

MEMORANDUM

*E. Disinger with State
analysis. Soviets*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET

*would not ask mid question
lightly - stamp
they do not mean that
they intend to attack*

ACTION

September 12, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt
John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT: The US Role in Soviet Maneuvering Against Peking

*Rede would mean
for President going
a little more
of determining
preber. Remember he needs
back up
medial
9-19-69*

Secretary Rogers has sent the President a memorandum commenting on various soundings by the Soviets of American attitudes toward a Soviet strike against China's nuclear facilities. The memorandum concludes that such action is not likely. (It was written before the Kosygin trip to Peking.)

We have prepared a memorandum from you to the President calling attention to these soundings and expressing your concern that we should have a consistent response. Your memorandum also notes a related problem of recent overtures from the Soviets regarding a possible common position with them on Chinese representation in the UN. Your memorandum asks for authorization to have the Department of State prepare guidance on these two points so that the Soviets will not be able to create the impression that we are acting in concert with them. Also included in your package for the President is a memorandum commenting on much of the same reporting covered by the Secretary's memorandum, but tying it in with the China representation issue.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum at Tab A and forward the attached package to the President.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

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*But I want us to work
with them + give specific guidance.
But would be to send direction to state
about some instructions we need*

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Authority E012958
By TS NARA Date 3/17/99

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September 10, 1969

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The US Role in Soviet Maneuvers Against Communist China

The US Reaction to a Soviet Pre-emptive Strike Against China

It seems increasingly clear that the Soviets are probing for foreign reactions to a strike against China and, in general, keeping the subject alive by denying Western "fabrications" concerning such a strike.

The following are some of the probes:

-- In Mid-August a Soviet Embassy official asked a State officer pointblank what our reaction would be to a Soviet strike against Chinese nuclear facilities;

-- the same official put the same question to an official of the Research Analysis Corporation last week;

-- in Moscow a Soviet editor while denying such plans, claimed that the Soviets would show some "new weapons" to deal with the Chinese;

-- at the UN a Soviet officer said the Chinese were making the erroneous assumption that the Soviets would not use larger-than-tactical nuclear weapons against them.

These statements, as well as somewhat similar ones to Japanese, French, and Indian officials, have been offset by fairly authoritative denials which, of course, call attention to the subject. Kosygin told Foreign Minister Aichi that the Soviets "absolutely" would not launch an attack on China and labeled Western press speculation to this effect as "total nonsense." Soviet Foreign Ministry officials responsible for Far East affairs have said much the same. And Soviet broadcasts in the last weeks have dismissed such CIA "fabrications."

One problem created by these contacts and discussions involving Americans is that there is apparently no clear line of response. It is

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thus possible that the Soviets are reporting American reaction as generally one of tacit acceptance of the prospect of a Soviet strike.

A second problem is that, even if the results of probing are not critical to a final Soviet decision, the Soviets are creating an impression, for Peking's benefit, that this whole question of a Soviet strike has been discussed with the US.

Do we wish to allow this impression to stand?

We make two assumptions:

- That the Soviets would not really expect us, in any case, to react militarily in any way to a Soviet strike against China; and

- that the Soviets would expect us to make maximum propaganda advantage of a Soviet strike, should it occur.

On these assumptions, our reaction to the Soviet probes will probably make little difference to the Soviet decision. It will, however, make a great deal of difference in how the Chinese and others read our position.

For this reason, we believe we should endeavor to counter the impression which the Soviets may be cultivating, that we acquiesce in the prospect.

To correct that impression, we will need to draw up instructions for a common line to take in response to Soviet and other inquiries concerning the US view of a possible Soviet strike; and we may wish to see that our position is conveyed indirectly to Peking.

The Chinese Representation Question

Soviet representatives at the UN, Shevchenko and Ambassador Malik, have within recent days raised directly with our UN representatives the question of US policy on China representation. Shevchenko followed this question, perhaps significantly, by recalling an alleged conversation in which President Nixon told Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov that "China might become a common US/Soviet problem."

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Shevchenko said he "hoped this represented the real view of senior members of the administration."

At the least, the Soviets appear to be dangling the thought that somehow the US might obtain Soviet cooperation on the China representation issue.

The players, it seems, have all changed their numbers. Now, when the Soviets would like to keep the Chinese Communists out of the UN, we are making clear that our real interest is in keeping the Republic of China in. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communists have become very quiet as to their longstanding demand for the prior expulsion of the GRC from all UN organs as a price of their entry. It would seem that they may be getting interested.

The Soviets may see an overlap of interest with us, in the hope that if we keep the GRC in, the Chinese Communists will stay out. The Soviets themselves, given their relations with the Communist world, could probably not go very far in changing their own vote on the UN, but they might offer some prospect of swinging a few votes for us.

The question arises: How far do we play this game?

The answer, we believe, is: Not at all.

Our reasons are these:

-- In pursuit of their own interests, the Soviets will probably do as much as they prudently can to swing votes against the Chinese Communists; no explicit US "deal" -- short of a major concession on an issue important to European Communists -- would encourage them to go further;

-- by making clear that our stand is for the inclusion of the GRC, we have provided the best conditions for obtaining tacit cooperation from the Soviets; they would have much more trouble cooperating with any overt US move to exclude the Chinese Communists;

-- our purpose is achieved with the protection of a place for Taiwan; we do not want to be involved in any relationship which lends support to the Soviet objective of excluding the Chinese Communists;

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-- short of outright military collaboration with the Soviets, nothing would do more to sour our prospects for better long-term relations with the Chinese Communists than the appearance of collusion on the UN China representation issue. (Indeed, we may find such appearance a problem even if there is no understanding with the Soviets, and we have no interest in conveying the impression to the Chinese or anyone else that there is a US-Soviet "condominium.")

The Chinese Attitude

Any credit we might get from the Chinese will, as usual, have to be considered a potential long-term gain. The Foreign Ministry professionals in Peking cannot be blind to the potential advantages of easing Sino/US relations as a counter to the worsening Sino-Soviet relations, even if the Party dogmatists are still blocking a shift. Chinese foreign policy continues to be shaped much more by doctrine than tactical considerations, and suffers from inflexibility as a consequence. Moreover, the Chinese undoubtedly assume -- correctly -- that they have no chance of enlisting American military power against the Soviets. In the circumstances, we assume they would simply take note of any helpful US line vis-a-vis the Soviets.

The long-term considerations are nevertheless real. Freed from the constraints of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese diplomats are probing with increasing frankness to inform themselves of the nature of US policy. Presumably as a result of some directive (and in marked contrast to the propaganda output), they are not describing Sino/US relations in terms of immutable ideological hostility. Rather, they are focusing on the real national issues, Taiwan and the UN, and they are seeking to learn how much "give" there may be in the US position. (A new State Department intelligence summary of recent Chinese diplomatic behavior is attached.) Last November and February, in connection with plans for the Warsaw talks, there was evidence of an internal struggle over policy toward the US.

This does not mean that we have arrived at the millenium. It does suggest that there is a substantial body of opinion in Peking which is ready, presumably sometime after the incubus of Mao is removed, to explore Sino/US relations more rationally than has been done for some time. Evidence that we are not wedded to Soviet interests in the Sino/Soviet controversy should be a powerful stimulus to such thinking.

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