

ORE 22-48 (Addendum)

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POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SOVIET MILITARY ACTION DURING 1948-49

Report of Ad Hoc Committee¹ Reviewing the Conclusions on ORE 22-48

THE PROBLEM

1. We have been directed to estimate if the events of the past six months have increased or decreased the likelihood of a Soviet resort to military action during 1948-49.

BASIS FOR ESTIMATE²

2. Available intelligence bearing on the stated problem is too meager to support a conclusion that the USSR either will or will not resort to deliberate military action during 1948-49.

DISCUSSION

3. Our conclusions are based on considerations discussed in the Enclosure.

CONCLUSIONS

4. We do not believe that the events of the past six months have made deliberate Soviet military action a probability during 1948-49. They have, however, added some weight to the factors that might induce the USSR to resort to such action. It is considered, therefore, that the possibility of a resort to deliberate military action has been slightly increased.

5. However, the developments of the past six months which constitute setbacks to the Soviet international position have had the effect of adding to the pressure on the USSR. This pressure increases the possibility of the USSR resorting to diplomatic ventures which, while not constituting acts of war or even envisaging the likelihood of war, will involve an increased risk of miscalculations that could lead to war.

¹This estimate was prepared by a joint ad hoc committee representing CIA and the intelligence agencies of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The date of the estimate is 27 August 1948.

²The Office of Naval Intelligence concurs generally in the discussion, as contained in the Enclosure.

However, ONI feels that the "Basis for Estimate" as stated is not valid. Evidence of Soviet intentions is meager, but such intelligence as is available does not indicate a resort to deliberate military action. If the position is taken that the intelligence available cannot support conclusions one way or the other, any conclusions drawn from such a basis of estimate are of doubtful value for U. S. planning.

Therefore, ONI feels that the conclusions stated in ORE 22-48, as modified by ONI comment, are still valid. ONI concurs, however, that the events of the past six months have increased slightly the possibility of military action through miscalculation as stated in paragraph 5 of subject report, and would include under miscalculation the possibility that minor military incidents might expand into uncontrolled conflict.

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ENCLOSURE

DISCUSSION

1. Reference is made to ORE 22-48. In general, and except for such modifications as follow, it is considered that the discussion and conclusions thereof are still valid and are, particularly in respect to the economic and political factors involved, still generally applicable to the immediate future.

EVENTS WITHIN THE SOVIET ORBIT WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR
RESORT TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

2. In the USSR itself, we find no reliable evidence of military, economic, or political developments of sufficient importance to warrant any revision of our previous conclusions.

3. In the Eastern European Satellites, signs of nationalist sentiment, of mass peasant antagonism to Communist agrarian policies, and of dissension in Communist ranks, have suggested the growth of wavering loyalties and resistance to central direction from USSR. The defection of Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party is our most striking evidence for the existence of an unstable situation. There is no doubt that this situation has caused concern in the Kremlin. While the USSR might consider the use of force to correct this situation, and general war might result, we think such a decision unlikely unless the Soviet leaders believe that the issue has reached a point where it seriously threatens their control of the Soviet orbit. At such a time the risk of war might seem preferable to the risk of losing control. There is no reliable evidence, however, that this point has been reached.

EVENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR RESORT
TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

4. The following events in Western Europe may have brought about some change in Soviet strategic thinking:

- a. The positive effort of the US to recreate economic and political stability through the European Recovery Program (ERP).
- b. The increasing firmness of the Western Powers toward Soviet-Communist expansion, with the growth of military solidarity among Western European nations.
- c. The initial steps to establish a Western German Government.
- d. The failure of Communist tactics in Western Europe.

5. In ORE 22-48, we stated that "the opportunities for further Soviet gains through the exploitation of economic, political and social instability, while recently diminished, are by no means exhausted." These opportunities probably appear to Soviet analysts to be still further limited in Western Europe. While it can be argued that an increasing reduction of opportunity may be an inducement to early Soviet military action, it is

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possible that the events noted above have added to the strain on the Communist political control of Eastern Europe and therefore contributed to the weaknesses discussed in paras. 2-3 above. It is considered that the USSR, although confronted with resistance to Communist expansion in Europe, is still capable of exploiting existing political and economic instability, and is therefore more likely to continue to employ these means than to accept the risk of direct military action in the immediate future. Although Europe will remain the major objective, strategic areas elsewhere are also available for profitable exploitation.

EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A USSR
RESORT TO EARLY MILITARY ACTION

6. Since Soviet leaders view, and Communist Parties are indoctrinated to regard the US as the chief bulwark of capitalism, and hence the major antagonist of the USSR, the strategy and tactics of the Kremlin are probably strongly influenced by an analysis of US capabilities and intentions.

7. Until recently, it has been supposed that Soviet planners were assuming a severe economic crisis in the US by the end of 1948, and that from this would follow a progressive weakening of US power potential. In turn, the political and economic recovery of Western Europe would be inhibited. It now appears possible that this assumption is being revised, and that Soviet planners now assume that US economy will continue productive and prosperous so long as it enjoys the export markets provided by the European Recovery Program.

8. It appears probable that Soviet leaders will be forced to admit a miscalculation of factors in US domestic politics which they earlier considered favorable. Neither the isolationists, the pacifists, nor the Wallace "Progressives" have seriously undermined popular support of a firm US diplomatic line or of adequate US defense proposals. Opinion with respect to US foreign policy has not been fundamentally split along partisan lines. Never before, in peacetime, has US opinion been so uniform on a question of foreign policy.

9. In ORE 22-48, we stated that "Soviet leaders may have become convinced that the US actually has intentions of military aggression in the near future." Recent events may have somewhat strengthened Soviet conviction in this respect. The passage of a peacetime Draft Act, the continued development of atomic weapons, the general acceptance of increased military appropriations, the establishment of US bases within range of targets in the USSR, the activities of US naval forces in the Mediterranean, and the movement to Europe of US strategic airforce units are instances in point. We think it unlikely, however, that these events have actually led Soviet leaders to the conclusion that positive US aggression must be soon expected. It is considered that they are more probably taken to mean that the ultimate conflict with the capitalist system will be resolved by force rather than by the methods of "cold war." While the danger of an early Soviet military move, made in calculated anticipation of this ultimate conflict may be slightly increased by these circumstances, we do not estimate that such a move has become a probability.

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10. Soviet analysts, examining these evidences of US intentions, might conclude that they can no longer assume the early disintegration of the capitalist world, and that US military potential, now low, will steadily improve and will ultimately be accompanied by an improvement in the military potential of Western Europe. This might, in turn, suggest looking to military action for the achievement of their aims. However, since the usefulness of non-military methods has not yet been exhausted in Europe, and since there are other regions open to significant exploitation, we do not estimate that a USSR resort to deliberate military action has become a probability.

11. Several recent events—especially the Soviet blockade of Berlin—have served to increase the tension between the USSR and the US. With this heightened tension has come a corresponding increase in the possibility of a miscalculation which might result in general conflict.

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