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#51

SPECIAL ESTIMATE

PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT
TO BERLIN THROUGH MID-1953

SE-30

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 5 June 1952, except the Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, whose dissenting opinion is attached hereto.

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PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT
TO BERLIN THROUGH MID-1953

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable Soviet courses of action with respect to Berlin, with particular reference to the likelihood of ground blockade, during the periods: (a) prior to ratification by all signatory countries of the contractual agreement with West Germany and the agreement for a European Defense Community; (b) subsequent to such ratification.

ESTIMATE ¹

1. The expulsion of the Western Powers from Berlin remains a basic Soviet objective. The Kremlin regards the Western position in Berlin as a troublesome Western intelligence and political warfare base and as a substantial impediment to the Soviet program for East Germany. Moreover, the Kremlin would regard the expulsion of the West from Berlin as a major blow to Western prestige.
2. However, Soviet objectives toward Berlin itself are at the present time subordinate to the more important Soviet objective of preventing or retarding Western, and particularly West German, rearmament and West German integration with the West.
3. Moreover, Soviet courses of action with regard to Berlin will be taken in the light of Soviet global policy and the Kremlin estimate of the world power situation. The virulence with which Soviet propaganda is seeking to intensify Soviet Bloc opinion against the US is open to the interpretation that the Kremlin is prepared to accept general war. While it would be unsafe to disregard this possibility, we believe that, in the pursuit of its objectives toward Berlin to mid-1953, the Kremlin is unlikely to adopt courses of action which it estimates would involve grave risk of general war.

¹Dissenting views of the Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, are appended hereto.

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4. We believe the Kremlin probably now estimates that Soviet use of armed force toward Berlin would be met by force on the part of the US and the other Western occupying powers, and that measures short of force would be countered to the maximum of Western capabilities. Furthermore, the Kremlin probably estimates that at least the US would now be resolved to resort to force if the Western position in Berlin became or was about to become untenable. However, we cannot estimate whether this probable present Kremlin view of Western intentions will continue throughout the period of this estimate.

5. We believe the Kremlin estimates that interdiction of surface communications between West Berlin and West Germany, even if supplemented by maximum technical interference with a Western airlift, would not within the period of this estimate make the Western position in Berlin untenable. However, since Western capabilities for retaliation have decreased, and Soviet capabilities for technical interference with an airlift have increased, the Kremlin probably estimates that, if such a blockade is prolonged, the Western position in Berlin would become untenable.

6. Whether or not surface communications with West Berlin are interdicted, and whether or not such interdiction makes the position of the West in West Berlin untenable, will depend in large part on the demonstrated determination of the US and its allies to remain in West Berlin.

7. Partly because of the uncertain effects of such a surface blockade and partly because of the Kremlin desire to avoid an adverse reaction in West German opinion, the odds that the Kremlin will, before mid-1953, impose a surface blockade are estimated to be less than even. However, the odds may shift, and very suddenly, as a result of events in Germany or elsewhere.

8. The USSR and/or East German government (GDR) will almost certainly apply increasing pressures on West Berlin. These pressures may include attempts to seal off West Berlin from East Germany and East Berlin, and harassing of traffic between West Germany and West Berlin, possibly including shutting off the access of the Western occupying powers to West Berlin. To the extent that the Kremlin elects to increase the stature and military forces of the GDR, the severity of harassing measures and the use of GDR forces for such measures are likely to increase.

9. After ratification of the contractual and European Defense Community (EDC) agreements, the likelihood of extreme harassing measures would increase substantially and progressively. We believe, however, that, both

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before and after ratification, the Kremlin will carefully assess Western reaction to the various forms of pressure employed.

10. Soviet ground forces could overwhelm the Western forces in Berlin, but such use of Soviet ground forces would almost certainly lead to general war and is therefore unlikely. East German forces may soon have the capability to evict the Western garrisons from Berlin, but such use of East German forces is considered unlikely unless the Kremlin is prepared to assume grave risks of general war.

DISSENT OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT, INTELLIGENCE, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1. Any analysis of current Soviet intentions toward Berlin must take into account the strong indications that the USSR has now embarked on a program of speeding up the complete satellization of East Germany. Such a program will inevitably involve isolation of East Germany from West Germany and a campaign against the Western position in Berlin, probably including gradual institution of measures designed to seriously impede, if not cut off, surface and air traffic between West Germany and West Berlin. Special Estimate No. 30, on the other hand, assumes that Soviet objectives toward Berlin continue "subordinate to the objective of preventing and retarding Western, and particularly West German, rearmament and West German integration with the West" (paragraph 2), and that in consequence the odds are that the USSR will not impose a surface blockade partially because of concern over possible adverse reaction in West German opinion (paragraphs 7 and 9).

2. The apparent Soviet program of satellization of East Germany, of which new measures against West Berlin are an integral part, seems designed to insure that (a) Soviet control of East Germany will be more secure and (b) East Germany will become a more effective instrument for the achievement of Soviet objectives in Germany as a whole. Adoption of this program would therefore reflect a Soviet estimate that frustration of Western plans in Western Germany is no longer possible through a pretended soft approach and that it now is necessary to take measures in East Germany that will at least offset the western program in West Germany, and at the same time develop some other means than propaganda appeals and indirect pressures to effect ultimately the establishment of a Soviet-controlled united Germany.

3. It appears that this Soviet program for the satellization of East Germany will encompass (a) establishment of a balanced East German armed force under complete Soviet control; (b) the sealing off of the

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Eastern zone of Germany from the Western zone; (c) elimination of such individual liberties as have been permitted to remain in East Germany; (d) increasing use of war-scare activities with respect to West Germany, including border provocations, arrests of West German nationals, spy trials, etc.; (e) changes in the overt relationship between the USSR and the GDR, possibly including a separate Soviet-East German peace treaty once West Germany has ratified the contractual agreements; and (f) as a necessary supplement to all of the above, a campaign against the Western position in West Berlin.

4. On the basis of present indications the campaign against the western position in West Berlin is to be prosecuted by the government of the German Democratic Republic with the USSR remaining in the background, but prepared to give the GDR such support as might be required. The measures will probably be accompanied by GDR offers of arrangements to West Berlin whereby there would be "joint control" of the affairs of the city and a cooperative solution of economic and trade problems, provided West Berlin voluntarily severed its connection with West Germany. Rejection of this offer, may be assumed, whereupon West Berlin will be definitively isolated from East Berlin and the Eastern zone generally. Also on a probing but progressive basis, restrictions will probably be applied against air and surface traffic between West Berlin and West Germany. Initially, a degree of flexibility will be retained in the application of these restrictions, but after West German ratification of the contractual agreements they will probably be pushed more energetically. It appears distinctly possible that ultimately they will be extended to a point where surface traffic is interdicted and air traffic impeded through, among other things, technical interference with planes using the corridors and armed attacks on planes straying from the corridors.

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