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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

22

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TO: THE SECRETARY
THROUGH: S/S
FROM: INR - Thomas L. Hughes

SUBJECT: Soviet Attitude Toward Chinese Communist Acquisition
Of A Nuclear-Weapons Capability

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The Sino-Soviet polemic that erupted on the nuclear-test-ban treaty following the latter's signing July 25 has shed new light on Moscow's attitude toward Peiping's acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability. This report discusses this question and speculates briefly on possible Soviet efforts to impede and counter Chinese Communist development of a nuclear-weapons capability.

ABSTRACT

The Soviet leadership is clearly against Chinese Communist acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability, although neither public nor private statements on the subject have manifested noticeable concern over this possible development as such. There has, in fact, been some slight contradiction between Moscow's public and private position as to whether such a development would be a good or a bad thing.

The Soviets presently take the attitude that Chinese Communist acquisition of a limited nuclear-weapons capability would not significantly change the strategic balance of power, and that it would be some time before the Chinese could develop such a noteworthy capability. In fact, their emphatic remarks on China's backwardness and the level of economic development necessary to develop a great-power nuclear-missile weapons system suggest they take the most conservative view of the likelihood of Peiping's acquiring such a capability except over a very long period of time.

GROUP 1
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DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/99

T/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 2 -

At the very minimum, the Soviets believe that the limitations on Chinese Communist emergence as a major nuclear power will provide them with considerable time before they have to face up to what they, as well as the rest of the world, must presently regard as an undesirable and somewhat awesome development. In the meantime, they will hope for developments which will change the nature of the present Chinese Communist regime and will do what is politically and practically feasible to impede and offset Chinese Communist progress toward a nuclear capability.

Present Soviet Argumentation Against Chinese Acquisition

Moscow's current attitude toward Peiping's acquisition of a nuclear capability has been set forth at greatest length in remarks made by Khrushchev during a number of conversations held in recent months and in the Soviet Government statements of August 3 and August 21 replying to Chinese Communist attacks on the test-ban treaty and Soviet nuclear policies generally.

It is of interest to note that neither publicly nor privately do the Soviet statements reflect particular concern over Chinese Communist acquisition of a limited nuclear-weapons capability. If anything, they tend to belittle the significance of such a development and to imply that Peiping's acquisition of a significant nuclear/missile capability is a matter of the distant and unforseeable future.

It is also of interest that the main Soviet arguments against Chinese Communist acquisition of nuclear weapons are by and large the same as those used by the US against nuclear proliferation. However, the Soviets do not specifically cite the dangers of Chinese Communist possession of nuclear weapons, although such dangers are implied in Soviet accusations against Peiping of belligerency and readiness to risk world nuclear war to achieve communist goals.

Of cardinal significance is the fact that the Soviets are now for the first time publicly arguing against Chinese Communist acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability. Many of the Soviet arguments have no doubt been used before in private with the Chinese. As the Soviet Government's August 21 statement put it, "More than once the Soviet Government took measures to convince the CPR government that prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons meets the interests of peace, the interests of all socialist countries, among them the interests of the CPR." Nevertheless, the public argumentation on the subject has raised it to an issue of the first magnitude in the Sino-Soviet conflict.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/97

FOREIGN DISSEM

- 3 -

Initial Small Capability of No Significance. When queried last July about what situation would obtain when the Chinese exploded a nuclear bomb, Khrushchev downgraded the significance of such a development, asserting that the correlation of forces would not change, that it was one thing to explode a bomb and another to produce nuclear weapons as both the UK and France were aware. This was almost exactly the line Khrushchev expounded in his discussion of the subject in the US on September 17, 1959 with Henry Cabot Lodge (his escort) when he stated, concerning proliferation and Communist China's explosion of a nuclear bomb, that "one nuclear bomb does not make a great power," as France's example showed.

This general theme was reiterated publicly in the August 21 statement, which asserted that "even if the CPR were to produce two or three bombs, this would not solve its problem," but would in effect adversely affect Communist China's security: "Let us grant that by overstraining its economy the CPR will finally be able to produce a few atomic bombs. But how many such bombs would in this case be aimed by the imperialists at the CPR? Would the Chinese leaders then feel themselves more secure, even though sitting on their own bomb?"

No Soviet Concern? Privately the Soviets have denied concern over Chinese acquisition of a nuclear capability. Khrushchev flatly asserted that he was not at all concerned even if the Chinese exploded a nuclear device soon, just as no one was concerned over UK/French possession of a nuclear capability.

However, when queried as to the possibility that a Chinese nuclear capability might be directed against the USSR, Khrushchev's evasive answer indicated the Soviets might not be as sanguine over this prospect as they pretend. His comparison of the Sino-Soviet conflict to the differences that attend the US-UK/French relationship in the West grossly belittles the scope and nature of the Moscow-Peiping rift, as Khrushchev probably realized but nevertheless felt was a good line to take with a Western statesman.

Khrushchev attributed Chinese Communist militancy and irresponsibility to their ignorance of nuclear weaponry and stated this attitude would change when they possessed nuclear means.

However, some concern over Chinese intransigence appeared to be reflected in Khrushchev's statements urging that the US contribute to moderating Chinese behavior by leaving Taiwan and by recognizing the Peiping government and admitting it to the UN before China possessed nuclear weapons.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By ~~Te~~ NARA Date 3/16/97

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 4 -

Skepticism Regarding Chinese Communist Capabilities. To the extent that the Soviet display of unconcern over Peiping's acquisition of nuclear weapons is genuine, it is probably due primarily to Moscow's view that Chinese acquisition of a strategically significant nuclear/missile weapons system is a distant prospect and thus not an immediate worry.

Probably the major point emerging from Khrushchev's discussion of prospects for Chinese Communist acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability was his emphasis on the economic might needed to develop nuclear weapons and missiles -- might which he insisted only the US and USSR had at present. Although acknowledging that the USSR had given the Chinese limited assistance in developing a nuclear capability prior to 1960, Khrushchev expressed the belief that the Chinese were developing very slowly in this respect. He even expressed skepticism that Peiping would conduct a nuclear explosion within a year or two, noting that such reports had been appearing in the press over the past two years but were, he thought, more invention than reflection of fact. At the same time, he professed Soviet ignorance as to the rate of Chinese progress in nuclear-weapons development. And he implied Soviet belief that the Chinese could eventually make progress in this field when he asserted with special emphasis that "so far" only the US and USSR had been capable of accumulating nuclear weapons.

The same attitude toward Chinese Communist capabilities has reportedly been expressed recently to the Indians by a ranking Soviet official, who asserted that while the Chinese might conduct a nuclear explosion in late 1963 or 1964, they would not be able to explode or manufacture atomic bombs and it would be "almost impossible" for China to produce delivery systems or nuclear warheads "for many years to come."

The Soviet Government's August 21 statement strongly emphasized this point, asserting, "It must be admitted that, being at a definite stage of its economic development, possessing a definite economic potential, the CPR is yet unprepared to produce nuclear arms in quantity." The statement argued that "the most reasonable policy for the CPR in present conditions -- if, of course, its desires and potential are to be commensurate" -- would be to devote its efforts to all-round economic-scientific development aimed at improving the welfare of the Chinese people rather than "overstraining its economy" to "produce a few bombs." Although this is propaganda aimed at the Chinese people over their leaders' heads, it nevertheless contains a large measure of truth and reflects Soviet awareness of the actual situation.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/99 /NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 5 -

Soviet Nuclear Shield Provides Adequate Protection. One of the first arguments Moscow adduced in response to Chinese attacks on the test-ban treaty as a vehicle to ensure a Soviet "nuclear monopoly" within the communist bloc was, as the Soviet Government's August 3 statement asserted, that the USSR's "powerful rocket-nuclear shield insures the security of not only the Soviet Union but all the socialist countries, including the CPR...."

The August 21 statement emphasized the same point, and also argued that "whether one or more socialist countries would be added to the number of nuclear states, that would make no material changes in the defense potential of the socialist camp -- provided, of course, the socialist camp is regarded as a single whole." The latter phrase appears an implied Soviet threat to withdraw its nuclear-strategic shield from Communist China.

Chinese Acquisition A Good Thing. In contradiction to this latter argument, as well as all other Soviet expositions of its views on the subject, was Khrushchev's intimation in private talks that he viewed such a development positively.

Specifically, Khrushchev asserted at one stage during a recent talk that when the Chinese developed nuclear weapons and rockets, it would ease the situation for the USSR by enhancing the overall strength of the communist bloc and requiring a lesser effort on the part of the Soviet Union. Such a development, he maintained, would be directed against the US and other "imperialists."

This statement contradicts almost all other Soviet expressions of view, public and private, and was very likely mere bombast designed for "imperialist" consumption.

Soviets Against Proliferation. It is noteworthy that in this polemic with the Chinese over the test-ban treaty, and in argumentation against Chinese acquisition of a nuclear capability, Moscow has come out more openly and strongly than ever before against proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has, in fact, in spirit and almost in substance adopted a public position on nuclear proliferation very close to that of the US.

The danger of proliferation is the only danger the Soviets presently admit in Chinese possession of a nuclear capability -- not that Chinese possession per se is a danger, but that it would lead to proliferation of nuclear weapons in the West, especially their possession by West Germany, and hence increase the danger of war.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/97

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 6 -

Both the Soviet Government statements took up this theme, the August 21 statement at considerable length. Specifically, the latter argued that it would be impossible for the USSR to "conduct one policy in the West and another in the East," i.e., to fight against nuclear arming of West Germany and at the same time supply Communist China with nuclear weapons. Thus, Moscow's refusal to give Peiping nuclear weapons was allegedly due to its desire to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the highly developed capitalist states of the West where an "entire nuclear arsenal would have gone into the combined kitty of the aggressive military blocs of NATO, CENTO, SEATO, and counter to the nuclear arsenal of the socialist countries."

These statements, of course, contradict Soviet assertions on the inconsequence of UK/French possession of a limited nuclear capability, but not expressions of concern over West German possession of nuclear weapons. While the statements about the dangers of proliferation constitute a stronger Soviet public commitment against this development, they also constrict Soviet flexibility in agreeing to any nonproliferation agreement that would allow the West to carry through on plans for a multilateral force.

These Soviet nonproliferation arguments also serve to underscore the double-edged game Moscow has been playing on this issue vis-a-vis both the Chinese Communists and the West. While Moscow has argued to Peiping that it could not provide the latter with nuclear weapons because to do so would lead to proliferation of such weapons in the West, it has threatened the West with nuclear proliferation inside the bloc in the event of nuclear-weapons sharing under a Western multilateral force (MLF) agreement. The Soviet Government's April 8, 1963 note to the US on an MLF threatened that "if the US, Britain, and France were to embark upon the road of spreading nuclear arms, the Soviet Government naturally would be compelled to draw a corresponding conclusion and take, with due account for the new situation, measures which would insure the maintenance at a proper level of the security of the Soviet Union, its friends and allies." The same general threat was made in the Soviet-Hungarian joint statement of July 23, 1963. Privately the Soviets have been explicit in threatening diffusion of nuclear/missile weapons within the bloc in reaction to Western defense measures.

Soviet Position, Past and Present, on Chinese Acquisition

There is much that is contradictory and specious in present Soviet argumentation against Chinese Communist acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability. Yet the very fact Moscow is publicly arguing against it represents a guarantee of some sincerity.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/97

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 7 -

Even more important, there is convincing evidence to corroborate Khrushchev's statement that Moscow has rendered no assistance in nuclear-weapons development to Peiping since 1960. Furthermore, it is almost inconceivable, given the present acrimonious state of Sino-Soviet relations and the tremendous potential that would accrue to the Chinese from addition of a strategically significant nuclear-weapons capability to Peiping's vast human resources, that the Soviets are not genuinely, and strongly, against this development. They may well even dread it, although if this is so they presently conceal the intensity of their concern in their public and private position on the issue. There is, however, a substantial body of evidence to indicate Moscow was opposed to Chinese acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability even before the present strained state of Sino-Soviet relations.

The Chinese Communist Government statement of August 15 charged that on June 20, 1959, "the Soviets unilaterally tore up the agreement on new technology for national defense concluded between China and the Soviet Union on October 15, 1957, and refused to provide China with a sample of an atomic bomb and technical data concerning its manufacture." This was allegedly done as a concession to the US for Khrushchev's trip to the US in September for talks with President Eisenhower.

The Soviet Government statement of August 21 did not specifically address itself to the substance of this accusation or deny it, but merely charged that the Chinese were making public information "related to the defenses of the countries of the socialist commonwealth" and "presenting the facts tendentiously, in a distorted light."

The Soviet Union has almost certainly, as Khrushchev admitted, given the Chinese limited assistance in nuclear research and development that would aid in development of nuclear weapons, although the exact nature and extent of the assistance is not known. Khrushchev claimed that such assistance had been rendered at an "initial stage" but had not been comprehensive, that Chinese scientists and engineers had had access to Soviet secrets but this too had been at a very early stage.

It is conceivable, as the Chinese Communist statement asserts, that the Soviets promised to give the Chinese the "sample of an atomic bomb" -- possibly a do-it-yourself kit and technical data concerning nuclear weapons development. On the latter point, Khrushchev had already admitted as much.

In retrospect, 1957 was probably the apogee of Chinese Communist influence and prestige within the bloc; Moscow was indebted to Peiping for the latter's assistance in helping the USSR overcome its difficulties in Eastern Europe following the Polish-Hungarian

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Authority 979524

By ~~TC~~

NARA Date 3/16/99

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 8 -

developments of late 1956; and within the month prior to the date Peiping alleged the agreement was made, Moscow had tested its first ICBM and launched the world's first earth satellite -- dramatic manifestations of scientific-military advance which a staunch and worthy ally would expect to share.

Yet even if the Chinese Communist charges, which Moscow does not deny, are accepted literally, it does not necessarily follow that the USSR promised, or intended to give, substantial assistance to Peiping in development of a nuclear-weapons system. As Khrushchev noted in the private talks last July, it was quite insufficient to hand over secrets of bomb design because for development of a nuclear capability it was also necessary to have the required industry to back up such a project. The Soviets may thus have made promises of limited assistance as a price for keeping Peiping's goodwill and loyalty, and in the belief that even if given such aid they would not contribute substantially to Peiping's development of nuclear weapons.

In the 1957-59 period the USSR rendered military assistance to Communist China on a significant scale, with the program apparently also including cooperation in the field of nuclear/missile weapons development. However, the limited nature of the latter assistance seems indicated by the fact Peiping still appears far from developing a capability in these fields, and has not yet exploded its first nuclear device, four years after the alleged agreement on "new technology for national defense" was (as Peiping charges) "torn up" by the USSR.

Furthermore, as the Chinese Communist statements and accompanying propaganda point out, Soviet proposals in the disarmament field for the past seven years have contained features which seemed directed against China's acquisition of nuclear weapons. As far back as early 1956 (at the 20th Party Congress in February) the USSR for the first time intimated its willingness to separate the test-ban proposal from its general disarmament package. On September 20, 1957, less than a month prior to the date Peiping claimed Moscow agreed to give it components of a nuclear bomb and technical data on its manufacture, Moscow formally submitted to the UN a lengthy memorandum on disarmament proposals including one calling for agreement by the nuclear powers "not to place these nuclear weapons at the disposal of any other States or commands of military blocs." This memorandum also formally separated the proposal for a nuclear-test-ban agreement from other disarmament proposals.

It is difficult to perceive exactly how these proposals meshed with alleged Soviet promises of nuclear-weapons assistance to China. Possibly the Soviets thought agreement on these proposals would obviate the necessity of fulfilling any promises of nuclear aid to

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 979524

By JG NARA Date 3/16/97

T/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 9 -

Peiping; or, more likely, they calculated such aid would not block the kind of agreement Moscow proposed and would buy Chinese Communist accession to it. In any case, these and subsequent Soviet disarmament proposals suggest at a minimum a cavalier attitude on Moscow's part toward Chinese development of a nuclear-weapons capability and very likely a calculated effort to impede it.

In conclusion, Moscow is now conducting a propaganda-psychological campaign against Chinese Communist acquisition of nuclear weapons and is utilizing the nuclear-test-ban treaty, or Peiping's failure to sign it, to politically isolate the Chinese. A cursory review of Soviet disarmament proposals suggests at the least that Moscow held no sympathy for Chinese aspirations for development of a nuclear-weapons system, and may have been trying to inhibit such a development even before Sino-Soviet relations reached their present estranged state.

The new evidence surfaced in Sino-Soviet polemics tends to confirm the intelligence community's previous opinion that while Soviet assistance was an important factor in Communist China's program for nuclear-weapons missile production until 1959, it was probably terminated entirely, along with other major forms of Soviet military assistance, sometime that year. With the degeneration of Sino-Soviet relations into a stage of political-psychological warfare which began in 1960 the Soviet leadership has without doubt been strongly inclined to delay and, after that, counter Chinese Communist acquisition of a nuclear-weapons system. The conclusion is that it is this latter course the Soviets intend to follow, and lines of action they may pursue are outlined below.

Possible Soviet Countermeasures

Short of drastic measures, the USSR in the past three years has already done almost all within its power to impede Chinese Communist advanced weapons development. The withdrawal of Soviet specialists from China in July-August 1960 was probably the major blow delivered in Soviet efforts to slow up Chinese technological-military progress. Soviet military assistance to Communist China appears to have virtually stopped since 1959. And the precipitous decline over the past three years in Soviet economic deliveries to Communist China (occasioned by Peiping's inability to pay because of domestic economic difficulties, and Soviet unwillingness to render economic assistance) has increased the already staggering burdens the Chinese economy has had to bear, and thus contributed to retardation of the nuclear/missile weapons program over and above the setbacks caused by the cessation of material and technological assistance.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By Jc NARA Date 3/16/99

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 10 -

In addition to these concrete actions directly affecting Communist China's nuclear-weapons development program, some aspects of Soviet disarmament policies have been designed to erect political inhibitions to Peiping's ambitions in this direction. The test-ban treaty, which does not retard Chinese Communist nuclear-weapons development but casts some onus on Peiping for pursuing it, is presently the salient feature of Soviet policies aimed in this direction. The Soviet position on nondiffusion of nuclear weapons also has an anti-Peiping slant and has been so evaluated by the Chinese.

The Chinese Communist Government's August 15 statement noted the Peiping regime had sent three memoranda (September 3, 1962; October 20, 1962; and June 6, 1963) protesting the Soviet Government's discussions (privately reported to the Chinese) with US Secretary of State Rusk on August 25, 1962 of proposals against nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, and informing the Soviet Government that the Chinese could "not tolerate the conclusion, in disregard of China's opposition, of any sort of treaty between the Soviet Government and the US which aimed at depriving the Chinese people of their right to take steps to resist the nuclear threats of US imperialism, and that we would issue a statement to make our position known."

The August 15 statement concluded with this allusion to Soviet policies designed to inhibit Peiping's acquisition of nuclear weapons:

"First the Soviet Government tried to subdue China and curry favor with US imperialism by discontinuing assistance to China. Then it put forward all sorts of untenable arguments in an attempt to induce China to abandon its solemn stand. Failing in all this, it has brazenly ganged up with the imperialist bandits in exerting pressure on China. In view of all the above, China has long ceased to place any hope in the Soviet leaders in developing its own nuclear strength to resist the US nuclear threats."

It appears unlikely that the Soviets are willing at present to take far-reaching or drastic measures to prevent Chinese Communist nuclear-weapons development for a variety of reasons.

In the first place, as the Soviets have stated publicly and privately, they regard Communist China's acquisition of a strategically significant nuclear weapons/delivery system as a distant prospect of at least a few years, and thus not as an immediately critical problem demanding counteraction. The Soviets may also hope,

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED.

Authority 979524

By JG NARA Date 3/16/99

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 11 -

as Khrushchev stated, that the Chinese Communists' initial experience with nuclear explosions will sober their present, seemingly cavalier, views on the consequences of nuclear war.

Even more important, the Soviets probably hope for changes within Communist China (foremost among them replacement, by natural or other causes, of the Mao leadership) which will make possible attenuation of the Sino-Soviet conflict and meaningful improvement in the two powers' estranged relations. While Khrushchev is probably aware of the ineptness of his comparison of Sino-Soviet differences with US-French/UK differences, he also probably genuinely believes that present Chinese Communist extremism is a transitory phenomenon that will disappear and permit significant amelioration of Sino-Soviet relations. To abandon this hope would be tantamount to giving up his communist faith.

Nevertheless, given the present embittered state of Sino-Soviet relations, and probable Soviet awareness of the psychological boost to Peiping's prestige that would result from a Chinese explosion of a nuclear device, the Soviets will probably take what few limited steps they can to delay this development. A complete cessation of whatever rudiments remain of Soviet military/informational cooperation with Peiping would seem to be in the offing. The Soviet Government August 21 statement accused the Chinese of "divulging information relating to the defenses of the socialist nations" and of thus being unworthy to receive "information of defensive importance." The statement asserted, "It is natural that the Soviet Government will draw its conclusions on this score." However, what little cooperation, if any, is left in this field must be minor and unrelated to nuclear-weapons development, and thus will not directly affect Chinese nuclear-weapons development.

The Soviets also will not hesitate, provided other important considerations of Soviet self-interest are satisfied, to seek additional agreements with the US which, if they do not concretely impede Chinese nuclear-weapons development, will place a political onus on Peiping for pursuing such a course. In response to an expression of hope last July that more comprehensive control of armaments could be achieved before China became a nuclear power, Khrushchev expressed agreement and said the Soviets were making efforts to prevent the increase in the number of nuclear powers. He added that such efforts would of necessity be limited in effect until agreement on disarmament was reached.

Possibly one such measure erecting political inhibitions to Chinese nuclear-weapons development would be an agreement on non-proliferation. However, because of Moscow's strident emphasis on prevention of proliferation in the West as the pretext for withholding nuclear-weapons assistance from Peiping, the Soviets

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 979524

By ~~TC~~ NARA Date 3/16/97

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 12 -

cannot, without blatant discrimination against China, appear to acquiesce in special nuclear arrangements for the benefit of Germany. It thus seems unlikely, at least in any early round of further talks on nondissemination, that Moscow would drop its insistence that any agreement on this issue must preclude measures presently contemplated for Western defense under the multilateral forces plan.¹

Similarly, Soviet proposed limitations on or reductions of means of delivery -- such as the Gromyko September 1962 UN proposal that in initial disarmament stages a limited number of missiles might be retained only by the US and USSR, thus apparently excluding China along with other countries -- might be designed as political inhibitions to Chinese missile development.

Probably the major concrete step remaining to Moscow to retard Peiping's nuclear-weapons development would be termination of remaining Soviet economic deliveries -- of which petroleum is a key item -- and imposition of a Soviet bloc economic boycott against China. To the extent that measures of this kind aggravated Chinese economic problems and retarded economic progress, the Soviets would calculate that indirectly they could slow up the Chinese program for nuclear-weapons development. There are, however, good arguments against imposition of an economic boycott, particularly as related to Chinese nuclear-weapons development. Sino-Soviet trade is presently at such a low level as to be almost marginal in Chinese economic development; Soviet deliveries pose no strain on the USSR economy; and to impose an economic boycott on China might bring greater onus on the Soviet Union than the result was worth. It thus does not appear that the Soviets would resort to this measure unless prompted to do so by even more drastic deterioration of Sino-Soviet political relations, or unless the Soviets became more concerned than they appear to be at present over the rate of Chinese progress in developing a nuclear-weapons capability.

In the more distant future, if Sino-Soviet hostility remains acute while China acquires a strategically significant nuclear-weapons/missile delivery system, the Soviets would find it necessary to undertake more far-reaching measures. For example, they might significantly intensify what already appears as a "containment" policy, and provide even greater advanced weapons assistance to Indonesia and India, while seeking at the same time to strengthen political relations with these countries, and possibly also making a serious effort to develop similar close relations of political

1. For a fuller discussion of Soviet views on this subject, see RSB-122, September 4, 1963, "Current Soviet Line on the MLF."

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

DECLASSIFIED
Authority 979524
By Jc NARA Date 3/16/97

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

- 13 -

rapport with Japan. They might also acquiesce in, or privately encourage, limited US military action to contain Chinese Communist militancy in Southeast Asia and the Taiwan Strait. Along the Sino-Soviet borders the Soviets might attempt subversion of ethnic groups in an attempt to threaten the security of the Peiping regime or cause it political-economic dislocations.

It does not seem likely that the USSR would undertake military measures to prevent Chinese nuclear/missile weapons development unless Chinese behavior were so bellicose, and China's weapons program so advanced, as to constitute a threat to the security of the Soviet Union. And before this stage had been reached, the USSR would probably already have denounced the Sino-Soviet treaty of alliance and made common cause with the US against China.

In sum, it does not seem likely that the Soviets in the immediate future will take dramatic or far-reaching steps to prevent Chinese acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability. The more likely prospect is continuation of present Soviet policies designed to minimize the buildup of Chinese economic power and military strength, and politically to encircle and isolate Communist China both internationally and within the international communist movement.

The Soviet leadership has clearly indicated that Communist acquisition of a limited nuclear-weapons capability would neither publicly nor privately affect the USSR's policy of having unrestricted economic relations with China. There may, however, be some slight contradictions between Moscow's public and private positions as to whether such a development would be a good or a bad thing.

The Soviets presently take the view that a limited Communist acquisition of a limited nuclear-weapons capability would not significantly change the strategic balance of power, and that it would be some time before the Chinese could develop such a capability and military strength, their economic resources on China's land and sea, and the level of economic development necessary to develop a great-power nuclear-missile weapons system. They take the most conservative view of the likelihood of Peiping's acquiring such a capability except over a very long period of time.

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