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Date: 2001

Soviet Policy Toward the United States in 1984

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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SNIE 11-9-84

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SOVIET POLICY TOWARD
THE UNITED STATES IN 1984

Information available as of 9 August 1984 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

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SCOPE NOTE

This Special National Intelligence Estimate examines current Soviet policy toward the United States and prospects for major changes during the remainder of 1984. In part, it is a contribution to the ongoing effort by the Intelligence Community to monitor the possibility that the Soviets may be preparing for some form of confrontation with the United States in the near term. This effort has assessed recent Soviet military activities as largely the product of longstanding or evolving plans, intended to increase Soviet strength for an intensified power struggle over the long term, rather than preparations for confrontation in the near term.

This SNIE's focus, however, is broader than that issue alone. It attempts a comprehensive assessment of current Soviet policy toward the United States and possibilities for sharp changes of course. Such possibilities include Soviet moves which instigate or exploit local crisis situations and also initiatives relating to arms control negotiations. Soviet views about the current US administration make the possibility of major Soviet initiatives to influence the November election, or to exploit the political environment of the campaign period, a central concern of this Estimate.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Current Soviet policy toward the United States expresses deep hostility to US aims and interests. It is shaped primarily by the Soviet perception that the United States is acting to alter the overall military power relationship, seeking to strengthen US alliances, and conducting regional security policies—all for the purpose of containing and reducing Soviet influence in world affairs. US policies threaten to undercut earlier Soviet expectations that the 1980s would be a period in which the USSR could, against the backdrop of its military power, expand its international influence at low risk, and enjoy the economic and diplomatic benefits of Western acceptance of its superpower status. US policies and pronouncements also contain a degree of challenge to the moral and political legitimacy claims of the Soviet regime which its leaders find unusually disturbing. Soviet policy is motivated by the desire to combat and, if possible, deflect US policies, and to create a more permissive environment in which Soviet relative military power and world influence can continue to grow.

Current Soviet policy toward the United States makes hostile initiatives in crisis areas, such as Central America and Pakistan, a distinct near-term possibility. However, we do not see in current Soviet political and military behavior preparation for a deliberate major confrontation with the United States in the near future.

The Soviets perceive that US policies directed against their objectives enjoy a considerable base of political support within the United States and in NATO. At the same time, they see weaknesses in that political base which can be exploited to alter or discredit US policies, making it possible to blunt the challenge posed by the United States and perhaps to return to a condition of detente on terms consistent with Soviet international ambitions.

The policy implications of these perceptions for Moscow are fairly straightforward, up to a point:

- First, Soviet leaders seem at present to believe that the likelihood that the United States will continue the policies of the past several years into the rest of the decade is high enough to require some political and military gearing up for a period of lasting and more intense struggle. How vigorous an effort this will require in the future is uncertain to them, and possibly in some dispute.

— Second, the Soviets believe they can influence the content, effectiveness, and durability of US policies they see directed against them. The rigidity and hostility of Soviet policy toward the United States, on one hand, and attempts to take initiative and show flexibility, on the other, are aimed at negating those policies. Up to now, they have evidently calculated that rigidity and hostility are the most promising posture. But their recent performance and the outlook for the future plausibly call this into question.

Moscow's policies toward the United States are focused on undercutting the domestic and alliance bases of public support for US policies and programs. Hostile propaganda, which blames the United States for an increased danger of war and for diplomatic rigidity with regard to regional security and the major arms control issues, is used to put the US administration on the defensive where possible and to excite opposition to Washington's policies.

At the same time, a hostile stance toward the West is seen by Soviet leaders as convenient for exhorting greater discipline, sacrifice, and vigilance on the Soviet home front, where the Politburo is preoccupied with a range of complex problems. These problems include stagnating economic performance and the resistance of the system to reform, flagging social morale and the dwindling effectiveness of exhortation and disciplinary measures to boost worker performance, continuing isolated dissent, ethnic nationalism, "antisocial" attitudes among youth, and some doubts among the elite as to top-leadership effectiveness. Commanding a great deal of their attention, these problems create a setting in which a deliberately stimulated image of the USSR's being embattled abroad is used by the Politburo to reinforce its political and ideological control at home.

An alternative view is that, while the Soviet leaders recognize the existence of a number of longstanding domestic problems, they are not so preoccupied with addressing these issues that it prevents them from acting decisively and resolutely on foreign policies. Moreover, the holder of this view also believes that, while there may be some criticisms among party functionaries, there is no evidence that these criticisms affect Soviet policies.¹

Although there may be debates among Soviet leaders about tactics toward the United States, we believe that current Soviet policy, combining a dominant hard line with steps and hints of progress, is based on consensus in the Politburo. The uncertain political power of

¹ The holder of this view is the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency.

General Secretary Chernenko, his and other Politburo members' limited foreign affairs expertise, and Gromyko's long experience as Foreign Minister have probably given the latter influence over Soviet foreign policy tactics he has not enjoyed under any previous General Secretary. We doubt, however, that he is unilaterally able to enforce his preferences over the objections of the rest of the Politburo, or that explicit contention on foreign policy—as recently rumored with respect to the USSR's space arms control initiative—led to his being temporarily overruled. The consensus-maintaining mores of the Politburo and the skills of its members in avoiding isolation make such showdown situations unlikely. Rumors of foreign policy conflict in the Politburo are probably exaggerations of more routine debate over tactics, and may be deliberately spread to influence Western perceptions.

In the last few months, the Soviets have been amenable to progress on several US-Soviet bilateral issues and have made a prominent initiative on antisatellite systems/space weapons negotiations. On bilateral issues, such as the hotline upgrade and the renewal of the technical and economic cooperation accord, the Soviets appear motivated by a desire to preserve the basis for substantive dialogue on issues of direct benefit to them, despite their underlying hostility toward the present US administration. The space weapons initiative, on the other hand, was intended primarily to stimulate concessions from the United States, or political controversy about them, in an election period when the Soviets judge that the administration wants to display progress in US-Soviet relations. Failing US concessions, the Soviets want, at a minimum, to deny the US administration any basis for claiming that it can manage constructive US-Soviet relations while pursuing anti-Soviet military and foreign policy goals.

The USSR's as-yet inconclusive initiative on space weapons is an example of the policy mix being pursued. Soviet behavior on this subject is motivated by a profound concern that the United States will develop strategic defense capabilities—whether space-based or an ABM version—that would seriously undercut the credibility of Soviet strategy and by a strong desire to achieve real constraints, by agreement or political influence, on what the Soviets regard as threatening long-term technology challenges by the United States in space weapons. This desire will persist and shape future Soviet actions whether there are space weapons talks in the near future or not. But short-term political considerations have clearly influenced the Soviets' tactics so far. They proposed specific talks in Vienna in September for a combination of reasons: to put Washington on the defensive if it refused, to coax it into major concessions if it chose not to refuse, and to stimulate political

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interference from Congress and elsewhere with US ASAT and space weapons programs. The Soviets have expected all of these possibilities to be greater in an election season, and have evidently been willing, for a time, to risk the US administration's claiming progress on arms control for its own political advantage. Throughout the diplomatic exchanges that followed their proposal of 29 June, the Soviets combined a dominant line of hostility and accusation that the United States blocks the talks with repeated hints that compromise leading to Vienna is possible.

The USSR is currently following a deliberate dual-track policy toward the United States. It involves, on one hand, hostile propaganda on all subjects, hostile acts such as harassment of US diplomats and tampering with access to Berlin, stubborn resistance to compromise on central arms control issues, and incremental increases in military capability dramatized by exercises and INF-related deployments. It has also allowed, on the other hand, forward movement on selected bilateral issues and contained hints of progress on arms control and wider US-Soviet issues if the United States makes concessions. Sustained Soviet efforts to undermine US interests and policies, from Central America, to Europe, to the Middle East, are an integral part of this policy course.

We expect this mixed Soviet policy to continue in the near future. It provides a basis for denying political benefits to the US administration—which the Soviets expect, but are not sure, will be reelected—while exploring for concessions and a new tactical base for dealing with the administration in a following term. This tactical posture leaves open the possibility of joining ASAT/space weapons talks in September if the United States appears ready to make inviting proposals, and also the possibility of refusing such talks, or walking out on them, if the administration looks politically vulnerable to such moves.

As of now, we believe the chances are well less than even that the Soviets will see it in their interest to start some form of ASAT/space weapons talks in September. They have probably not yet conclusively decided this, notwithstanding high-level assertions that talks are not expected. In any case, they will handle the matter for the short-term purpose of stimulating pressures for a US ASAT test moratorium and to coax concessions on the agenda and substantive issues. Should such talks begin, it is highly likely that the Soviets will hold over them the constant threat of a walkout or suspension to keep up this pressure. If they see the US administration as unbending on Soviet demands, divided within, and politically vulnerable as the election approaches, there is a significant chance they would stage some sort of walkout for political effect. It is somewhat more likely, however, that they would remain at the talks,

press for a scheduled adjournment or suspension before the elections, and maintain a drumfire of public and private accusations that the administration is blocking progress on a vital arms issue that could open the way to progress on the rest of the strategic arms control agenda. This tactic would maintain pressure on Washington for concessions, keep the issue alive during the campaign, but not damage irretrievably the prospects for resuming the game should the administration be reelected.

Soviet desires to exacerbate the political vulnerabilities of the administration or to exploit inhibitions on its behavior in the preelection period could play a role in Soviet behavior toward potentially confrontational situations that may arise in regions of tension, or could be instigated by Soviet action. On the whole, Soviet behavior toward regional crisis contingencies will be governed more by local opportunities and risks than by the Soviet reading of the US political environment. As regards the latter, while the Soviets may see opportunities to hurt the US administration politically or to exploit election-year inhibitions, they will also reflect on a spotty record of assessing these effects, realizing that a Soviet challenge might strengthen the administration's standing and generate support for a forceful response unwelcome to Moscow. The following examines possible contingencies we believe most worthy of attention, and we have reached judgments as to their probability:

— In *Central America*, an insurgent offensive of limited scope and moderate effectiveness is likely to occur in El Salvador in late summer or the fall, and the Soviets expect it to undermine Washington's claim that its policies there are working. There is evidence that the Soviets are arranging the shipment of L-39 trainer/combat aircraft to Nicaragua, possibly before November. Although the United States has made clear that it will not accept MIGs or other combat jets in Nicaragua, the Soviets would count on the less capable L-39 to introduce ambiguities into the situation and to complicate a US response. The Soviets would be betting that the United States is unwilling militarily to challenge the L-39 deployment before the election, and constrained by its prior acceptance to tolerate the planes thereafter. The Soviets may intend to introduce more advanced fighter aircraft (such as MIG-21s) into Nicaragua at some point in the future. Their decision on MIGs or other advanced aircraft would depend principally on US reaction to deployment of the L-39s. The Soviets could also exploit the availability of Nicaragua's large new military airbase for visits by Bear reconnais-

sance and ASW aircraft, to shape the political environment for other deployment actions, and for military activity, such as maritime monitoring at the approaches of the Panama Canal. An alternative view is that the estimate places too much emphasis on the L-39 issue. If these aircraft are shipped to Nicaragua, Moscow would perceive their introduction as only one of a number of increments in the Sandinista regime's military capability—others would include the construction of a large military airfield at Punta Huete and three Soviet-equipped communications intercept facilities. In evaluating the probable US response to the MIGs, Moscow would consider US reaction to all of such increments, not to the L-39s alone. The Soviet concern not to provoke the United States into military action that has kept Moscow from delivering MIGs to Nicaragua for over two years would continue in play.²

- The Soviets may take hostile action against *Pakistan* to end its support of the Afghan resistance, the tenacity of which appears to have increased the Soviets' frustration and perhaps led to doubts as to whether they ought to be satisfied with their protracted strategy for imposing control on Afghanistan. [

] The Soviets cannot direct Indian actions against *Pakistan*. But we believe that the likelihood of India's taking action over the next 12 months for its own reasons has risen distinctly, and we believe that the Soviets are in consultation with New Delhi about the situation and strongly motivated to exploit it.³ It is somewhat less likely that the Soviets will make direct but limited attacks on *Pakistan's* border because this would present the best political circumstances for increased US support while not altering Zia's policies. Nevertheless, given Moscow's strong incentives to try to change *Pakistan's* policies toward the Afghan war, recent signs of increased Soviet pressure on Islamabad, and Moscow's inability to command Indian action against *Pakistan*, the prospect of unilateral Soviet political and military pressures on *Pakistan*, such as limited air attacks and hot-pursuit raids on border sites, cannot be ruled out. The Soviets may decide to

³ The holder of this view is the Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

increase the frequency and scale of limited cross-border raids in an attempt to force President Zia to rein in the insurgents, but we believe large-scale Soviet military actions against Pakistan remain unlikely.

— In the Persian Gulf region, escalation of the *Iran-Iraq* war and the prospect of US intervention might induce the USSR preemptively to apply military pressure on Iran to end the conflict and to assert a Soviet role as a superpower in the Gulf region. Various developments in the Gulf are possible, but in the short term the most likely Soviet responses will be efforts to gain increased political influence in Iran and other regional states, rather than confrontational military actions. An Iranian victory over Iraq and Soviet reaction to it could lead to a Soviet invasion of Iran, and thereby to a direct military confrontation with the United States. But we believe this course of events is highly unlikely in the time frame of this Estimate. There is no evidence to suggest that the Soviets are readying their military forces in the region to exert visible pressure or to take local action, but they could be brought within weeks to sufficient readiness to attack Iran or play a part in a Soviet pressure campaign against Iran.

— In *Berlin*, where the Soviets have been acting to remind the West of its vulnerable access, the Soviets could escalate pressures to stimulate fear and tension among the United States and its allies. Some increase in Soviet actions to test US and allied reactions cannot be ruled out in the short term. We believe any major escalation of pressure is very unlikely because the risk of counterproductive political effects in the West or a genuine confrontation is higher than the Soviets wish to run now.

Taken together, these regional conflict situations, in which US and Soviet interests are opposed and the potential for local conflict escalation is significant, generate possibilities for limited US-Soviet confrontation over coming months which we cannot rule out, although we judge them unlikely. Circumstances could arise in which local events combine with Soviet desire to gain local objectives and, secondarily, to embarrass the United States, resulting in a degree of confrontation the USSR did not originally seek. Domestic political conditions in the United States will play some role in Soviet calculations. The Soviets would expect the election period to impose inhibitions on US responses to their initiatives or other developments which would enhance their prospects of local success. To a lesser extent, they may expect regional crises to put the US administration on the defensive regarding its overall foreign policy. At

the same time, uncertainties about US reactions to challenge and about the political effects of Soviet challenges on US politics will continue to be a restraining influence on Moscow's actions.

Recent Soviet military and political actions have created concern that the Soviets may be preparing for a major military confrontation with the United States. During the past six months or so the Soviets have pursued a vigorous program of large-scale military exercises, have engaged in anomalous behavior with respect to troop rotation and withdrawn military support for harvest activities, have demonstratively deployed weapon systems in response to NATO's INF deployments, and have heightened internal vigilance and security activities. Amidst continuing propaganda and intermittent reporting [

] about Soviet fears of impending war, there is concern that recent Soviet military and defense-related activities might be read as revealing (or attempting to cloud) definite Soviet preparations for a near-term confrontation with the United States that could sharply heighten the risk of a general war.

There is also concern about the possibility that the Soviet leadership might be of a mind to attempt a "now-or-never" effort to dramatically shift the terms of the US-Soviet power struggle through central confrontation, fearful that future Soviet domestic problems may make it excessively difficult for the USSR to achieve its military and international goals in the future. It is feared that Soviet military activities could be in preparation for such a confrontation.

We strongly believe that Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States. Also, we do not believe that Soviet war talk and other actions "mask" Soviet preparations for an imminent move toward confrontation on the part of the USSR.

Supporting the conclusion, the analysis underlying the present Estimate has led us to judge, further:

- The Soviet leadership displays an expectation of intensified power competition with the United States in the years ahead, along with some hope that US policies can be deflected by a combination of stubbornness and cajolery. It does not now display a view that dangerous confrontation may be required to defend its interests and advance its power.
- While pleased with the USSR's improved military situation achieved in the past decade, the Soviet leadership is not so confident in it that it would deliberately seek out a central test of US-Soviet strategic strength to "keep history on track."

- Patterns of power and decisionmaking in the Soviet Politburo at present are very unlikely to generate initiatives that are politically dangerous for its members, which a risky confrontational strategy would be.
- Examined comprehensively, Soviet military and defense-related activities are in line with long-evolving plans and patterns, rather than with sharp acceleration of preparations for a major war. Noteworthy by their absence are widespread logistics, supply, and defense-economic preparations obligated by Soviet war doctrines and operational requirements. We have high confidence in our ability to detect them if they were occurring on a wide scale.

To be sure, Soviet propaganda and other information activities have deliberately tried to create the image of a dangerous international environment, of Soviet fear of war, and of possible Soviet willingness to contemplate dangerous actions. Some, although by no means all, recent Soviet military activity appears to have been directed in part at supporting this campaign, especially large and visible Soviet military exercises. We believe that the apprehensive outlook the Soviets have toward the long-term struggle with the United States has prompted them to respond with a controlled display of military muscle.

[However, in the total context of Soviet foreign and domestic developments, we judge it very unlikely that the Soviets are now preparing for a major war or for confrontation that could lead to a major war in the short run.

It is possible that, following the US elections and their reading of the overall political results, the Soviets could adjust their present foreign policy tactics to give more emphasis to steps of limited accommodation. Their aim would be to encourage US political trends that would deflect or alter the defense and foreign policies of the United States which the Soviets see directed against them. They would seek a return in some form to the detente environment of the early 1970s in which they enjoyed many political and economic benefits of East-West amity but

suffered few constraints on the expansion of their military power and international activities directed against the West, especially in the Third World. Although political circumstances in the West, both in the United States and in Europe, may encourage them to make more serious attempts in this direction than in the past several years, the present Soviet leaders appreciate that detente consistent with longstanding Soviet aims requires fundamental changes in US policies, namely a substantial US retreat from efforts to contain Soviet power. They also appreciate that this is unlikely to be accomplished solely by diplomatic maneuver on their part.

It is highly unlikely that the Soviets will fundamentally moderate their military and international aims and shift to a policy of genuine and far-reaching accommodation toward the United States in the period of this Estimate. This could occur in the years ahead as a result of the USSR's facing greater internal problems and external obstacles. For the present and the foreseeable future, Soviet leaders are likely to remain attached to expanding their military and international power. They will try to manage the Soviet internal system to sustain these objectives. They would like to achieve a form of East-West detente that facilitates these objectives while limiting the costs and risks of pursuing them. They are not yet ready for a form of detente that forswears the expansion of their power.

In brief summary, the near-term projections we have made are as follows (percentages are merely for display of qualitative judgment; note that judgments of probable Soviet behavior in some cases are contingent on prior developments having a lower probability):

- The USSR is likely to continue through the remainder of 1984 the mixed policy toward the United States observed during the summer months so far, with heavy emphasis on hostility and rigidity, but with an undercurrent of hints about progress in bilateral relations and arms control (70 percent).
- It is now unlikely, but not ruled out, that the USSR will agree at the last minute to commence space weapons talks in September (20 percent). The odds rise sharply if the United States agrees to an ASAT test moratorium (70 percent).
- Should space weapons talks begin in September, there is a chance that the Soviets will contrive some sort of breakoff to damage the US administration politically (30 percent), but more likely that they will simply accuse the United States of blocking substantive progress (70 percent).

- A **moderately** effective insurgent offensive is very likely to occur in El Salvador in late summer or the fall, and the Soviets will welcome it for putting significant although not decisive political pressure on Washington (90 percent).
- It is likely that the Soviets will introduce L-39 jet aircraft into Nicaragua (70 percent). It is unlikely that more advanced fighters (such as MIG-21s) will be introduced before November (10 percent). Should they successfully introduce L-39s, then the probability of their sending more advanced fighters rises. See the alternative view, held by the Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, as referenced in footnote 2. The Soviets could also use the new large airfield soon to be completed for visits by Bear reconnaissance and ASW aircraft.
- Should India evince interest in attacking Pakistan [] the Soviets probably would be privately supportive, and probably would agree to provide intelligence and some logistic support (70 percent). The Soviets' main aim would be an end to Pakistan's support of the Afghan resistance.
- There is also a serious possibility that the Soviets will take escalated unilateral military steps such as airstrikes and hot-pursuit actions to pressure Islamabad toward this end in the months ahead (40 percent). A major Soviet attack on Pakistan, requiring new deployments and some weeks of preparation, is very unlikely during the period of this Estimate (5 percent).
- Near-term Soviet behavior toward the more probable developments in the Iran-Iraq war is likely to be continued efforts toward political openings in Tehran and among the Persian Gulf states (80 percent). Only in the event of dramatic military success by Iran against Iraq (10 percent) or major US intervention on Iranian soil are the Soviets likely to take direct military measures toward intervention (70 percent).
- The Soviets are unlikely to escalate substantially their present very low-key pressures on Berlin access (10 percent). They may, however, test Western reactions by small increases in the degree and visibility of pressures they are now applying (30 percent).
- There is some likelihood that the Soviets will try, following the US elections, a mix of tactics toward the United States that give greater emphasis to flexibility on arms control and movement on bilateral issues, without giving up fundamental positions (30 percent). Continuation of present policy mix well into 1985 is more likely (70 percent).

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- It is highly improbable that the Soviets will shift to more far-reaching accommodations toward the United States during the period of this Estimate (5 percent).
- It is highly unlikely that the USSR is now preparing for and will move deliberately into a visible posture of direct, high-level military confrontation with the United States during the next six months (5 percent). It cannot be ruled out, however, that the USSR could move quickly into such a posture as a result of a local crisis escalation not now planned or sought by Moscow (10 percent).

DISCUSSION

I. CURRENT SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES

A. The Content of the Current Line

1. The Soviets are pursuing policies that express deep political hostility toward the United States. Soviet tactics on arms control and bilateral issues have been more activist and have attempted to display more flexibility since early summer than during the previous six months or so. The dominant thrust of Soviet policy, however, remains highly combative toward US interests and stubbornly resistant to compromise on all major arms control and security issues. Soviet policy continues to serve and be molded by the Soviet desire to achieve and maintain overall military superiority over the United States and its coalition partners. It aims at preserving the USSR's gains and expanding its international power against what the Soviets regard as serious challenges from the United States.
2. The Soviets accuse the United States of pursuing the most malign goals in world affairs, of seeking to overturn the strategic "parity" created in the 1970s, of being totally insincere about desiring arms control and improvement in East-West relations, of increasing the danger of nuclear war, and of seeking to destabilize the Soviet internal system. The US administration is frequently depicted to foreign and domestic audiences as following in the footsteps of Nazism. On the diplomatic front, both in what they do and what they refuse to do, the Soviets are striving to undermine the domestic and alliance support for the policies and the survival of the present US administration.
3. The hostility of Soviet policy today is new in degree, but not in content. Soviet propaganda has been blaming the United States for raising the danger of nuclear war since a Central Committee resolution of mid-1980 which followed NATO's dual-track decision on INF and measures taken by the Carter administration after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The identification of the United States with Nazism was a common feature of Soviet propaganda until the early 1970s. Although the Soviets charge the present US administration with carrying US-Soviet relations to their lowest point in several decades, they also recognize that those relations have been declining since the mid-1970s.
4. Soviet refusal to negotiate on START and INF, a central feature of Moscow's current policy, was triggered by the onset of NATO's INF deployments but continues to be motivated by the larger Soviet purpose of creating a worldwide atmosphere of anxiety for which the United States is held to blame. Soviet withdrawal from the Olympics was intended to signal the extent of deterioration in US-Soviet relations and thereby to strike a blow that was expected to embarrass Washington in a very political year. The Soviet initiative on ASAT and space weapons talks has been managed, so far, in order to saddle Washington with blame for rejecting an opportunity to discuss a major arms issue.
5. On regional security issues throughout the world, the current Soviet line is that Washington is ultimately responsible for all tensions, seeking to exploit them for its "imperial" purposes, willing to risk major conflict, and thwarting all reasonable solutions. In many areas of the Third World, where the Soviets see themselves locked in a historic struggle with the United States, they remain active in supplying arms, seeking to influence regional politics, and conducting local penetration activities to expand their power and to protect it where it has been established. Although Moscow publicly proclaims its desires for cooperation on regional security issues, confidential diplomatic exchanges with the United States and its allies reveal little, if any, interest by Moscow in this direction. Although less shrill than their public propaganda, their private messages are wholly of indictment and complaint.
6. Current Soviet policy toward the United States has a visible internal political purpose. The supposedly increased tensions—for which Washington is held responsible—are constant preambles to exhortations by Soviet leaders to greater effort, discipline, and sacrifice by the Soviet population. They are cited in demands for greater internal vigilance and security.

They preface repeated calls by Soviet military and political leaders for measures to strengthen Soviet defenses.

7. On close examination the overall image of hostility and intransigence displayed by Soviet policy is, nevertheless, marked by elements that qualify the dominant theme. Soviet pronouncements make clear what Moscow wants in US-Soviet relations: return to the condition of detente as they saw it in the early 1970s. In Soviet eyes, this is not a fundamental compromise of East-West antagonisms, but an environment in which Moscow is relatively free to expand its military power, to extend its influence in the Third World at low risk, to conduct political and ideological campaigns against the West, and to enjoy the economic and political benefits of "equality" as a superpower member of the international community, while the United States is relatively constrained by agreement and political factors from contesting these Soviet policies. What appears a good deal less certain to Soviet leaders is whether return to this kind of detente is possible, and, if not, what pattern of US-Soviet relations is feasible for them to pursue.

8. Soviet propaganda directed principally at internal audiences injects the recurrent note that, after all, East-West tensions and the dangers of war have not gotten irretrievably out of hand, that US anti-Soviet policies are destined to be unsuccessful because the "correlation of forces" and "objective factors" will thwart them, and that "healthy forces" in the West can be counted on to ease tensions and revive detente eventually.

9. Soviet official intransigence on START and INF is accompanied by occasional private feelers on how to get dialogue on these issues moving again, while exploring for signs of US willingness to make concessions. Although the aim of putting the United States on the political defensive has determined Soviet tactics on the ASAT/space initiative, Moscow also has a genuine desire to achieve—by some combination of political influences and agreement—real constraints on US space weapons programs which could negate some current Soviet advantages in these areas and could eventually strain the USSR's strategic posture and outpace its technological responsiveness. Meanwhile, the Soviets maintain some aspects of the arms control dialogue on Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction, on Conference on Disarmament in Europe, and on chemical weapons. They have portrayed an eagerness to move on the Comprehensive Test Ban.

10. The hostile atmosphere of the past six months has not prevented the Soviets from moving on a variety of selected bilateral issues, from which they can obtain some benefit or which do not require compromising their strategic concerns. These issues are modest in themselves, but invested with a potential political impact somewhat contrary to the dominant thrust of Soviet policy. These include renewal of the trade and economic cooperation agreement, hotline upgrade, and progress on some consular issues and exchanges. During regular talks under the Incidents-at-Sea Agreement in late May, the Soviets showed exceptional hospitality to the American delegation (not atypical for military-to-military exchanges) and made a number of very forthcoming suggestions on ship visits and air safety. In confidential and high-level diplomatic interactions with the United States, which have been sustained fairly consistently throughout the last several years, the Soviets have been sober and businesslike. Although substantively intransigent on most central issues, especially arms control, their diplomatic communications have displayed neither the tone of alarm nor the belligerence generated in their official propaganda.

11. During the last six months, certain nuances in Soviet public, diplomatic, and private communications have suggested some experimentation or searching, if only for tactical purposes, for openings to be more flexible without jeopardy to basic positions:

- Around the turn of the year, [] and some Soviet leaders' statements implied that the Soviets did not wish their recent walkout on START and INF to lock them into an immobile diplomatic posture.
- Chernenko's 2 March "election" speech referred to the possibility of a "breakthrough" in East-West relations, dependent on significant US concessions.
- Nongovernment delegations and diplomatic observers in Moscow report a very frigid political atmosphere in March-May, and then a certain softening in the Soviet tone in late May and June, during which progress on some bilateral issues was made.
- The Soviet ASAT/space weapons demarche of 29 June, foreshadowed by a multitude of private and official signals of Soviet preoccupation with this topic, was clearly an initiative to get Soviet diplomacy toward the United States out of its

frozen state, although certainly motivated in large part by combative political attitudes toward the United States.

- Throughout this period, the Soviets have sought through high-level contacts with US allies to transmit pressures for change in Washington's policies and to undermine allied support for them.

12. In sum, especially since late spring, the Soviets have been moving on a dual track in which the dominant posture of hostility, suspicion, and refusal to entertain compromise on major arms control and security issues has combined with real, but less visible, efforts to sustain a working relationship on a range of bilateral matters.

13. Their major—and as yet inconclusive—initiative on ASAT/space weapons, made on 29 June, is an example of this policy. Soviet behavior on this subject is motivated by a profound concern that the United States will develop strategic defense capabilities—whether space-based or an ABM version—that would seriously undercut the credibility of Soviet strategy and by a strong desire to achieve real constraints on what the Soviets regard as threatening long-term technology challenges by the United States in space weapons, a desire which will persist and influence future Soviet actions whether there are space weapons talks in the near future or not. But short-term political considerations have clearly influenced the Soviets' tactics so far. They proposed specific talks in Vienna in September for a combination of reasons: to put Washington on the defensive if it refused, to coax it into major concessions if it chose not to refuse, and to stimulate political opposition from Congress and elsewhere to US ASAT and space weapons programs. The Soviets have expected all of these possibilities to be greater in an election season, and, in order to test them, apparently were willing for a time to risk the US administration's claiming progress on arms control for its political advantage. Throughout the month of diplomatic exchanges that followed their proposal, the Soviets combined a dominant line of intransigence and accusation that the United States blocks the talks with repeated hints that compromise leading to Vienna is possible.

B. Soviet Perceptions and Foreign Policy Calculations

14. The motivation for Soviet policy at present lies in the perception that the United States under its

current administration is a more consistently hostile opponent of the USSR's interests and aspirations than it has faced in many years. At the core of this perception is the overall military power relationship and the prospects for its being altered. By the late 1970s the Soviets believed they had created a total military posture which was, although not a plateau on which they could rest their efforts, a much more satisfactory basis for the defense of their security interests and the advancement of their power in the surrounding world than had existed for decades. They expected that, in the 1980s, this military framework would help them gain many of the economic and political benefits of detente and also expanded influence at Western expense around their periphery and in the Third World, however reluctantly acquiesced in by the West.

15. Today they see the United States acting on a broad front to undercut these expectations, first by pursuing an array of military programs that might shift the central strategic and regional power equations against Soviet interests, and second by pursuing foreign policies that both deny the benefits of detente on the terms the Soviets have sought and mobilize US allies and regional security partners against the USSR. They see the Sino-US relationship, despite persistent frictions in it and Beijing's determination to follow a completely independent course, as directed mainly against Soviet interests.

16. Soviet leaders believe US policies are governed by deep anti-Soviet convictions in Washington. In their view, not only is the United States seeking to contain Soviet power by its military and political initiatives, but aiming to use the larger power struggle, along with political and propaganda efforts, to challenge the legitimacy and ultimately the stability of Soviet control over its Third World clients, its East European dependencies, and even its domestic order. Although they have long propagated the dogma that the ultimate threats to human welfare and security lie in the "nature of imperialism"—above all US imperialism—Soviet leaders are greatly dismayed to hear from US leaders the contention that the dictatorial and acquisitive nature of the Soviet system itself is the historic threat to peace and other human values.

17. In the Soviet view, American leaders cannot be other than essentially anti-Soviet. But since Stalin, the Soviets have increasingly believed that the United States would more often than not be governed by "realistic" political elements who would recognize the need to accommodate not only to the existence of the

Soviet system but to its expanding international influence and military power as well. In this respect, the broad challenge to the legitimacy of its power and moral claims heard from the United States recently has been a disturbing jolt to the Kremlin.

18. The Soviets perceive that current US policy toward the USSR enjoys a considerable base of support at home and among key allies. As a consequence, the US administration has been more successful than not in gaining approval for its military and foreign policy initiatives, for its arms control stance, and for surviving unsuccessful efforts, such as in Lebanon. On the other hand, the Soviets perceive and are intensely interested in the vulnerabilities of this political base. They look to a whole range of "contradictions" in the economic development of the West generally, in relations among US allies, and in US domestic politics as sources of opposition to current US policies. They proclaim—as much out of hope as conviction—that these sources of opposition, along with the strength of the USSR, will prevent the United States from turning back the clock of history on the East-West power struggle. Above all, they look to the peace issue and popular concern about nuclear arms as a countervailing force which they can stimulate and exploit. The policy implications of these perceptions for Moscow are fairly straightforward, up to a point:

— First, Soviet leaders seem at present to believe that the likelihood that the United States will continue the policies of the past several years into the rest of the decade is high enough to require some political and military gearing up for a period of lasting and more intense strategic struggle. How vigorous an effort this will require in the future is uncertain to them, and possibly in some dispute.

— Second, they believe that they can influence the content, effectiveness, and durability of US policies they see directed against them. The rigidity and hostility of Soviet policy toward the United States, on one hand, and attempts to take initiative and show flexibility, on the other, are aimed at deflecting and discrediting those US policies. Up to now, they have evidently calculated that rigidity and hostility are the more promising posture. But their recent performance and the outlook for the future plausibly call this into question.

19. How the Soviets read the upcoming US presidential election is unavoidably an important factor in assessing their current foreign policy behavior. Soviet

concern about US domestic politics is not unique to the present situation. The Soviets always seek to base their policies on long-term interests and calculation. For those policies to be successful, however, has obliged them, especially since the late 1960s, to tailor their tactics to a reading of the domestic political trends in the West which they wish to exploit or temper. The political prospects of the present US administration are therefore of keen interest to them.

20. Many Soviet experts on the United States profess conviction that President Reagan will be reelected. Although Soviet propaganda has taken care not to applaud his opponents, it is easy to see that Soviet leaders would like him to be defeated. But the more relevant question is whether they think they can usefully and safely influence or exploit the US election.

21. Numerous sources report a Soviet determination not to do anything that might help President Reagan's reelection. This is a political stance resting on more than just pique. The Soviets have calculated, thus far, that an improvement in the US-Soviet atmosphere and genuine progress on arms control issues, while it might yield specific benefits of interest to them and offer some opportunity to deflect the administration's policies, would probably have the net effect of demonstrating that the United States can manage stable US-Soviet relations while also pressing military and foreign policies fundamentally directed against the USSR. They have been very unwilling to concede this. They have not expected to affect the outcome of the presidential race thereby, but have expected to keep the administration on the defensive regarding US-Soviet relations through the campaign and into the next term, perhaps influencing the behavior of Congress and the administration's freedom of political action. The Soviets clearly have operated on the belief that election pressures enhance the eagerness of Washington to display some positive developments on arms control and, hence, the likelihood of some US concessions on ASAT/space weapons issues so long as they keep prospects for negotiations barely alive. Moreover, they may calculate that an administration on the defensive about US-Soviet relations and otherwise seized with the pressures of an election campaign will be more than normally inhibited in its responses to regional crisis developments in which the Soviets have interests or take initiatives.

C. Internal Factors

22. Soviet propaganda frequently accuses the United States of seeking to destabilize the Soviet system by,

among other means, forcing the Soviet Union into arms efforts which the system cannot sustain. The frequency with which the Soviets accuse the United States of this policy and the energy with which they dismiss its prospects for success suggest some anxiety in the minds of Soviet leaders about the ability of the Soviet system to deal with intensified and protracted strategic struggle.

23. The Soviet leadership continues to be faced with a whole range of internal problems:

- The performance of the Soviet economy and the challenge of finding any combination of politically acceptable reforms that will materially improve it.
- Declining social morale and dwindling effectiveness of exhortations and disciplinary measures in motivating worker effort.
- Continuing manifestations of isolated political dissent, ethnic nationalism, and antisocial attitudes, especially among youth, which are worrisome despite massive and effective means of control in the hands of the regime.
- Doubts within the Soviet political elite as to whether the current senior Politburo members can effectively address Soviet foreign and domestic problems. An alternative view is that, while the Soviet leaders recognize the existence of a number of longstanding domestic problems, they are not so preoccupied with addressing these issues that it prevents them from acting decisively and resolutely on foreign policies. Moreover, the holder of this view also believes that, while there may be some criticisms among party functionaries, there is no evidence that these criticisms affect Soviet policies.*

24. [we have some evidence that Soviet military leaders question the ability of the work force to tolerate the sacrifices of intensified defense efforts. To the extent these sentiments are known to, or present in, the Politburo, they would cause considerable anxiety.

25. The internal problems of managing the country dominate the agendas of the Soviet leadership in the best of times. The array of problems facing them now has probably increased their preoccupation with internal affairs. Recent Soviet policies toward the United

* The holder of this view is the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency.

States and the outside world generally may to a significant degree be affected by these internal preoccupations. Rigid policies and hostile, defensive rhetoric toward the outside world are a natural reflex of Soviet leaders when they sense that the system itself is under challenge. These policies may endure even when they are neither effective in advancing Soviet interests abroad nor very helpful in easing the system's internal difficulties. For example, Soviet war-scare propaganda may have had counterproductive effects at home by stimulating the population's fears that the military power for which they pay so dearly does not really protect them. This may have stimulated intermittent assurances from various spokesmen that the dangers of the international environment should not be exaggerated. Chernenko has reassured a working-class audience that the demands of defense in a tense international period will not require overtime on military production. See the alternative view, held by the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, as referenced in footnote 4.

26. Somewhat akin to their internal concerns, Soviet leaders face challenges to their interests in Eastern Europe where social and economic problems are taxing the effectiveness of Communist regimes and those regimes are pressed to experiment with reforms and ties to the West which run counter to Soviet interests in ideological orthodoxy and subservience to Moscow. In one degree or another, all the East European members of the Warsaw Pact except Czechoslovakia are pursuing domestic and foreign policy agendas that pose challenges to Soviet interests and control, although the USSR maintains basic limits on East European deviation.

27. A balancing act is evident in current Soviet tactics toward Eastern Europe. Seeking a high degree of visible solidarity on such issues as INF, the Olympics, and dealings with the West, the Soviets have had to temper or delay some efforts to enhance economic integration in CEMA.

28. The state of the top political leadership itself is a factor in the shaping of Soviet foreign policy. [the present pattern of Politburo decisionmaking has its several experts, such as Ustinov on military matters, framing issues while final decisions are reached collectively. Collectivity is constantly touted in Politburo pronouncements. Limited foreign policy experience on the part of Chernenko and other senior Politburo members has apparently given Gromyko a leading role on foreign policy decisions which he did not enjoy

under previous General Secretaries. Recent rumors about dispute over the ASAT/space weapons initiative between a majority of the Politburo, who allegedly favored it, and Gromyko, who opposed but was overruled, are probably overdrawn. We suspect some argument among Soviet leaders over tactics, but are wary of such reports because of the occasional Soviet interest in depicting a "hawk-dove" dichotomy in the leadership to influence Western policy.

29. Given our uncertainties about the exact state of play in Soviet leadership politics, assessments about the influence of personalities and factions would at this point be little more than guesses. It is possible that complaining about Gromyko's policy judgment on the part of others eclipsed by his role, such as the international affairs specialists in the Central Committee apparatus, could exert an influence on future Soviet policymaking.

30. Recent statements by Soviet military and political leaders and somewhat divergent pronouncements as to how dangerous the international environment really is, against the backdrop of obvious economic problems faced by the system, strongly indicate that important resource allocation issues now intersect sharply with foreign policymaking. As it prepares for the 27th CPSU Congress scheduled for 1986, rewrites the party program, and builds the 1986-90 Five-Year Plan, the leadership is now addressing what the general directions of foreign and domestic policy ought to be over the rest of the decade and beyond. The key issue is whether US behavior and the challenges it poses to Soviet strategic interests demand an increase in the Soviet military burden, and how the Soviet system can bear such an increase while managing its other problems. In some fashion the leadership is probably grappling with the question whether near-term departures in policy might have a better chance of advancing Soviet interests against the United States and of doing so at lower long-term cost to the system than the policies currently being pursued.

31. An alternative view is that the recent statements by Soviet military and political leaders concerning the dangerous international environment have a domestic propaganda function of rationalizing the demands for greater productivity on the part of the labor force, continued consumer deprivation, and ideological vigilance in the society. In this view, these statements against the backdrop of economic problems do not indicate that important resource allocation issues are impacting on Soviet foreign policy making. Although the USSR is faced with continuing economic problems,

this view holds that it is unlikely that the Soviet leadership will reduce military spending. On the basis of observed military activity—the number of weapon systems in production, weapons development, programs, and trends in capital expansion in the defense industries—this view expects Soviet military spending to grow.³

D. Possible Arguments Within the Kremlin for and Against Near-Term Policy Change

32. We have indirect evidence of Soviet leadership debate over future foreign policy direction, largely in the form of varying lines on the danger of war and the balance of positive versus negative features of the international scene. This evidence should not be taken to indicate sharp, explicit controversy in the Politburo. The current thrust of Soviet policy is probably satisfactory to most members, in part because it avoids the immediate need for basic decisions. Moreover, the Soviet Politburo only rarely decides even major issues by direct confrontation of opposing views, which can be politically dangerous for the losers. Normally, policy disputes are resolved by bureaucratic process, subtle personnel moves, and esoteric communications that signal which way the wind is blowing. Showdown situations—such as Gromyko's allegedly being outvoted on the ASAT initiative—are avoided; when they occur they are about political power as well as policy choice. Thus, the Politburo projects to itself as well as the surrounding elite an image of steady authority and stability vital to its hold on power.

33. These Politburo decisionmaking mores tend to protract and obscure consideration of basic policy change, but not prevent it entirely. An influential Soviet argument for near-term change in the direction or basic tactics of Soviet policy would have to rest heavily on the assessed benefits, costs, and uncertainties of proposed alternatives. A range of possible alternatives the Soviets might consider is examined in the next section. Proponents of different policies, however, would have to make a strong case or otherwise contrive a consensus that current Soviet policies toward the United States are failing to achieve Soviet objectives, and overcome a self-interested defense of current policies by its principal stewards.

34. A telling critique of current Soviet policies toward the United States could be made, and probably is being made in some quarters of the Soviet national security establishment. What might it be?

³ The holder of this view is the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency.

- NATO's INF deployment was a major Soviet failure unlikely to be reversed, even though it faces further difficulties.
 - Soviet policy—the walkout of START and INF, propaganda efforts, and diplomatic hostility toward the United States—has not put the United States clearly on the defensive. The US administration has managed to maintain its original anti-Soviet policies and to limit the political effects of Soviet hostility.
 - If reelected, the Reagan administration will have a relatively free hand to pursue anti-Soviet policies in the future. Some new Soviet policy combination has to be contrived to blunt those policies by showing them ineffective or too dangerous.
35. Against such a critique, a Soviet defense of current policy would probably take the following lines:
- There are fundamental forces of strain within the United States and its alliances that limit US power and serve Soviet interests, such as fear of war, concern about defense spending, and distaste for tense relations with the USSR. Soviet policy is designed to exploit them, but must do so patiently and persistently.
 - Current Soviet policies exploit and increase the difficulties faced by the United States without either undue concessions or undue risk, regardless of US election results.
 - Alternative policies face greater risks and uncertainties. Policies based on concessions run the high risk of failing to elicit counterconcessions from Washington while legitimizing current US policies. Policies veering more toward confrontational relations run the political risk of broadening anti-Soviet sentiment in the United States, and could lead to real conflict.
 - Relying on its strong suit of patience and staying power, Soviet policy will outlast the current phase of the US effort to block Soviet global ambitions and to win back past US losses.
 - A proper evaluation of Soviet internal conditions lends support to current foreign policies. Although it will be difficult, the Soviet economy can sustain the likely intensification of the military competition. Major confrontations should be avoided because they will tax Soviet resources and stimulate US arms efforts which may otherwise subside.

Of the foregoing arguments, the defense of current policy, in our judgment, has the upper hand in the Kremlin today, although the critique is probably persuasive enough to cause some consideration of alternative policies.

II. SOVIET POLICY OPTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

A. Continuation of the Dual-Track Policy

36. The USSR is currently following a deliberate dual-track policy toward the United States involving, on one hand, hostile propaganda on all subjects, hostile acts such as harassment of US diplomats and tampering with access to Berlin, and stubborn resistance to compromise on central arms control issues, combined with, on the other hand, forward movement on selected bilateral issues and hints of progress on arms control and wider US-Soviet issues if the United States makes concessions. Sustained Soviet efforts to undermine US interests and policies, from Central America, to Europe, to the Middle East, are entirely consistent with this course.

37. We believe that continuation of this policy is the most likely Soviet behavior at least into early 1985.

38. In Soviet calculations, this mixed policy has a number of benefits. It has the highest likelihood of putting the United States in a defensive and reactive political position, and applying pressure on Washington to make concessions prior to the elections for domestic political reasons. By holding out the possibility of improvement in relations, it could inhibit US exploitation of Soviet political vulnerabilities, such as arising from the Sakharov case, or from taking new anti-Soviet initiatives of its own. This policy is also calculated to stimulate policy dispute within the US Government and the public arena that will help the Soviets to determine future diplomatic tactics and propaganda lines.

39. The dual-track approach the Soviets are following allows them with some credibility to depict Soviet policy as having the initiative, while leaving their options open as to which direction to take before and after the US elections. It does not constrain their ability to respond to regional opportunities or pressures for action that could exacerbate US-Soviet tensions.

40. In the Soviet internal decision arena, the dual-track policy has the benefit of avoiding major policy revisions while giving increased license to various parts

of the Soviet national security establishment to pursue their institutional agendas. There is a chance that this could produce actions by Soviet diplomats, propagandists, security organs, and even the military that are not fully synchronized by central calculation. Such actions should not automatically be taken as a sign of policy dispute or institutional conflict because the Soviets are balancing multiple objectives and because the appearance of dispute may be encouraged for tactical purposes.

41. Soviet behavior regarding ASAT/space weapons talks will be central to their tactics. Over the course of the next month, the Soviets will have to make a decision about priorities which they probably have not yet made: Do they prevent the onset of ASAT talks to deny the Reagan administration the political boon which the very existence of talks will represent? Or do they use the talks for continuing influence over the US programs affected and as the starting point for new engagement of a US administration they expect to be returned in November? They have a strong interest in keeping the prospects of such talks barely alive as long as possible, while depicting the United States as rejecting them, in order to maintain the political pressures in Washington which could interfere with the funding or testing of US systems while retaining an easy Soviet option of backing away from talks.

42. As of the moment the chances appear well less than even that the Soviets will decide to go to Vienna in September. Their immediate tactical objectives appear to be to deny the US administration the political benefits of talks while casting it in a position of blame for their absence. This explains the present, seemingly conclusive, deadlock. Nevertheless, they still have both a short-term interest in eliciting substantive concessions on space weapons issues and a longer term interest in starting a political and negotiating process that offers some prospect of constraining US programs in the future. If the United States is willing to make concessions on any of the points which the Soviets insist are blocking the talks, the Soviets may yet be willing to go to Vienna to service these short and long-term interests. They probably regard the US desire to raise nuclear forces at such talks as relatively unimportant, so long as they need not negotiate about them. They also probably judge prior US commitment to the goal of a total space weapons ban as unrealistic, although they would continue to insist on this as a goal. Their real bargaining target is a temporary ASAT-testing moratorium, which they believe could be parlayed into wider constraints on US space weapons programs. Even if talks do begin in September, the

Soviets will probably maintain a stubborn and accusatory posture in negotiations through the fall, insisting that US behavior and positions indicate insincerity and jeopardize the continuation of talks.

43. The Soviets are unlikely during the next half year to agree to reopen the START and INF negotiations in any forum, although their interest in finding some way back to those talks will probably increase after the US elections. Over time, they may come to see an arms control linkage of offensive strategic systems with space-based defensive systems, which they now bitterly resist, as a means to exert political pressure on the entire range of US strategic programs. We also believe it highly unlikely that the Soviets will agree to a summit with the United States before or immediately after the US elections short of major US concessions on arms issues. They would view either move as gratuitous legitimation of US policies they seek to discredit. After the November elections or at such point as the Soviets conclude their outcome is certain, Moscow could begin to put more stress on positive steps in the US-Soviet relationship in order to reshape the priorities of the administration in the next term away from the anti-Soviet directions Moscow now perceives.

44. There is a serious possibility that sometime between now and November, the USSR could revert to its completely negative tactics of the spring or deliberately contrive a sudden collapse of space negotiations or other promising US-Soviet bilateral proceedings in the hope of blaming the US administration for a "lost opportunity" prior to the elections. Opening this option was probably a factor in the Soviet proposal to initiate formal talks. [

](The Soviets have recently stepped up overseas grain purchases; this is probably a hedge against a poor harvest outlook.) Such Soviet moves, while currently in their contingency planning, will certainly be decided in the light of US domestic political reactions, as best they can read them. Their recent experience should tell them that they have consistently underestimated the ability of the US administration to fend off such political blows. Should visible controversy arise in Washington over possible concessions in space talks, however, the Soviets might believe they could use facile diplomatic maneuvers to elicit concessions or to blame the administration for failure to make progress. If the Soviets were to consider cancellation of the grain

agreement, they would have to take into account such factors as their harvest outlook and, in general, Soviet reliability on long-term agreements.

B. Deliberate Central Confrontation

45. We believe it highly unlikely that the USSR is preparing, in the near term, to instigate an acute central confrontation—on the order of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962—carrying the risk of a general war to achieve its political objectives.⁴ But the implications of this possibility are so great as to require its examination. Concern that the Soviets might plan for an imminent confrontation arises from two kinds of reasoning:

— Against the backdrop of sharpening difficulties inside the Soviet system, and facing US actions that could reverse the “correlation of forces” in the years ahead, it is feared, Soviet leaders might calculate that now is the time to call a major showdown in the US-Soviet strategic struggle. They might believe that their relative military power will never be greater, that as a consequence there is as high a prospect as they could expect that the United States would back down in a confrontation, and that such a result would virtually neutralize the United States as a strategic opponent under any administration for years to come.

— During the past six months or so, the Soviets have pursued a vigorous program of large-scale military exercises, have engaged in anomalous behavior with respect to troop rotation, have withheld military support from the harvest, have demonstratively deployed weapon systems in response to NATO’s INF deployments, and have heightened internal vigilance and security activities. Amidst continuing propaganda and intermittent reporting [] about Soviet fears of impending war, there is concern that recent Soviet military and defense-related activities might be read as revealing (or possibly concealing) definite Soviet preparations for a near-term confrontation with the United States that could sharply heighten the risk of a general war.

46. The concern here is less that the Soviets might deliberately provoke a general war than that they might seek local objectives of such importance that a larger test of the US-Soviet power relationship ensues

⁴ See additional view, as referenced in footnote 7, paragraph 53.

and the risk of escalation to a major conflict is dramatically increased. Were the Soviets to have such objectives immediately in mind, they would presumably be obliged to prepare for the most dangerous possible consequences of acting to achieve them. Such a confrontation might occur as a result of deliberate Soviet closure of access to Berlin (to collapse NATO’s confidence in itself and the United States), a major direct attack on Pakistan (to terminate support to the Afghan resistance), a preemptive military move toward the Gulf (to prevent the United States from installing forces and bases and to establish the USSR as the preeminent superpower in the region), or the insertion of nuclear weapons and other Soviet forces into Cuba (as a counter to INF or to deter US actions against Soviet clients in Central America).

47. The foregoing argumentation is presented to explain consideration of this possibility. It cannot be ruled out that the Soviet leaders have given some thought to the radical option of a direct military confrontation with the United States. Their own propaganda and other means of signaling are partially intended to plant the thought in Western minds that they are genuinely fearful of such a possibility now, and it is conceivable that they take this element of their own propaganda with some degree of seriousness. However, we believe it to be very unlikely that the Soviets are now planning to instigate a confrontation that would carry an acute risk of general war, are planning on a short-term basis some other action that could lead to such a confrontation, or genuinely fear that they must prepare for and possibly preempt an impending US attack on them of some sort.

48. Our reasons for this judgment are as follows:

— First, we see no convincing evidence that the Soviet leadership is currently in the apocalyptic frame of mind required to drive them into the sort of behavior speculated on above, and fairly convincing evidence to the contrary in the balance of Soviet rhetoric about international and domestic affairs. The Soviet leadership is definitely worried about longer term trends in the “correlation of forces” and their prospects in the East-West power struggle. At the same time it tells all audiences that there are powerful forces and trends at work in the international arena that will prevent the United States from forcing a showdown situation and avert the necessity of the USSR doing so. The Soviet leadership is also worried about the capacity of the Soviet internal

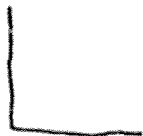
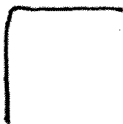
system to sustain the rigors of East-West competition, not only in economic and technology terms which clearly influence the military balance, but also in propaganda and political terms. The authentic concern of Soviet leaders is probably greater than that conveyed in public communications. Yet we see little reason to believe that their worries about Soviet domestic problems over the long run would motivate Soviet leaders to precipitate a massive confrontation to somehow "win the Cold War" before those problems become more serious. Indeed, Soviet political and military leaders at the top may out of self-interest be more optimistic about Soviet internal conditions than are lower level Soviet observers who are the sources of much of our information about the problems of Soviet society. Moreover, the history of Russian wars suggests to Soviet leaders that, while international tension can fortify their domestic control, major wars can pose grave threats to internal stability.

- In short, the picture of the East-West power struggle and of the Soviet system which exists in the minds of Soviet leaders today is not so gloomy about long-term prospects nor optimistic about the prospects for a grand test of strategic strength in the short run as to inspire deliberate instigation of acute confrontation. Moreover, although Soviet official propaganda continues to trumpet the war-danger theme, its clear intent to blacken the image of the United States and its coexistence with the theme that peace will be assured by Soviet strength and foreign policy display a Soviet leadership which is not genuinely afraid of imminent attack by the United States.
- Second, the current condition of the Soviet Politburo as depicted by public evidence and consistent intelligence reporting argues strongly against its serious contemplation of deliberate central confrontation. Collective decisionmaking by a body without a strong central figure who commands authority across the whole range of foreign, military, and domestic policy is very un conducive to bold initiatives on anything controversial, which deliberate confrontational options would certainly be. As strong a leader as Khrushchev found himself hurt politically and ultimately deposed in part because he laid himself open to the charge of "adventurism" in the Cuban missile crisis. None of the present top Soviet leaders, neither the senior ones who seek to retain power as long as possible nor the

younger ones who want to inherit it, wishes to face this charge.

- Third, although Soviet leaders have more confidence in the adequacy of their overall military posture today than at any time since the beginning of the Cold War, they are not so confident in it that they would deliberately put it to the test of a direct, central confrontation with the United States and possibly a general war. Moreover, only in the case of Berlin, do the Soviets enjoy such overwhelming local power that they could confidently dictate the local military outcome of a crisis, unless the United States escalated to general war. And if NATO did not collapse politically, costs accruing from likely reactions throughout the Atlantic world would far outweigh the short term Soviet gains. In the case of direct Soviet moves against Pakistan or the Gulf, the local power balances are potentially favorable to the Soviet side if large-scale operations (and extensive preparations for them, not yet seen) occurred, but still too problematical for easy calculation. In the case of direct confrontational initiatives involving Cuba, they are highly adverse for the Soviets. In considering directly confrontational options, Soviet leaders would have to face the high probability of getting into serious military trouble or losing locally, and of having a more united and motivated set of adversaries over the long run even were they to win their local objective.
- Fourth, in surveying the range of military and defense-related activities currently being conducted by the USSR, we conclude it is highly unlikely that the Soviets are deliberately preparing their forces for central confrontation or for theaterwide military operations in the short term. These activities [On the whole, they are consistent with familiar patterns. All aimed at enhancing the military might of the Soviet Union in some way, they distribute their payoffs at widely different times from the near to the distant future. They do not "cluster" to indicate targeting of preparations for some period of maximum readiness in the near future. Moreover, the Soviets are engaged in activities that detract to some degree from near-term force readiness; for example, modernization of the Moscow ABM system makes it currently less combat capable than at any time since the early 1970s.

~~Top Secret~~



in the total political context we are examining, we feel confident that the Soviets are not now preparing for major conflict during the period of this Estimate.

53. There is an additional view specific to the obviously very confrontational Soviet option to place SS-20s in Cuba. Although it is currently unlikely that the Soviets would place SS-20s in Cuba in the near future, the possibility still exists and, because of the great danger which it poses, warrants continuing consideration. There is still a rationale for such deployments, although they are not likely until after the election. The Soviet leadership, while aware of the potentially great risks involved in deploying SS-20s to Cuba, is also cognizant of, and might be tempted by, the significant political (and to a lesser extent military) gains that would be achieved if the United States were forced to back down in a second Cuban missile crisis. Furthermore, given the significantly different US-Soviet military balance today compared with 1962, Soviet leaders might anticipate that another Cuban missile crisis, in conjunction with renewed Soviet declarations about a desire to negotiate, would prompt West European leaders to pressure the United States to withdraw the Pershing II missiles and would split US opinion rather than generate a strong consensus in favor of US military action.

54. It is possible that the Soviets could shift their currently more or less normal military preparedness activities onto the track of rapid preparation for a major confrontation in response to a local crisis development which might unexpectedly threaten to escalate. These possibilities are considered below.

C. Instigation or Exploitation of Limited Crises

55. Over the next six months the Soviets may find it in their interest to exploit or possibly even stimulate limited crises, in most cases through their allies or surrogates. We believe the Soviets are more likely to exploit or exacerbate a local crisis than they are to foment one *de novo*; there are plenty of potential candidates already in existence. Candidate areas we believe most worthy of attention are Central America, Pakistan, the Persian Gulf, and Berlin. A Soviet desire to have impact on US domestic politics could be a partial, but probably not a dominant, motive for Soviet actions in a limited crisis. The Soviets might expect that, facing a challenge in an area of military weakness or political vulnerability, the United States could be shackled with damaging controversy, defeat, or blame for precipitate action. The election prospects of the administration or longer term political support for its policies could be hurt. More likely, the Soviets might calculate that an otherwise risky initiative on their part could prove less risky because election politics would inhibit US responses and improve Soviet prospects for local success. However, they could not be confident that US action in response to any Soviet or Soviet-supported threat would not have the opposite result of enhancing the administration's image in the eyes of US voters—as witnessed by the US intervention in Grenada. In any case, Soviet actions will be primarily governed by the regional considerations that would either constrain or advance Soviet objectives in addition to short-term political effects in the United States. Moscow would weigh the likelihood of succeeding in such a venture against the risks of escalation and loss of Soviet control of events.

56. Soviet readiness to run some risk of a limited confrontation, short of actual hostilities, with the United States in a regional crisis situation would not require a fundamental change of policy and attitude in Moscow from those prevailing now. Actions Moscow is now engaged in, particularly in respect to Central

¹ This holder of this view is the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army.

America and Pakistan, already imply a degree of willingness to tolerate some risk of confrontation with the United States.

Central America

57. The Soviets see Central America as a promising theater of revolution for challenging and distracting US power close to home. Soviet supply of encouragement, arms, and advice to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and to the insurgents in El Salvador, both directly and through their Cuban allies, serves long-term strategic aims. Less to test the United States and embarrass the administration than to advance those long-term aims, the Soviets could take near-term initiatives that would present the United States with difficult choices:

— Confronted now with a militarily and politically more effective regime, the insurgents in El Salvador are trying to launch a late-summer offensive. Guerrilla objectives are to prove that Duarte does not effectively govern El Salvador, to expand their geographic areas of operation, and to attack economic targets in order to force Duarte to negotiate.

— [] suggests that Castro sees an insurgent offensive in El Salvador as potentially very debilitating for the US administration, hurting it badly if it acts or fails to respond. []

— In Nicaragua, several runways capable of handling high-performance fighters are being built. One of these is a major new airbase with runways long and thick enough to handle the heaviest transports and reconnaissance strike aircraft in the Soviet inventory. This base is likely to be ready for limited operations by October. The Sandinista regime has been seeking first-line jet fighters from the Soviets, and some pilots have been training in L-39s and MIG-21s. This and other evidence, such as the development of an air defense radar network []

— [] suggest that air defense capable fighters will be delivered at some point. []

— Soviet delivery of arms and related supplies to Cuba and Nicaragua has continued at a high rate since 1981.

58. It is very likely that an insurgent offensive will take place in El Salvador. It is unlikely that Moscow expects an offensive of such strength as to impact heavily on the US domestic scene, that is, to force a decision in Washington between "losing El Salvador" or sending US troops. An early insurgent offensive, however, would be seen by Moscow as undermining administration claims during the election that its Central American policies are proving effective. Although the Soviets have repeatedly cautioned the Cubans and Nicaraguans—and most likely also the Salvadoran guerrillas—against provoking the United States, Moscow probably supports a Salvadoran guerrilla fall offensive.

59. The Soviets may well intend to introduce advanced fighters into Nicaragua at some point, notwithstanding the US position that this would not be tolerated. They could time action toward this goal to exploit a perceived reluctance in Washington to take strong counteractions on the eve of elections, and to impose the political burdens on the administration that would stem from either action or inaction. To make US decisions more difficult, the Soviets are likely to move in a series of graduated steps.

60. We believe that the Czech-built L-39 subsonic jet trainer aircraft recently shipped from Libya to Bulgaria are likely to be destined for Nicaragua and may be the next step in the process of introducing advanced fighters, possibly before November. Although far less capable as fighters than MIG-21-class aircraft, the L-39 is nevertheless capable of air-to-ground missions and would be a threat to slow flying reconnaissance and insurgent supply aircraft. The Soviets would probably judge that shipping L-39s to Nicaragua has a fair likelihood of being accepted by the United States, which would make it more difficult for the United States to act later against the arrival of more advanced aircraft. US action against the L-39s would be expected by the Soviets to generate major controversy within the United States and among its allies. Should the United States show itself willing to take direct action against such a move, the Soviets would expect that action to be presaged by diplomatic and other warnings permitting them to modify their plans and to foment political problems for Washington short of actually shipping the planes. A Soviet decision to send MIGs into Nicaragua thus would depend heavily on the US reaction to the L-39s. An alternative view is that the estimate places too much emphasis on the L-39 issue. If these aircraft are shipped to Nicaragua, Moscow would perceive their introduction as only one of a number of increments in the Sandinista

regime's military capability—others would include the construction of a large military airfield at Punta Huete and three Soviet-equipped communications intercept facilities. In evaluating the probable US response to the MIGs, Moscow would consider US reaction to all of such increments, not to the L-39s alone. The Soviet concern not to provoke the United States into military action that has kept Moscow from delivering MIGs to Nicaragua for over two years would continue in play.*

61. The completion of the large airfield at Punta Huete would give the Soviets additional options of near- and long-term concern to the United States. For example, periodic visits by Soviet TU-95 Bear reconnaissance and ASW aircraft, even if irregular, could be used to monitor maritime activity in the Caribbean and the Pacific, especially the approaches to the Panama Canal, and would be expected by the Soviets to draw off thinly spread US resources in military contingency plans. In addition, such visits could be used by the Soviets to raise the profile of their military association with the Sandinistas at such time as they believe this useful.

62. Soviet military deliveries to the region indicate that the Soviets and their clients expect developments which may occasion US action against Nicaragua and even Cuba. Clearly the success of Soviet aims in the region is likely to increase pressures for US action in the years ahead, especially if the present US administration is returned in November. The Soviets may not exclude the possibility that the United States will experiment with negotiating approaches to influence Nicaraguan and Cuban behavior. In either case, increased military strength of Soviet clients will enhance their ability to continue serving Soviet long-term aims in political bargaining and in spreading leftist revolutions.

Pakistan

63. Over the next six to nine months there is an increasing likelihood that the Soviets could take confrontational initiatives against Pakistan, especially in conjunction with possible overt military moves by India against Pakistan's nuclear facilities. The possibility of unilateral Soviet political and military action against Pakistan, although less convenient for Moscow and, we believe, less likely, also cannot be ruled out.

* The holder of this view is the Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

actions against Pakistan of greater scope and intensity than the intermittent airstrikes at the border which have occurred in the past.

68. [] as befits their treaty relationship, the Soviets and the Indians are in consultation to some degree on their moves toward Pakistan []

65. The USSR cannot command Indian behavior toward Pakistan. The Indians, moreover, have strong motives to avoid being seen as any sort of surrogate for Soviet policies, along with other considerations inhibiting their actions against Pakistan now. But the Soviets have powerful interests in exploiting any Indo-Pakistani conflict for their own immediate purposes, and some resources—including their treaty ties, military cooperation, and intelligence connections—to encourage and influence Indian behavior. Further, although Moscow and Delhi have different long-term conceptions of Pakistan's future, they share a strong common interest in Zia's removal or, at least, a major change in his policies, specifically, termination of Pakistan's support for the Afghan resistance, an end to Pakistan's nuclear program, and disruption of the US-Pakistani military assistance relationship.

[] How far this consultation goes is unclear. If India is contemplating military action against Pakistan, however, Delhi would certainly seek a close reading of the views and desires of the Soviet Union, its principal arms supplier and the only significant counterweight to Pakistan's allies, the United States and China. The Indians would expect the Soviets to exploit an Indo-Pakistani conflict politically to facilitate a termination to Pakistan's support of the Afghan resistance. The Indians would, on balance, probably welcome this result. In addition to formal consultations, the Soviets probably have many intelligence sources on Indian intentions and tactics, and channels for influencing Indian calculations. In any case, because the Soviets and the Indians share a common interest in securing basic changes to Islamabad's policies and possibly its government, some cooperation toward that end may now be in progress. Should India evince interest in attacking Pakistan []

66. Soviet motives for considering a confrontational initiative against Pakistan arise primarily from the war in Afghanistan. The Soviets aim to suppress the insurgency there and have a long-term strategy for doing so. But their campaign is not going well. Among its costs have been frustration in the military command, sagging morale among Soviet troops, and some degree of popular dissatisfaction about the war at home. Their recent major offensives have been aimed to get the campaign on a winning track, but have not been visibly successful in this respect.

[] the Soviets would be privately supportive, and probably would agree to provide intelligence and some logistic support.

67. An element in any Soviet strategy to hasten victory in Afghanistan is elimination of Pakistan's support to the Mujahedin. The Soviets have applied diplomatic pressure and threats to this end in the past, so far unsuccessfully. On various occasions, we believe the Soviets have attempted to draw India into some kind of joint action to pressure or destabilize the Zia regime. We have some reporting that the Soviets are considering stepped-up offensive actions from Afghanistan which includes "hot pursuit" at the Pakistan border. []

69. For their part, the Soviets would see an Indo-Pakistani conflict []

[] as a major contribution to achieving their objectives vis-a-vis Pakistan, if it does not lead to greater US support for Pakistan. Some form of Indian attack, coincident with Soviet political and possibly military pressure, could force Zia to come to terms with both India and the USSR unless he received strong US military support, including new military deliveries and possibly a direct US presence. But if the precipitating occasion were an Indian response to Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, the Soviets might calculate that the United States would find it politically difficult to provide adequate support to Pakistan. The Soviets would expect that a crisis arising from this equation could be a major political burden to the US administration in the fall, especially if the Soviet hand in it were obscured.

[] Increased Soviet deployments of MIG-23s into Afghanistan enhance Soviet ability to strike at targets near the border in Pakistan. This suggests that the Soviets are considering military

70. Soviet interest in an Indo-Pakistani confrontation would be inhibited by fear, shared by the Indians, that such action could lead to tighter US-Pakistani

cooperation, more US arms, and possibly US military intervention. It could also lead to more active Chinese support for Pakistan, in cooperation with the United States. Because of the Afghan war, the Soviets have had for several years an interest in acting against Pakistan. These inhibitions have helped deter such action up until now. They may be reduced, but not eliminated, by the prospect of parallel action with India and election-time inhibitions on US responses.

71. Should an Indian attack on Pakistan materialize, the Soviets' preferred course of action would be to play peacemaker in public, as they did at Tashkent in 1965, while putting critical pressure on Zia in private to meet Moscow's key demand—ending support for the Afghan resistance—as the price of his survival and avoidance of defeat in an all-out war with India. If this did not prove effective, the Soviets might threaten limited air attacks and other military measures in addition to the pressures brought by Indian operations. Such Soviet pressure coincident with Indian military action and reluctant US support, could force Zia into accommodation with both adversaries and possibly topple his regime.

72. Moscow would probably regard escalated Soviet military attacks—airstrikes and "hot pursuit" ground actions—on Pakistan by themselves as a less effective and riskier way to pressure Zia than some form of parallel action in which India takes the more visible role. Limited cross-border actions by the Soviets alone have a low probability of changing Zia's policies and a high probability of bringing in greater US support. But this may be the best the Soviets believe they can do on their own.

73. The Soviets lack the ground forces in Afghanistan to mount a serious military threat of invasion against Pakistan. Especially if they expected to maintain the present tenuous degree of control in Afghanistan while conducting operations against Pakistan, the Soviets would have to introduce on the order of several hundred thousand additional troops and their associated support into the regions adjacent to Pakistan's northwestern border. This would require mobilization within several military districts of the USSR and six to eight weeks of movement time, at a minimum. There is no evidence that this is occurring.

74. We believe that there is a serious possibility over the next 12 months of Indian actions against Pakistan in which an Indian attack [

] coincides with Soviet political and, possibly, military pressure on Islamabad. Although it would seem less attractive

from Moscow's point of view for the Soviet Union to take limited military action against Pakistan in the absence of prominent Indian initiatives, we do not rule out this possibility either. The immediate Soviet aim in both cases would be to end Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan war. An ancillary but very important objective would be to discredit the role of the United States as an ally and security partner throughout the region. We believe an all-out Soviet invasion of Pakistan to be very unlikely in the period of this Estimate.

Soviet Moves on the Persian Gulf

75. The Iran-Iraq war and longstanding Soviet ambitions to have greater influence in the area may occasion new Soviet moves that threaten vital US interests and carry some risk of confrontation. Soviet military power north of Iran gives the USSR latent potential to exert more influence on the region should Soviet willingness to use it become more credible. Although the Soviets genuinely believe the United States is exploiting the war to establish a permanent military presence in the region and deeply oppose this, they also appreciate the political controversy which would attend either direct US engagement in an escalation of the crisis or US reluctance to act if Saudi Arabia or one of the Persian Gulf states were attacked by Iran.

76. Present Soviet policy rests on extensive military and political support for Iraq, while it seeks to exploit any opening in Tehran for ending the war and improving Soviet-Iranian relations, and the insecurities of the region, particularly those of the Gulf states, to establish new Soviet diplomatic inroads. Soviet actions are very much dependent on local developments and attitudes; on the whole, Soviet policy has been cautious and exploratory, rather than daring. Yet the interest of Iran, Kuwait, and Jordan in keeping lines to Moscow open—and recently increased Soviet responsiveness to this interest—continue to give the Soviets political prospects in the region.

77. If the Iran-Iraq war grinds on along presently visible lines, it will present the USSR with no dramatic new pressures or opportunities for intrusion into the region. In the near term, the most plausible departures from current trends which could prompt changes in Soviet behavior are:

— Either in conjunction with, or as a substitute for, their long-awaited offensive against Iraq, the Iranians escalate air attacks against the Gulf states, and the United States responds by injecting forces into the region.

— The Iranian offensive aborts or is defeated and Iran, perhaps under a new leadership constellation, decides to come to terms with Iraq and its Soviet patron.

78. While fulminating at length against the prospect of US intervention, the Soviets have been very reticent to indicate how they would respond to it. Low-level Soviet spokesmen have implied that the USSR would invade Iran under the 1921 treaty if the United States puts force ashore in Iran, but would not react militarily to lesser US moves. The Soviets would hope for a political opening in Tehran attending an Iranian military setback as opposed to US intervention following an Iranian escalation. Both developments could occur. In either case, the Soviets are most likely to try using the new circumstances to improve their influence in Iran before they attempt to apply military pressure or take major military actions for which Iran is the immediate target.

79. In the less likely event that an Iranian offensive appears successful and threatens to defeat Iraq, the Soviets could bring military pressure on Iran from the north to end the fighting. It is conceivable that the USSR would express an interest in acting with the United States to contain the crisis, but much more likely that the Soviets would seek to take the lead in some combination of diplomatic and military pressure on Iran—including a cutoff of Soviet and East Bloc munitions and supply shipments to Iran—that leaves them with the image of the Gulf's new protector. An Iranian victory over Iraq and Soviet reaction to it could lead to a Soviet invasion of Iran, and thereby to a direct military confrontation with the United States, but we believe this course of events is very unlikely in the time frame of this Estimate.

80. There is no evidence to suggest that the Soviets are readying their military forces in the region to exert pressure or take local action, but they could be brought within weeks to sufficient readiness to play the roles required by the developments discussed above.*

81. The volatility of the region plus Soviet ambitions, involvement, and regional military power combine to give a fair probability to near-term Soviet actions exploiting or responding to the course of the Gulf war. The exact circumstances would determine the likelihood of some form of US-Soviet confrontation, which cannot be ruled out. None of these developments is susceptible to prior orchestration or confi-

* For greater detail, see NIE 11/39-83, *Soviet Forces and Capabilities in the Southern Theater of Military Operations*.

dent management by the USSR, nor could they be timed by the Soviets for impact on US domestic developments. One or another variation could occur at any time and stimulate the Soviets to take a more forward political and military posture.

82. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the near-term potential for an escalating crisis leading to possible US-Soviet confrontation is much less than in the Gulf region. The USSR is, however, becoming more active diplomatically on Arab-Israeli conflict issues in ways that could put pressure on US political interests. The refurbishment of the USSR's Middle East peace proposals recently, the regional travels of Soviet diplomats, and developments in Soviet relations with Amman, Cairo, and Beirut arise from a Soviet desire to appeal to the current frustration of moderate Arab states with lack of movement on regional issues. The Soviets clearly want some role comparable to that of the United States in regional peace diplomacy, and are willing to try again at this longstanding goal at a time when the United States and Israel are preoccupied with internal politics.

Berlin

83. Soviet military authorities have been toying with Allied air access to Berlin by unilaterally establishing and adjusting air corridor altitude restrictions, ostensibly to assure safety in the presence of local military operations. The Soviets have not accommodated to Allied protests, but insist that they have no desire to provoke a contest over the issue. Soviet behavior on the air corridors, a few cases of train delays and harassment, and protests about West German behavior in West Berlin suggest that the Soviets are pursuing a low-key program of reminding the United States and its key allies of the vulnerability of Berlin. A related objective may be to signal that the Soviets could act quickly and unilaterally to disrupt East-West German relations, about which Moscow is currently somewhat nervous. Major Soviet changes to the Permanent Restricted Areas in East Germany, which restrict Allied freedom of movement and intelligence collection, may be part of the same pattern of activities, although they have a clear operational rationale.

84. Intensifying this campaign in a number of ways could at any time be used by the Soviets to dramatize Berlin's vulnerability. The presumed aims of such activity would be to show that the Soviets are willing, because of their distaste for US policy and the support it finds in NATO, to act against the most neuralgic symbol of peace in Europe. They might hope thereby

to stimulate criticism of the United States, especially in West Germany, and pressures for more accommodat- ing policies toward the USSR. They would, however, risk a serious negative response from the United States and Western Europe.

85. There is no evidence that the Soviets intend to escalate their pressures on Berlin in the near future. They could do so without warning. The way they have handled the matter in the past six months indicates that they have not wished for a more dramatic altercation. Presumably, they calculated that they could achieve their local objectives without public controversy over the issue.

86. We believe it unlikely that the Soviets will significantly escalate pressures on Berlin in the near term. The Soviets probably appreciate that they could not pick a poorer symbolic target than Berlin for short-term pressure tactics that become publicly visible. Although they might generate some frictions among allied governments and between them and some sectors of public opinion in Europe, the early effect of relatively limited Soviet pressure would probably be increased political support for NATO and the United States, and to enhance the credibility of anti-Soviet arguments. Yet Soviet uncertainty on this score and hopes for more positive political results could induce them to try very cautious increases in their pressures on Berlin to test Western reactions.

87. Something on the scale of the Berlin Blockade could be used by the Soviets to trigger an acute East-West crisis in Europe. The Soviets would expect that the risk of NATO taking direct military counteraction would be minimal. But the Soviets probably would also expect US action against other exposed Soviet strategic interests, such as Cuba. And they would feel the need to ready their entire defense posture against the prospect that the crisis escalated into a major war. The Soviets might calculate that over a period of months NATO's resolve and integrity would crack from the tension. But this would not be certain enough to rationalize provok- ing a general crisis, nor would the value to the Soviets of a change in Berlin's status. We see no evidence that the Soviets are contemplating a crisis of this sort over Berlin, and judge it highly improbable in the near term. It is less improbable, however, that the Soviets would try to use the Berlin lever to exacerbate US-European frictions in the event of a major US-Soviet confrontation in the Third World.

D. Shift Toward East-West Accommodation

88. It is highly unlikely that the Soviets will give more emphasis to tactics aimed at improving the East-

West atmosphere before November. This is slightly more likely in following months as the Soviets assess the wider political consequences of the US elections and other world developments which may occur. The key factor in the calculations of the Soviet leadership would be their assessment of their ability in the late 1980s, through limited accommodation, to deflect or undermine political support for current US military programs and foreign policies they regard as anti-Soviet. They would not see tactics of limited accom- modation—muting their hostile propaganda, allowing resumption of the major strategic arms talks, and making minor concessions on bilateral issues—as en- tailing fundamental concessions to the United States in arms control or major changes in their policies toward regional security issues.

89. Present Soviet policy seeks, but does not confi- dently expect, the kind of detente which the Soviets believe prevailed in the 1970s. That environment permitted what the Soviets found to be relatively profitable East-West relations while Soviet military power and influence in surrounding regions continued to grow. But the Soviets realize this attractive environ- ment was not purely a function of Soviet policy choice. Various developments within the United States and its alliances contributed considerably to weakening the American challenge to Soviet power in that period.

90. At present and for the foreseeable future, the Soviet leadership is adamantly opposed to seeking more amicable US-Soviet relations on terms which it believes the United States aims to impose, namely material constraints on Soviet military power and the expansion of Soviet international influence against the interests of the United States and its allies. The Soviets are doubtful now that they can encourage detente consistent with their power aspirations when the United States is seeking to pose effective challenges to Soviet power and not seeming to retreat from its own superpower role. In short, the Soviets see the prospects for detente on terms they judge acceptable as dim in the near future unless the United States can somehow be brought by Soviet cajolery and domestic political pressures to acquiesce in Soviet terms. Their reading of political signals from the West could, however, per- suade them to try tactics of limited accommodation to see if detente on their terms is still possible.

91. It is highly unlikely over the next six months, or for a considerable period beyond, that the USSR will shift toward a broad-based policy of genuine accom- modation with the United States. If, however, existing pressures in the Soviet international and domestic environment increase dramatically at some point in

the future, they might encourage Soviet leaders to try more far-reaching accommodation in dealing with the United States. These pressures could arise from worsening economic problems, greater difficulty in turning Soviet military power into political gain at low risk, greater fear that US defense efforts could shift the overall strategic power balance against the USSR, and a perception that opposing US and Soviet objectives harbor a higher risk of conflict than in the past.

92. A Soviet policy which sought a more authentic easing of East-West conflicts would represent a far-reaching shift of Soviet leadership attitudes, which we judge impossible in the time frame of this Estimate. In fact, it is almost certain to require a new Soviet leadership, one that comes to believe that policies of conflict with the West do not work, are too dangerous to pursue so long as the United States remains committed to the containment of Soviet power, and can be safely modified for a long period. Such a Soviet leadership might come into being following the demise of the present senior members of the Politburo, and as successor generations of leaders inherit full responsibility for the USSR's domestic evolution and international power. A Soviet leadership consensus might conceivably be formed on a policy that seeks to shift political and resource priority toward revitalizing the Soviet economy and improving social conditions while stabilizing for a protracted period the magnitude of military resource claims, retrenching Soviet efforts to expand influence in third areas, and seeking mutual detente with the United States and its allies.

93. The generations of leaders represented by such figures as Gorbachev, Romanov, Ogarkov, and Ligachev appear now to differ from their elders only in the belief that they can pursue traditional Soviet aims more skillfully and successfully at home and abroad. They will not come naturally to the judgment that their time at the helm should be devoted to "rebuilding socialism on one country," while ambitions to expand Soviet power abroad should be deemphasized for a long period. At best this is a very distant and highly uncertain prospect which could only emerge gradually. It will not occur as the result of largely tactical adjustments we have recently seen.

II. ASSESSMENT AND OUTLOOK

94. The Soviet Union is currently applying toward the United States a dual-track policy that emphasizes political hostility and diplomatic rigidity, especially on major arms control and security issues, combined with an important, but subordinate, effort to move forward on various bilateral issues and space weapons negotia-

tions. The avowed goal of this policy is to return to the relationship of detente of the early 1970s. The long-term goal of this policy is to pocket any gains from US interest in improved ties while limiting and neutralizing US defense and foreign policies. The practical goal of this policy is, in the immediate future, to exploit the political pressures of a US election season to encourage concessions from Washington and to put the administration on the defensive about those aspects of its policy the Soviets most dislike, especially its military programs and far-reaching arms control proposals. The Soviets probably believe that this combination of tactics will open new opportunities for influencing various US and European audiences, and will provide a context for reassessing their tactics toward the United States after November.

95. Current Soviet policy involves, at most, minor modifications of their tactics of the past six months or so, and rests on premises of deep hostility toward US aims and interests. Soviet motives for slightly changed tactics arise from the judgment that their uniform negativism has not worked with Western audiences they wished to influence, particularly within the US administration and major allied governments.

96. At the same time the Soviets are looking ahead to a period of intensified political and strategic struggle against the United States likely to last through the 1980s. Soviet elite and leadership pronouncements plus the ongoing preparation of a new party program, Congress, and the Five-Year Plan, suggest that the Politburo has not yet decided on all the policy and resource implications of this next phase. The current state of the Soviet leadership probably complicates decisive, lasting choices and encourages the retention of established policies during the rest of this year. The pressures for some basic decisions on foreign and domestic policy will increase in 1985.

97. We believe it highly unlikely that the current Soviet leadership is now planning a deliberate major departure from the policies presently being pursued toward the United States, either in the direction of accommodation on arms and regional security issues, or toward direct military confrontation. Following the US elections, and depending on how the Soviets read its results, there is some possibility that Moscow will activate a variety of tactics aimed at limited accommodation with the United States and constraining the anti-Soviet foreign and defense policies it now sees the United States pursuing.

98. The most likely of possible policy departures in the near term are, we believe, a reversion to uniform

negativism toward the United States until November or a sudden Soviet withdrawal from any arms negotiation which may be ongoing in the fall for the purpose of sharpening domestic opposition to administration foreign policy. We do not rule out that the Soviet ASAT/space weapons initiative has been contrived from the start to set up this opportunity, but believe the Soviets are still playing this card opportunistically.

99. It is also possible that a continuing regional conflict could develop in such a way as to afford the Soviet Union opportunities for new initiatives against the United States. We doubt that the Soviets will try to stimulate a regional conflict escalation expressly to have impact on the US election because they would doubt their ability to predict its political results. But

they have regional aims and strategies to pursue against the United States in any case, and these will determine their actions relative to local developments.

100. Overall, the local dynamics of the regional conflict situations we have examined, combined with Soviet ambitions and opportunities for initiative, create the possibility of limited US-Soviet confrontation in the near term, which cannot be ruled out but which we judge unlikely. Although the Soviets are probably ready and may indeed be planning to take initiatives that put pressure on the United States, we do not believe the Soviets are now preparing themselves for the prospect that their actions and US responses will create a central military confrontation in the next six months.

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