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RESTRICTED DATA

IMR - Mr. George C. Denney, Jr.

July 23, 1963

IMR/HFE - Richard T. Ewing

SMIE 13-2-63: COMMUNIST CHINA'S ADVANCED WEAPONS PROGRAM

This SMIE has been in preparation in one form or another since last fall. An original virtually completed draft was remanded to ONE in December to await further evidence. SMIE 13-2-63 is based on this relatively recently acquired and analyzed evidence. As you will note, however, from the "Note to Readers," there is a great deal of lack of confidence as to the reliability of the dating in the estimate and a strong sense of the incompleteness of our evidence. We strongly endorse this caveat which was inserted at our request but met with immediate and general approval from everyone present at the preparatory meetings.

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A general observation for your information is that privately, most of the representatives were much more conservative about the timing and scheduling of Peiping's programs than the estimate itself conveys. This estimate, therefore, can be taken as the most optimistic plausible view of the weapons program.

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We recommend that you approve it with the exception of paragraph E of the conclusions (page 4) and paragraph 26. We suggest you take footnotes to these paras which pertain to the same point to which you took a footnote in NIE 4-63. (Paragraphs 25 and 26 of this current estimate are identical in language with paragraphs 25 and 26 of NIE 4-63.) Your footnote to NIE 4-63 could be used in identical form at paragraph 26, i.e.,

The Acting Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that there is insufficient evidence to warrant such a definite statement about the Chinese appraisal of our intentions and that the statement is somewhat inconsistent with paragraph 25.

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Somewhat different language is called for in conclusion E and we suggest the following:

The Acting Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the Chinese are likely to be no less wary of the risks of a forward policy regarding conflicts along its periphery after detonating a nuclear device than before.

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The ~~Air Force~~ reservation on page 7 relates to the ~~Air Force~~ representative's belief that if the Chinese are able in the next year or two to complete and operate the currently partially completed part of the gaseous diffusion plant, the experience they acquire will enable them to put a full plant into operation almost as soon as it is completed, i.e., before 1968-9.

For your information, the phrase "crude low-yield weapons" in line four of paragraph 5 is intended to convey the point that the Chinese lack of skill in fabricating sophisticated weapons will force them to use more plutonium for a given yield weapon than we would.

We suggested an elaboration of this sentence to this effect but did not believe it was sufficiently important to reserve on since the dimensions of the Chinese program would not be effected by this point.

In paragraph 14, although the point is ambiguous, the last sentence was intended to convey the estimate that the Chinese could produce not only the boat but the missile as well.

In the penultimate sentence of paragraph 16, our estimate is roughly the same as a recent ~~UK~~ estimate (May 1963) which placed a Chinese development of a fission warhead for missiles three years after initial detonation.

The additional paragraph which the representative of the ~~Navy~~ may propose for section C (page 18) is appended in at least the most recent form available to us. Its point is to argue that the Chinese might agree to give up its nuclear capability in exchange for some form of "Asian nuclear free zone" involving the US. The other representatives, with whom we agree, did not believe this was a probability and that any consideration belonged more properly in a detailed contingency planning paper rather than in this estimate.

We argued strongly at the preparatory meeting that paragraph 27 should be dropped. It is obviously a "saving" paragraph which says: "we don't believe something will happen, but if it does, we want you to remember we warned you it might." We recommend that you press for its elimination but resistance, particularly from the Director of Central Intelligence may be strong.

We recommend that the classification of the paper be downgraded to SECRET since there are no materials we can identify in the text as being TOP SECRET.

Finally, there will probably be considerable interest in making this estimate or a sanitized version of it available to certain friendly countries. Japan, for example, would find the estimate extremely interesting. We recommend that ORE prepare such a sanitized version, omitting the sections on which footnotes may be taken and any particularly sensitive indications of sources.

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