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Memo Regarding the Issue of the Lease of a Soviet Nuclear Submarine to India

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Summary:

This document discusses potential political repercussions of the Soviet Union's lease of a nuclear submarine to India vis-a-vis Pakistan and the USSR's global status.

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MEMO

regarding the issue of the lease of a Soviet nuclear submarine to India

I. Through a 31 October 1986 (P39/35) CPSU CC decree it was decided to confirm our position about handing over a Project S nuclear submarine to the Indian Side in the second quarter of 1987 for training purposes (reference: a Project 670 nuclear submarine built in 1967, displacement 3600 tons, submerged speed 44-46 km/hr, cruising radius 24,000 km, crew of 81, with torpedoes and eight Ametist anti-ship cruise missile launchers as weapons. They have been in service since 1968, have a range of 70 km, a speed of 1100-1300 km/hr, a flight altitude of 60 meters, homing guidance, and have a 500-kg high-explosive warhead or a special approximately 10-kiloton warhead. This step will demonstrate the continuity of the policy of the Soviet leadership and its interest in strengthening India's influence in the Indian region [Translator's note: SIC, presumably "Indian Ocean" was intended]. The presence of a nuclear ship in the Indian Navy will also raise R. Gandhi's personal prestige to some degree.

II. At the same time the appearance of a Soviet nuclear submarine in the Indian Navy known as the Charlie-1 type with SS-N-7 cruise missiles equipped with nuclear or conventional warheads might lead to serious negative political consequences, of which [the following] are possible:

1. An accusation that the USSR is violating the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (with regard to the Ametist missiles). When this is done our argument might be used: if the boat is armed with cruise missiles then all boats of this type are considered armed with such [missiles]. As always in such situations the technical ability of the boat to carry SS-N-[7]....warhead, but not our intentions to arm it with ...

2. A qualitatively new phenomenon in nuclear policy begun in the Indian Ocean might lead to retaliatory actions from Pakistan [or/and] the US, for example, the transfer of an American nuclear submarines to Pakistan with Tomahawk cruise missiles, but now in a combat version.

3. In personal terms the Soviet Union and its leadership might be accused of political inconsistency (words not matching deeds) when advocating the resumption of talks to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, they contribute to its militarization at a qualitatively new level. This might complicate the planned talks with the countries of the Indian [Ocean] region about confidence-building measures to reduce naval activity in the Indian Ocean.

4. It can be assumed with great probability that in the process of the use of the nuclear submarine a succession of technical data about the boat's systems, and also partially about the external parameters of the benchmark [bazovoy] of the nuclear power plant for our nuclear submarines will fall into the Americans' [hands]. They are extremely interested in this since our systems are better in performance.

5. Limited access to information about the transfer of a Soviet nuclear submarine to India will nevertheless not allow the fact of the transfer itself to be concealed for a long time; however, it will lead to the appearance of malicious conjecture about this. The details known to a narrow circle of specialists that the boat is a training [boat], without missiles, will not work in this case to lessen the political damage to our country from the transfer of the boat.

III. With the understanding that the agreement about the transfer of a nuclear submarine to India has been reached and that the documentation is being finished, but the readiness date for the transfer of the boat has been set, the 2nd quarter of 1987, [we] consider it possible:

1. When meeting with the Indian Side at the summit level again discuss the far-reaching consequences of such a step, again assessing its advisability in the light of our peace initiatives.

2. If the advisability is nevertheless confirmed arrange for the legalization and the softening of the consequences of this step: publications in the press of the plan for the use of this nuclear submarines only for training purposes, without transfer of the operational missile weaponry of the boat and without handing the boat over to full ownership of the Indian Side. Think over together about other measures in these terms.