This might, in turn, suggest looking to military action for the achievement of their aims. However, since the usefulness of non-military methods has not yet been exhausted in Europe, and since there are other regions open to significant exploitation, we do not estimate that a USSR resort to deliberate military action has become a probability.

11. Several recent events—especially the Soviet blockade of Berlin—have served to increase the tension between the USSR and the US. With this heightened tension has come a corresponding increase in the possibility of a miscalculation which might result in general conflict.

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SOVIET MILITARY ACTION DURING 1949

Report of a Joint Ad Hoc Committee *

THE PROBLEM

1. We have been directed to estimate the likelihood of a Soviet resort to direct military action during 1949.

DISCUSSION

2. Our conclusions are based on considerations discussed in the Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

3. The USSR has an overwhelming preponderance of immediately available military power on the Eurasian continent and a consequent capability of resorting to direct military action at any time. The principal deterrent to such action is the superior war-making potential of the United States.

4. There is no conclusive factual evidence of Soviet preparation for direct military aggression during 1949.

5. A deliberate Soviet resort to direct military action against the West during 1949 is improbable. Moreover, the USSR is likely to exercise some care to avoid an unintended outbreak of hostilities with the United States.

6. As part of its efforts to counteract the Atlantic Pact and US military aid program, however, the USSR will seek to intensify and exploit the universal fear of a new war. In this it will pay special attention to Scandinavia, Yugoslavia, and Iran. It is unlikely, however, to resort to even localized direct military action.

7. The fact remains that international tension has increased during 1948. It will probably increase further during 1949. In these circumstances, the danger of an unintended outbreak of hostilities through miscalculation on either side must be considered to have increased.**

* This estimate was prepared by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee composed of designated representatives of the CIA and of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. It has been concurred in by the Directors of those agencies, except as indicated in the footnote below. The date of the estimate is 21 April 1949.

** The Director of Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that the last sentence of paragraph 7 implies a greater possibility of war in 1949 than, in fact, exists; and that it should read "In these circumstances, the small but continuing danger of an unintended outbreak of hostilities through miscalculation on either side must be considered."

~~TOP SECRET~~

ENCLOSURE

1. As of 30 March 1948, we estimated that the preponderance of available evidence and of considerations derived from the "logic of the situation" supported the conclusion that the USSR would not resort to direct military action during 1948. Our present task is to prepare a corresponding estimate with respect to the possibility of Soviet military action during 1949.

2. The USSR continues to enjoy an overwhelming preponderance of immediately available military power on the Eurasian continent. During the past year it has maintained, and possibly accelerated, its efforts to enhance its military capabilities through both the intensive development of basic war industries and the qualitative improvement of its military forces. There has recently been a significant increase in Soviet troop strength in Germany through the arrival of recruits from the 1928 class. It is not yet apparent whether this increase is temporary or permanent. In general, however, Soviet military preparations appear to be precautionary or long-term. There is no factual evidence of Soviet preparation for aggressive military action during 1949.

3. In the absence of conclusive factual evidence, our estimate must depend on our appreciation of the fundamental objectives and strategy of the USSR. This appreciation, set forth in ORE 60-48, ORE 41-49, and elsewhere, need not be repeated here at length. The pertinent conclusion is that the USSR would be unlikely to resort to direct military action unless convinced that a military attack by the West on the USSR was in active preparation and impossible to forestall by non-military means.

4. Our estimate of 30 March 1948 (ORE 22-48) has been borne out by the event. We may be permitted, then, to assume that the situation as it existed a year ago was not such as would cause the USSR to resort to direct military action. Consequently we limit our present consideration to developments since that date which might cause the USSR to resort to such action. These developments are:

a. An increasingly evident US determination to resist further Soviet encroachment in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Near East, and to encourage, organize, and support local resistance in those areas. In the context of Soviet thought, this development must appear to be essentially hostile and preparatory to eventual US aggression, though not indicative of immediate attack. The USSR is particularly sensitive to the extension of US influence from Western Europe and the Mediterranean into Scandinavia on the one hand, the Balkans and Iran on the other.

b. A gradual increase in the will and ability of Western Europe to resist Soviet political aggression, and a corresponding decline in Communist political and revolutionary capabilities in that area.

c. Increasing rigidity in the partition of Germany and the development of an extremely taut situation at Berlin; in particular, the success of the airlift in defeating the blockade as a means of coercion with respect to Berlin, progress toward the establishment of Western Germany as a political and economic entity within the Western European community, and deterioration of the Soviet position in Eastern Germany and in Germany as a whole.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

d. The persistence of individualism and nationalism in Eastern Europe, despite further forcible consolidation of the Soviet position in that area (excepting Yugoslavia)

e. Tito's successful defiance of the Kremlin, a matter of greatest significance in the development of international Communism and Soviet hegemony.

f. Failure of the situation in the Near and Middle East to develop as advantageously, from the Soviet point of view, as might have been expected, and the current trend toward adjustment and stabilization in the internal conflicts within that region

Communist successes in China and prospects in Southeast Asia are matters manifestly unlikely to cause the USSR to resort to direct military action.

5. The rulers of the USSR are presumably realistic enough to perceive that these developments do not constitute a danger of immediate attack. They will appreciate, however, that the opportunity for Soviet expansion westward by non-military means has ended for the time being, and they will be apprehensive lest a continuation of the present trend result eventually in a corresponding stabilization of the situation in the Near East, a further deterioration of the Soviet position in Eastern Europe, and an ultimate danger of US attack upon the USSR. In these circumstances the USSR must give serious consideration to the advisability of resort to preventive war while it still enjoys a preponderance of immediately available military power on the Eurasian continent.

6. The deterrents to such a decision are the realization that it would precipitate an immediate decisive conflict with the United States, a present lack of adequate defense against atomic attack and of means for a decisive military attack on the United States, respect for the present general superiority of US war industrial potential in terms of a long struggle, and reasonable hope of improving the position of the USSR in these respects with the passage of time. Philosophically prepared to take the long view in the absence of an immediate threat and confident that future crises of capitalism will produce new opportunities for Soviet aggrandizement by non-military means, the Kremlin would have reason to avoid a premature showdown while assiduously developing its capabilities for eventual defense or aggression.

7. On balance we conclude that the USSR is unlikely to resort to preventive war during 1949 at least. Its most probable course of action will be to continue its preparations for eventual war while seeking to arrest or retard the indicated adverse trend of developments (para. 4) by political and psychological counterefforts in forms currently familiar. In following this course the USSR will seek to intensify and exploit the universal fear of a new war. It will pay special attention to Scandinavia, Yugoslavia, and Iran. It is unlikely, however, to resort to even localized direct military action, except possibly with respect to Finland and Yugoslavia. In any such action taken, it will probably exercise care to avoid direct collision with the United States.

8. US and Soviet forces are in actual contact only in Germany and Austria. The fact that in the course of a year of acute tension the USSR has carefully avoided any action there calculated to precipitate armed hostilities establishes a presumption that the USSR would not resort to direct military action merely to break the deadlock at Berlin or to secure a satisfactory solution of the German problem. On the contrary, present indications are that the USSR may soon discard coercion, as repre-

~~TOP SECRET~~

mented by the blockade of Berlin, for the time being, in order to seek a more satisfactory situation through political negotiation.

9. The vulnerability of Finland to Soviet pressure and the gravity with which the USSR views Norwegian adherence to the Atlantic Pact requires specific consideration of that case. Threatening gestures toward Finland and Scandinavia might be expected to discourage any possible Finnish hope of rescue from the West, to confirm Swedish adherence to neutrality, and to inhibit Norwegian implementation of the Pact. A Soviet military occupation of Finland, however, might have exactly the opposite effect, driving Sweden into the arms of the West and stimulating Norwegian demands for direct military support. For these reasons, increasing intimidation is to be expected, but direct military action is unlikely.

10. Similarly, threatening Soviet gestures might be more effective ^{than} that direct action in inhibiting Yugoslav rapprochement with the West. Basically, however, the continuing existence of the Tito regime is intolerable from the Soviet point of view and real efforts to liquidate it must be expected. Any attempt to do so by force of arms would probably take the form of insurrection within Yugoslavia with covert Satellite support, as in the case of Greece. Direct Soviet military intervention would be unlikely unless it became the only means of preventing the military alignment of Yugoslavia with the West. Even in that case, Soviet intervention would not be intended to precipitate a general war and could do so only if the West chose to take armed counteraction.

11. Soviet sensitivity with respect to Iran requires specific consideration of that situation also. In terms of the internal factors involved, the situation in Iran is more stable than it was a year ago. There has been, however, an intensification of Soviet pressure upon Iran and there remain opportunities for indirect Soviet intervention through indigenous "liberation" movements, as with respect to Azerbaijan and the Kurdish tribes. The immediate Soviet purpose appears to be to prevent Iranian adherence to a Near Eastern pact analogous to the Atlantic Pact and acceptance of substantial US military aid. Although the USSR has been at some pains to build up a legalistic basis for direct intervention with reference to the Treaty of 1921, this appears to be part of the war of nerves. Direct Soviet military action in Iran during 1949 is considered unlikely.

12. Accepting our estimate of Soviet intentions, the fact remains that international tension has increased during 1948 and will probably increase further during 1949. Both sides are actively preparing for eventual war. In these circumstances there is increasing danger of an undesired outbreak of hostilities through miscalculation by either side. Such miscalculation could occur in underestimating the determination of the opposing side or in exaggerating its aggressive intentions. Both miscalculations would be present in a situation in which one side took a position from which it could not withdraw in the face of an unexpectedly alarmed and forceful reaction on the part of the other.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE STRENGTH AND CAPABILITIES OF SOVIET
BLOC FORCES TO CONDUCT MILITARY OPERATIONS
AGAINST NATO

THE PROBLEM

To analyze the strength and capabilities of Soviet Bloc forces to conduct military operations against NATO during the period 1951-1954, including the capacity of the Soviet Bloc to maintain and increase these forces after the outbreak of war.

ANALYSIS

See the Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The USSR has at present and will probably have through mid-1954 military strength of such magnitude as to pose a constant and serious threat to the security of the NATO powers, especially in view of the aggressive nature of Soviet objectives and policies.
2. Politically, economically, and militarily the Soviet Bloc is capable of undertaking a major war. Its over-all strength and war potential should increase considerably by mid-1954.
 - a. Despite continued political tensions within the Soviet Bloc, both the Soviet population and the European Satellites are under firm Kremlin control. In the event of war various internal tensions will tend to become more acute, but they probably will not become serious enough to pose a major obstacle to Soviet ability to sustain a major war effort until

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~U. S. EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

the latent disruptive elements within the Soviet Bloc acquire a reasonable expectation and hope of the ultimate victory of the anti-Soviet forces. The potential of such disruptive elements will probably increase substantially and at an accelerated pace if and as the Soviet Bloc suffers damaging internal reverses.

b. The Soviet economy is already at a high state of war-readiness and its productive capacity is such as to enable the USSR to undertake a major war effort. In the event of war, the Soviet economy, unless crippled by a strategic air offensive, could support a substantial increase in war production.

c. The over-all conventional military strength in being of the Soviet orbit is the greatest in the world today. While the personnel strength of the Soviet Bloc forces should increase only moderately through mid-1954, the completion of current programs should materially improve their mobilization potential and combat effectiveness. Soviet atomic capabilities, already substantial, should also materially increase.

3. In view of the high state of war-readiness of the Soviet economy and armed forces, the USSR is at present capable of initiating hostilities against the NATO powers with little or no warning. It now has the capability of simultaneously conducting a series of land campaigns against Western Europe and the Middle East, as well as air and submarine attacks against the UK, the US and Canada, and NATO sea communications. By mid-1954, growing Soviet military and economic strength, particularly in atomic weapons, should materially enhance Soviet ability to conduct these operations.

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

NSC
7wise
3/31/53

INTELLIGENCE ON THE SOVIET BLOC

The adequacy of intelligence on the Soviet bloc varies from firm and accurate in some categories to inadequate and practically nonexistent in others. We have no reliable inside intelligence on thinking in the Kremlin. Our estimates of Soviet long range plans and intentions are speculations drawn from inadequate evidence. At the other extreme, evidence confirming the existence of major surface vessels in the bloc naval forces is firm and accurate. Operational intelligence in support of current military operations in Korea is generally excellent. Other phases of Soviet bloc activities fall into intervening degrees of intelligence coverage.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE

In the field of atomic energy, our estimates of future Soviet stockpiles of fission weapons are reasonably adequate. The margin of error is such that the actual stockpile may be from 1/3 less to twice the estimate. However, gaps exist regarding production of U-235, and more important, their thermonuclear program.

Intelligence on Soviet biological and chemical warfare programs is extremely limited. On the other hand, we have a fairly good picture of Soviet capabilities in contributing scientific fields.

Knowledge of Soviet electronics has improved significantly in the last eighteen months. Intelligence on Soviet electromagnetic warfare capabilities is now very good. While our knowledge of the electronics aspects of Soviet air defense has improved, there are still serious gaps.

Knowledge of current Soviet guided missiles programs is poor, although certain projects based on German developments are fairly well known.

Technical intelligence on conventional military weapons and equipment is reasonably good as far as standardized items are concerned. However, there is little knowledge of important improvements in such fields as underwater and aerial warfare. ^{atank - 7/54}

With respect to basic scientific research, present estimates of long-range developments are very weak, but our estimates of the current status are believed to be more nearly adequate.

Sci manpower $\pm 10\%$ -

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Security Information
Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8
ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE

The adequacy of economic intelligence on the Soviet Bloc varies widely from one industry to another and from one country to another. The best intelligence is on the USSR.

Our intelligence is believed best on output of basic industries in the USSR -- the primary metals, fuels and power, transportation, and some machinery and chemical industries. This intelligence is based in part on official Soviet announcements. Although contrary to what is usually regarded as Kremlin practice and not in keeping with Soviet character, such announcements have been shown to be reliable. The validity of official Soviet statistics has been confirmed by several independent studies based on intelligence materials. We believe, therefore, that official releases are not distributed for propaganda purposes. Nevertheless, there may be a margin of error due to faulty statistical practices and to falsification by the lower echelon. Thus our evidence on most major industries is probably within ten per cent of accuracy and, in the case of critical items such as steel, oil and electric power, within five per cent.

For other industries and for agriculture output estimates are built up from fragmentary intelligence. The techniques used include [REDACTED] plant studies based on reports of prisoners of war, defectors, and returned scientists and technicians who were employed in the bloc in the post-war period; and crop-weather correlation analyses to estimate biological yields. Improvement in such estimates will depend in the future

25X1B4d

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

upon refinement of research techniques and upon improved collection of raw intelligence materials. To date, these techniques have given output estimates for all major agricultural commodities, and for several branches of industry which range from within ten per cent to within twenty-five per cent of accuracy.

There are still a large number of industries about which little is known. These include producers of certain machinery and equipment items and a few of the rare minerals.

By combining all available output statistics, annual growth rates for industry, agriculture, and gross national product are derived. We believe that they are probably within one percentage point of accuracy, that is, an estimated annual growth rate of six per cent for Soviet gross national product is probably no higher than seven per cent and no lower than five per cent.

Information for East Germany is the most complete, for Czechoslovakia and Poland it is fairly good, while that for China is the least adequate.

At present, intelligence is too fragmentary to permit estimates on strategic stockpiles and working inventories in all Bloc countries.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

ARMED FORCES INTELLIGENCE

Military intelligence concerning the Soviet Bloc is considered from two points of view, tactical and strategic.

Tactical

Intelligence on the activities of the Soviet Bloc armed forces varies with the geographical area under consideration. Intelligence needed in support of ground military operations in Korea is generally excellent. Intelligence on the installations and on developments in Manchuria, such as the movement and activities of the Chinese Communist forces and North Korean units, is inadequate.

Order of battle and equipment intelligence on the USSR, Communist China and - to a lesser degree - the European Satellites, is partial and inadequate. Intelligence on the Communist Bloc units and equipment in most areas with which the US or nations friendly to the US are in contact is more nearly complete and reliable.

Intelligence concerning the strength of the Soviet Bloc and Satellite ground forces is believed to be of a fairly high order of reliability. Intelligence on the navies of the Soviet Bloc is, ^{however} however, in general, satisfactory and adequate because of the greater accessibility of naval forces to observation.

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

Air

Estimates of Soviet air strength are derived from intelligence which is considered of acceptable reliability, but collection coverage is incomplete. Estimates of over-all size and composition of Soviet Air Forces are derived from identification of individual units and from estimated Table of Organization and Equipment strengths authorized for the various types of air regiments. Current estimates of jet fighter and medium bomber strength are considered reasonably valid.

Intelligence

Reliable intelligence of the enemy's long-range plans and intentions is practically non-existent. Little improvement in these deficiencies can be expected in the near future despite our efforts.

Warning of Attack

The period of warning which the Western Powers might expect to receive if they were attacked by the Soviet Union vary according to the circumstances of the attack. There is no guarantee that intelligence will be able to give adequate warning of attack prior to actual detection of hostile formations. Opportunity for detection of indications of Soviet or Satellite attack varies from fair in the border areas of Germany and Korea to extremely poor in the Transcaucasus and Southeast Asia.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8

~~TOP SECRET~~

In the event of a surprise attack we could not hope to obtain any detailed information of the Soviet military intentions. There would be no detectable redeployment of forces. We could therefore expect at most a few hours warning of air attack and hostile action might well take place in Germany or other territories bordering the Soviet Orbit before any warning at all had been received.

In the event of Soviet strength being fully mobilized for war, we could expect from overt sources at least a month's warning, with confirmation of Soviet hostile intentions building up continuously thereafter.

The period of warning in the event of partial Soviet mobilization for war would vary from the few hours of the surprise attack to something less than the warning to be expected when the attack was delayed until the full strength of the Soviet forces had been mobilized.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/09/08 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100120001-8