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SOVIET INTENTIONS 1965-1985

**Volume II
Soviet Post-Cold War
Testimonial Evidence**

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*Interviews and Discussions with Cold-War Era
Planners and Analysts*

This volume contains much of the raw material on which this study is based. All items in this collection represent the testimony, in some form, of Soviet and American strategic planners and analysts whose professional careers were largely dominated by the need to understand and respond effectively to the military threat from their Cold War opponents.

Most of the items are structured as records or summaries of interviews conducted on the basis of a specific list of questions. In follow-up interviews or interviews with difficult subjects, the questions served only as a general guide to research. Long, narrative responses also often did not address questions in the same format and sequence in which the questions were presented.

For many reasons, items do not follow precisely the sequence and contents of the interview questions. Soviet interview subjects often were uncomfortable with the interview situation, the questions, or the implications of the research (the Cold War was over and the West had won). As a result, the nature of the record of interview or discussion varies from interview to interview. Transcripts of taped interviews are the record of choice, of course, followed by records based on notes and, finally, summaries based on the memory of the interviewer prepared shortly after the interview.

Many Soviet interview subjects were uncomfortable with tape recorders, especially early in the project (1989-1990) when several were far from convinced that the Cold War was, indeed, over. Likewise, several of the questions caused discomfort which forced rephrasing and special prompting (provocative statements or allusions to other information) on the part of the interviewer. Some interview subjects responded with almost a stream-of-consciousness flow of information that moved from association to association through an entire series of related issues. Stopping such a response to adhere precisely to our questions could result in the loss of valuable insights and information not anticipated by the questioner.

Cold War Interviews

This resulted in incomplete coverage of some questions requiring, when possible, subsequent, supplementary interviews focused on specific issues. To compensate when possible, we revisited some of the most knowledgeable interview subjects several times over the course of 3 or 4 years.

We tried, when possible, to isolate the interview subject from his colleagues during questioning to avoid mutual intimidation, collegial responses, and contamination of data and observations. We were generally successful in meeting this objective but were sometimes forced by those who helped arrange a given interview to involve them in the process. When possible, we would subsequently isolate the interview subject and revisit one or two key questions to validate the original response.

The record that follows, therefore, is inconsistent in level of detail and comprehensiveness despite the planning and good intentions of the researchers. Imperfect as they are, they nevertheless represent a unique record of information and beliefs of Cold War participants who were able to trust their former enemies sufficiently to share their thoughts and beliefs in some detail before they themselves passed into history.

For the convenience of the reader, a list of acronyms and abbreviations appears in the appendices, as well as a selective list of decision makers and analysts cited or referred to in the interview record.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Subject: Viktor M. Surikov

Position: President of the Institute for Defense Studies (INOBIS); former Deputy Director of the Central Scientific Research Institute for General Machine Building (TsNIIMash) 1976-1992. Over 30 years experience in building, testing and analyzing military and civilian missiles and related systems (C³I, satellites, space flight control, etc.)

Location: INOBIS, Moscow

Interviewer: John G. Hines

Language: Russian

Date: September 11, 1993

Prepared by: John G. Hines, based on notes

I raised with Dr. Surikov the issue of first strike versus retaliatory meeting strikes [*otvetno-vstrechnye udary*] and pure retaliation (ride out). He responded with a challenge that the U.S. strategy and posture was to strike first in a crisis in order to minimize damage to the U.S. He added that U.S. analysts had concluded that there were tremendous differences in levels of damage to the U.S. under conditions where the U.S. succeeded in successfully preemptively striking Soviet missiles and control systems before they launched versus under conditions of a simultaneous exchange or U.S. retaliation. He said, "John, if you deny that, then either you're ignorant about your own posture or you're lying to me." I acknowledged that the U.S. certainly had done such analysis.

Dr. Surikov continued with the assertion that the basic Soviet position and posture also was preemption—primarily because truly knowledgeable military and civilian leaders simply did not believe Soviet systems had the reliability [*ustoichivost'*] to ride out an attack and respond effectively, if at all. He made it clear that he was referring to the *whole* system—communications and control, launch systems, and the missiles themselves. Retaliatory-meeting strikes [essentially what U.S. strategists would call "launch-under-attack—LUA"] represented a far less attractive fall-back given the consequences to the USSR of allowing the U.S. to launch its arsenal.

I asked Dr. Surikov if submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) were relegated to the role of strategic reserve or could they be included, in whole or in part, in any preemptive first strike. He stated that SLBMs were sufficiently accurate by the late 1980s to have been included in a preemptive strike. SSBNs⁸⁵ tied to the pier and not under repair would be more likely to be involved.

I then asked Dr. Surikov about the "Dead Hand" [*Mertvaia Ruka*] automatic launch system. Dr. Surikov responded that he and his subordinates had designed the system—to

⁸⁵ SSBN — Submarine, Ballistic Missile equipped, Nuclear powered — a submarine designed to launch strategic nuclear ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

include the various sensors—seismic, light, and radiation—to launch the command missiles in the event the leadership were dead or unable to communicate. He continued that he briefed the concept and design to his chief, then Institute Director Mozzhorin, and to Baklanov, then the Central Committee Secretary responsible for military industry [Ustinov's former party position]. Both accepted and approved the concept. The design finally was rejected by Marshal of the Soviet Union Akhromeev [evidently when he was Chief of the General Staff, i.e., after September 6, 1984] on the recommendation of a trusted advisor and general officer, General-Colonel Korobushin [the officer who "revealed" the existence of the system to me months earlier]. As a result of this rejection, the "Dead Hand" trigger mechanism "was never realized."