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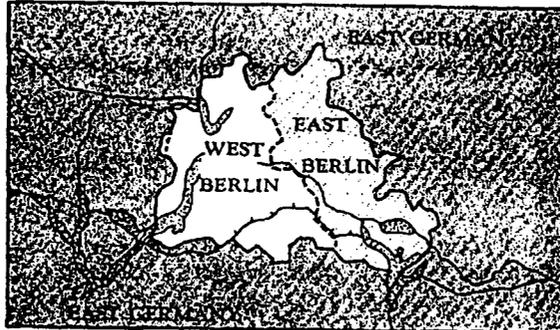
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SNIE 2-2-61
11 July 1961

SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

SOVIET AND OTHER REACTIONS TO
POSSIBLE US COURSES OF ACTION
WITH RESPECT TO BERLIN

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An additional printed text will not be circulated.



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Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 11 July 1961. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

11 July 1961

SUBJECT: SNIE 2-2-61: SOVIET AND OTHER REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE
US COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO
BERLIN

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable reactions of the USSR, Communist China, the NATO members, and certain other countries to a set of measures reflecting US determination to preserve the Western position in Berlin. These measures include military, political, economic, and clandestine preparations designed both to convey US intentions to undertake steps up to and including, if necessary, general war, and to put the US in a position to carry out these steps.

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THE ESTIMATE

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLYING SOVIET REACTIONS

1. Attitude to War. The Soviet leaders are confident of the prospects for advancing their cause by means short of all-out war. We continue to believe that, so long as they remain vulnerable to US strategic power, they will not willingly enter into situations in which, by their calculations, the risks of general war are substantial.^{1/} Similarly, they will not wish to set in train a course of events leading to local war in an area like Central Europe, where the dangers of escalation to general nuclear war are high. However, they believe that as their own strength has grown, the US has become increasingly deterred by the same considerations and that the risks of aggressive actions on their part have been correspondingly reduced. Thus the chances have increased that the Soviets may so miscalculate Western responses as to precipitate a situation from which neither side would feel able to withdraw.

^{1/} The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that this sentence should be extended to point out that the USSR would probably draw back in almost any such situation which might arise, as previously estimated in paragraph 146 of NIE 11-4-60, "Main Trends in Soviet Capabilities and Policies, 1960-1965," dated 1 December 1960. He therefore believes that the following should be added to this sentence: "and will endeavor to draw back from such situations should they evolve."

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2. Prestige. While important substantive considerations motivate the Communist endeavor to gain control of West Berlin, Soviet prestige, and that of Khrushchev himself, is already heavily involved. The Soviet leaders are especially sensitive on this score, feeling that their country, long regarded as backward, has not been accorded the world position to which its power and achievements entitle it. They are therefore the more anxious that their recently acquired strength should not be derogated. Closely linked to this, they have in recent years made a central proposition of their claim that the "world relation of forces" is inexorably shifting in their favor. They will be greatly concerned that any outcome of the Berlin situation which appeared to confound this proposition would deflate their recent successes and darken their future prospects for political advance.

3. Freedom of Action. We believe that this desire to protect and increase their prestige, at home as well as abroad, is at this stage a major factor impinging on Soviet freedom of action in the Berlin question. We recognize that the Chinese Communists exert a constant pressure on the USSR for a generally harder line against the West, and the East German regime does

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the same on the specific issue of Berlin. We believe, however, that Soviet positions on as potentially explosive a question as this are firmly grounded in considerations of self-interest and relatively immune to such pressures. There are no indications of differences over Berlin within the Soviet leadership.

4. Assessment of Local Factors. The Soviets consider that the geography of the Berlin problem confers great advantages upon them. They are therefore prone to believe that, sooner or later, the West will have to acknowledge its local military inferiority and begin to acquiesce in Soviet demands. In the meantime, the Soviets need not fear in Berlin, as they often must in non-Bloc areas, that their opportunities are fleeting and must be seized or lost; they are conscious that, as the situation stands today, the choice of timing and method remain, except perhaps in a full crisis, largely within their control.

II. SOME SPECIFIC SOVIET REACTIONS

5. Specific Soviet reactions to individual US moves would, of course, depend heavily upon a number of immediate related factors. In general, however, the foregoing considerations provide

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some indication of the manner in which the USSR might interpret and respond to various US measures. We discuss in the final section their general reaction to the totality of Western measures.

6. Military Measures. The USSR would be anxious, in the military field above all, to prove that it could not be intimidated. The militant note struck at the recent anniversary of Hitler's invasion and the display of strength made on Aviation Day were almost certainly designed to serve this purpose. To the same end, Khrushchev has announced a large increase in defense expenditures and suspended the scheduled reduction of Soviet forces. In response to US moves to strengthen its forces in Europe, the USSR would almost certainly undertake equivalent moves and make recurrent tangible demonstrations of its strength. The USSR might increase its forces in Poland and Germany or undertake some mobilization of reserves, particularly if the US went on to further military preparations. Additionally, the Soviets might hint or declare that they were stationing nuclear weapons with Soviet forces in East Germany or give indications of their strength in medium and intercontinental range missiles. US measures to increase its readiness for general nuclear war would almost certainly provoke Soviet measures to improve readiness.

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Clearly the timing and pace of measures specifically relating to US readiness for nuclear war would greatly affect the whole Soviet attitude.

7. Economic Measures. The Soviets probably would not react very seriously to purely contingent decisions to undertake NATO embargoes and to deny the use of NATO transport facilities. They would retain doubts that such decisions would be fully implemented or persisted in. However, they would observe NATO planning in this sphere as an important test of the unity which the Alliance could muster over the Berlin question. Harmonious Western agreement on far-reaching economic sanctions would probably increase the resolve which the USSR attributed to the NATO members on this issue. This factor might in turn carry over to its estimate of NATO's willingness to use military force. However, we must recognize that there is an inherent danger that the USSR would consider that economic or other measures within the overall program, and not the determination to use military force if necessary, represent the extent of our real intentions.

8. Measures Aimed at the Satellites. The Soviets probably believe that the West has at present only a limited capability

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to stir up dissidence in East Germany. But if attempts to demonstrate such a capability succeeded, the Soviets would recognize and perhaps even overrate the vulnerability of the GDR regime, especially as tensions increased. They would probably be much less concerned on this score in the other Satellites. Measures of this sort would produce contradictory pressures on the Soviet leaders. An overt effort by the West to stimulate dissidence in East Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe through public statements and appeals to the population would probably produce a stiffening of Soviet resolve. If, however, private Western warnings and clandestine activities convinced Moscow that a Berlin crisis could provoke a covertly supported wave of disorders in the Satellites, then the Soviets might be inclined to proceed more cautiously in their moves against Berlin.^{2/}

^{2/} The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, offers the comment that the Soviets would be susceptible to pressures in this field only if the West produced evidence of a capability to support and protect anti-Soviet-regime movements. Without such evidence, he believes that the proposed activities would tend to firm the Soviets' determination to eliminate Western control and influence in West Berlin.

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9. Political Measures. As the posited US course of action unfolded, the Soviets would be alert to signs that it signified a fundamental shift in US policy which could affect the East-West competition on a broader front than Central Europe. In this connection, they would probably interpret steps to undertake a sustained expansion of the US defense effort as portending a generally harder and more aggressive American line over the entire range of confrontation. They would regard this as undesirable because they would believe that this turn in US policy would make it difficult to elicit a US response to possible future "soft tactics." This consideration, we believe, would weigh as heavily with them as would the prospect that they might have to adjust their economic plans over a long period in order to keep pace with the US effort with increased military expenditures of their own.

10. Measures Aimed at World Opinion. The USSR would certainly take the US courses of action postulated in our problem into full account in its already substantial propaganda campaign on the Berlin question. It would calculate that Western preparations of this sort would provide a hitherto unparalleled opportunity to heighten apprehensions in Europe and divide the members of NATO.

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Soviet efforts to influence European opinion would therefore place heavy stress on Soviet military might and the consequences of nuclear war, while at the same time emphasizing that, for the USSR's part, the path of negotiation remained open. For non-European audiences, the USSR would probably concentrate upon the alleged peaceful nature of its proposals and attempt to contrast them with the warlike posture of its opponents. It would seek to portray the West as lacking constructive political suggestions and unwilling to negotiate on a problem which endangered world peace.

III. REACTIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The Members of NATO

11. A US program of preparatory measures intended to demonstrate Western resolution over Berlin, and involving a commitment to general war if necessary, would confront NATO with a crucial test of the viability of the alliance. The immediate consequence in the NAC would probably be a strengthening of NATO's cohesion in the face of an impending crisis, coupled with a sense of relief that the US was asserting leadership.

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However, an undercurrent of misgiving would exist from the start, and if Western measures failed to produce a visibly sobering effect on the USSR, this feeling would grow. At this point, demands for an exhaustive attempt at negotiations would rapidly pick up strength. The chances are good that the members would cooperate in joint planning for contingency actions, but if tensions continued to increase, indications would probably arise that some of the members would be unwilling, in the final analysis, to resort to military action. In a time of crisis, much would depend on the actions of West Germany, France, and the UK.

12. West Germany. The West German Government would be quick to support in principle and cooperate in a NATO-wide comprehensive program of the sort postulated here. The German authorities would feel committed to follow the US lead on military preparations for a possible Berlin crisis, fearing that their failure to accept the same risks as the US would discredit the Federal Republic within the NATO alliance and have far-reaching adverse consequences for German interests in Berlin. The Germans are keenly aware of the existence of reservations concerning Berlin policy in the UK and other NATO countries, and they would

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