

January 5, 1959
**Moscow Dispatch No. 375, Some Considerations
Regarding US Policy Toward the USSR**

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Summary:

Foreign Service Officer David Mark, reporting in Moscow Dispatch No. 375, suggests changes in US policy to embrace reduction of "pressure-generating activities" on Eastern Europe, including Radio Free Europe (RFE). Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson dissents but suggests that RFE broadcasts might be halted in exchange for an end to Soviet jamming [of Voice of America and other Western broadcasts].

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: **Ambassador MOSCOW**

375

COPY NO. SERIES B

TO: **THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.**

January 3, 1959

DATE **000045**

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SUBJECT: **Some Considerations Regarding US Policy Toward the USSR** *compared to points listed on Page 9*

INTRODUCTION

Ambassador Thompson's comments regarding this despatch are appended after its conclusion.

In the wake of the world communist movement's conference held in Moscow in November 1957 and in the light of Soviet exuberance concerning the USSR's advances in missilery, earth satellites, and space projectiles, the writer almost one year ago attempted an essay on the likely thrust and focus of Khrushchev's foreign policy in the immediate future (Embassy despatch 380, January 27, 1958). In general, Moscow's behavior in 1958 has unfortunately lived up to expectations of an aggressive Soviet pursuit of far reaching objectives in various areas of the world, and, as indicated below, there is no reason to expect an early change in this trend. Six months ago, the reporting officer also forwarded some thoughts on the internal situation in the USSR (Embassy despatch 587, May 2, 1958), particularly with regard to the improbabilities of change in those areas of political concern which would be important in the formulation of American policy toward the Soviet Union. The negative conclusions on that score, while by no means fully shared by all other readers working in this field, or by Ambassador Thompson, are also summarized below. The aim of the present despatch is to inquire whether the US programs and policies formulated to deal with the Soviet threat are taking realistic cognizance of the situation which the author believes is likely to exist for some years to come and are pursuing the most desirable objectives in this connection.

THE SOVIET SCENE

While it cannot be denied that the USSR is facing serious domestic problems which will persist at least for the next decade in the present or some related form, it seems unlikely that any of these will create situations even as serious as those faced by the Soviet state in its first 40 years of existence. It can be concluded that even if proclaimed Soviet goals are not met or have to be modified in the economic and agricultural fields, there will nevertheless be a marked advance and expansion of the economy and a further slow improvement on the farm front. In fact, the current momentum of technological and scientific achievement makes highly probable the continuation and even sharpening of the present major Soviet challenge to the West in the entire industrial-economic field. The discontent

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of some (even many) intellectuals and students, while undoubtedly a factor of decided concern to the regime, presents a long-term rather than an immediate challenge in that these elements of the population are and will be unorganized and vulnerable to regime pressures. This implies that the accommodation between them and the authorities will be relatively slow moving, but non-violent, with a satisfactory resolution having to await the emergence of a new generation of top leaders.

Perhaps the greatest internal danger arises from the outmoded political system which will remain in vogue for the indefinite future, that is, for as long as the Party feels that its interests make it necessary to maintain a monopoly of power and a system of centralized dictatorship within the Party which preclude routine and non-crisis transfers of power between individuals and factions. Such a situation is always fraught with dangers during a transition period, such as in the recent past (and, to a reduced degree, still in the present), but the system as a whole has showed considerable resiliency since 1953 in surviving a series of drastic internal personality changes without approaching a critically serious point of domestic strain, significantly slowing down its economic development, or disturbing the pervasive network of controls needed to operate the entire society.

THE PROBLEM

If the West is indeed faced with the prospect that it will for at least the next ten years have to deal with a Soviet Union essentially unchanged in political structure and orientation, in which there is no reliable prospect for a diminution of Soviet external or internal power, the question arises whether the policies presently pursued by the United States and other western countries realistically take account of these conditions and hold out some prospect of coping with the threat to the West inherent in Soviet external policies.

SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND OUTLOOKS

In regard to Moscow's foreign policies, there does not seem to be any reason for changing the prevalent assessment of Soviet ambitions and tactics vis-a-vis the outside world. On the one hand, there is a determination to consolidate the Soviet bloc in Asia and Europe (of which the current furor over Berlin is, in one sense, a part) and to prevent any movement of China and the satellite states toward the West. On the other hand, there will be a constant Soviet attempt to take advantage of the weaknesses of non-communist countries so as to advance Soviet influence in them and so as to disunite the outside world as much as possible, with the special aim of isolating the United States from its friends and allies. Strains and tension may indeed begin to develop or may already have developed in the Soviet-Chinese alliance on various grounds, but it is more likely than not that these will be kept under control in the next decade and the alliance maintained.

Under the current version of Soviet ideology, the Western powers, by the nature of their system, constitute an implacably hostile force which can never voluntarily reconcile itself to the existence of a powerful Soviet state and bloc. (And, in a

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sense, it is true that important Western economic and strategic interests depend upon keeping the Soviet Union from expanding into new territories in any preclusive or exclusive manner either physically or through more subtle means of penetration.) In this situation it is likely that the Soviet leaders will find it difficult to believe that any Western moves toward a détente or toward reaching a general settlement of contentious problems will have been undertaken in response to a desire to achieve a modus vivendi. Rather, their interpretation will incline them to assume that these Western moves have been brought on by inherent weaknesses which have forced Western concessions, that ever-increasing Soviet strength has been the basic ingredient in compelling Western retreats, and that the only course is to press harder in order to keep the Western enemy retreating.

It has been frequently suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union should seek some sort of understanding between them involving such disputed questions as the future of Eastern Europe, a settlement on Germany (and Berlin), the status of Communist China, including Formosa, and a common approach to Middle Eastern tensions and disarmament issues. The Soviet leaders in the first half of 1958 were themselves pushing for some sort of discussions along these lines and they may well do so again, either in connection with the Berlin crisis or otherwise, since they are anxious to obtain formal recognition of the numerous de facto advances (what they call "the new correlation of forces in the world") which they have registered on the international scene in the last ten years. Nevertheless, given their present feelings of superiority, their expectations of victory, and their obvious unwillingness to make even half-way concessions on basic issues, the prospect for any serious Soviet discussions with the West is highly unpromising for the US. Indeed, the obvious dynamism apparent in the Soviet approach to its relations with the outside world makes it likely that the agreements supposedly reached would to Moscow represent only a new line from which a further advance could be mounted against the free world. This does not imply that all negotiation with the Soviets is senseless and futile because there are both bilateral and international questions which might possibly be fruitfully discussed where there is some prospect either for a self-enforcing agreement or for a Western gain. But these hardly relate to the world-shattering issues that dominate international public attention.

PRESSENT US POLICIES

If the Soviet Union is not likely to become weaker, but on the contrary to become stronger, in the next decade, if the direction of the Soviet threat and challenge to the West is not likely basically to change in that period, if the prospects for negotiation are unpromising, if meaningful Soviet concessions or retreats cannot be expected, and if war remains an unthinkable, if not impossible, alternative course, where does this leave those who wish to formulate an American policy to deal with the problem?

As has already been made clear in NSC documents on basic national security policies, it goes without saying that the primary concern must be with the maintenance of Western cohesion and strength to prevent further Soviet incursions into free world territory, to enhance the domestic political stability of Western

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and other friendly countries, to match or surpass Soviet technological, scientific, and economic advances, and to deal with the related problems of colonialism, neutralism, and non-aligned countries. With this, give the maintenance of a respectable military posture which means furnishing a shield behind which other positive Western activities can be carried on in security and which can ultimately frustrate such Soviet allies as over Berlin.

At the same time, the complementary though ~~subordinating~~ direct US policy towards the Soviet world, while allowing for attempts at negotiation under certain conditions and authorizing cultural and technical exchange programs, seeks basically to generate such pressures on the Kremlin leadership (for example, by encouraging types of non-violent resistance in the East European satellites and by fanning pressures from the Soviet populace below on the leadership for a better economic deal) that the USSR will be forced to adopt policies less threatening to the West while it attends to difficulties in its own camp. This, in turn, might then lead to the consolidation or institutionalizing of such improved Soviet behavior on a longer-term basis. In the interim, American pressures on the Soviet bloc operate through a wide variety of overt, gray, and covert instrumentalities which, even if not always effective, at least serve to keep Moscow aware that a major endeavor is proceeding not only to frustrate most of its foreign policies, but also to undermine its internal stability and that of its "allies."

THE SLOWNESS OF SOME US POLICIES

There is no doubt that the US has grown into the habit of conducting these activities and that many of them have become bureaucratized, involving large numbers of officials and great sums of money. While spectacular events have occurred in connection with (and sometimes as a result of) these programs (e.g., major defections, Soviet propaganda embarrassments, Polish and Hungarian uprisings), the fact is that there has been no territorial change in Europe or between the Soviet bloc and the West for ten years, and that, despite the uncertainties surrounding Berlin, none is likely. On the contrary, the Soviet bloc in Europe has grown strategically (economically and militarily) more powerful in that period and will probably continue to do so. One cannot overlook the USSR's political difficulties there or the generally unfriendly attitudes of the various peoples, especially Hungarian, East German, and Polish, towards the USSR, but these factors hold no prospect of being decisive.

There is undoubtedly a great sentimental (and domestic political) attachment in the US towards pursuing the full range of pressure-generating activities against the Soviet position in Eastern Europe, and this is reinforced by the feeling of moral revulsion for the manifold political crimes which have taken place under Soviet auspices in this area since 1945. Nevertheless, the supreme duty of US policymaking, in addition to honestly avoiding a catastrophic war, is to project some approach towards the Soviet world which, while preserving all of the important positions of the Free World, offers some promise, even if distant, of establishing more normal East-West relations. US policy would have to aim at goals within the realm of possible achievement since it only tends to cheapen the currency of Western declarations and prohibitions if, when the chips are down, the West is unable or unwilling to follow through on its supposed commitments.

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Moreover, programs harassing Soviet bloc regimes in one or another way are of no value for their own sake if they produce no important results, or if such results as they may produce are outweighed by the damage which they might cause to other US policies addressed towards influencing the Soviet leadership.

REORIENTATION OF SOME US POLICIES VIS-A-VIS MOSCOW

While revised US policies towards the Soviet bloc might, for example, involve a US redefinition of its tactics for such areas of the world as Eastern Europe (but not necessarily including Eastern Germany) where the USSR has made clear by military action that it will brook no diminution of its influence, the question must inevitably arise of why the US should abandon its pretensions in such areas (involving a claim for freedom and true sovereignty for the countries under Soviet control) without seeming to obtain return concessions from the USSR. The answer to this depends on whether it is reasonable to expect that the removal of apparently useless external pressures on the Soviet leadership, as far as the territory of its "camp" is concerned, would work to bring about more rapidly a gradual evolution toward a revised power outlook and objective in Moscow with which it would be easier to co-exist than at present.

From what has been said previously, it is clear that no spectacular results along this line can be expected in a short period since Soviet society appears relatively stable and since its ideology and goals are fairly clearly fixed. At the same time, external pressure, although it may have been called forth by Soviet actions or Communist revolutionary aims themselves, has undoubtedly been a constant reaction-inducing factor in Soviet policy formulation since 1917. Not only does it provide a justification in Soviet eyes for many of the drastic policies adopted by the USSR, but it also undoubtedly is an important psychological factor in the thinking of Soviet officialdom. If it were possible to reduce this pressure over a sufficient number of years, while at the same time making it clear that the outside world remained prosperous and cohesive in itself and fully capable of self-defense, AND while conducting the type of exchange program noted below, it is certainly conceivable that a change would occur in the Soviet assessment of its position in the world and of the domestic and foreign policy need or even desirability of pursuing undeviatingly belligerent and hostile policies toward the West.

It is true that any such policy of relaxing Western pressure, if this were done without having received beforehand significant concessions from the Soviets, would reduce somewhat the problems faced by the Soviet Union at home and, particularly, in the East European satellites. Nevertheless, apart from the fact that bargaining for certain concessions need not be excluded (see below), it has also been postulated above that regardless of external pressure, the Soviet Union will in any event continue to grow stronger and to consolidate its position in the next years so that, essentially, the West would not be surrendering much of practical political importance. It would, of course, mean, as already stated, that Western policy would be directed at influencing the Soviet leadership directly, rather than at increasing mass pressures from below on the leadership, as has been tried up to now, but the policy suggested would also have in mind an acceleration of the growth within the Soviet Union, in this more favorable external and internal

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climate, of a greater drive on the part of the intelligentsia, and perhaps the government bureaucracy, for a more liberal approach to political and state affairs.

AN APPROACH TO ELABORATION OF A REVISED POLICY

A policy of relaxing pressure would have to be thought through with great care in Washington and discussed with major American allies. It would not only concern itself with realistic appraisals of US policy in specific geographical areas, such as the Middle East, and, perhaps, with new attention to some of the basic issues involved in the disarmament question (inspection, controls, foreign bases, nuclear production, conventional forces), but would also have to go thoroughly into matters like the further utility of strategic trade controls (except on military weapons themselves) and the question of the level and scope of East-West contacts.

If it should be decided to direct US policy primarily towards influencing the Soviet leadership, it would then seem that a program of contacts and exchanges focused at the upper levels of society and power in the USSR might become the key to any evolution that might be anticipated in the USSR of the future. It is true, of course, that changes will basically have to come from within the Soviet Union, but ideas and information gained on the outside can be of major help. The major objectives in this would not only be to convince influential Soviet personages that the US is strong, prosperous, cohes ve, and "peace-loving," but even more to get across the idea that there are really no objective reasons for deadly US-Soviet rivalry. Each nation has all of the wealth which it needs, and except for the inherited ideological bitterness, there are no fundamental divergences on the international scene.

The President's letter of February 8, 1958, to the then Soviet Premier Bulganin alluded to the possibility of arranging high-level political-type exchanges (each, perhaps, to last for some months) so that a degree of understanding might replace abysmal ignorance. Although the Soviets in Moscow subsequently asked a few times just what the US might have in mind, no concrete US proposals were offered, and both sides have let the matter drop. This idea would undoubtedly have to be revived and extended along with plans for many more exchanges of all kinds than have yet been suggested. Indeed, only when some of the suspicions of the US which exist in all top-level Soviet official minds have been reduced (the aim of the expanded exchanges) would it become possible to look forward to a greater US penetration of Soviet publications and mass media.*

It might also prove feasible, although careful and detailed advance study would be indispensable, to propose joint projects between the Soviet Union and
the US

* Mikoyan's January 1959 trip to the US at Soviet initiative may serve some of the purposes here intended, although his stay will be too short, and although he is somewhat too "top-level" for a more extended "get-acquainted" exchange of several months. However, the recent privately-sponsored trip by Georgi A. Zhlukov, the Soviet director of foreign cultural relations, is an excellent case in point,

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the US or the West in general (besides those already breached, though dormant, in the health field) with regard to underdeveloped and newly independent areas, which would be aimed, at least partially, at transforming the present ruinous competition in such matters (which, moreover, plays into the hands of the recipient countries) into some sort of cooperative effort that might capture both Soviet and Western imaginations. (Khrushchev's negative statements on this score on October 21, 1958, to Eric Johnston need not be taken as a final answer.) This is not to overlook the dangers of Soviet penetration and subversion, but is rather an attempt to channel a force which will undoubtedly make itself increasingly felt in any event and which might be a means for reducing rather than increasing tension between the USSR and the West.

It is recognized that the Soviets have themselves reiterated frequently that they have no intention of extending the theme of political co-existence between states to include ideological co-existence between themselves and the Western countries. Nevertheless, it would appear that changes in ideology do come about in the USSR (of which the present stress on peaceful co-existence without war is itself an example). In the long run, under present conditions, this seems to offer a better, even though unspectacular, hope for reducing the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the West to somewhat more manageable prospects than does the current policy of constant (yet still ineffective) Western pressure which only tends to maximize the competitive aspects of all US and Soviet activities and policies.

THE TACTICS OF IMPLEMENTING A REVISED POLICY

As already suggested, there can be no doubt that accomplishment of the foregoing changes of emphasis would present both serious US domestic political problems and practical foreign policy tactical difficulties. Such changes would, in any event, have to be undertaken, to say nothing of publicized, cautiously so as not to demoralize allied peoples into believing that the US were acting from a sense of weakness and failure. As a realistic matter, moreover, it is only fair to note that the USSR would not be likely to pay much for something already in its possession merely to obtain an unclouded title to Eastern Europe, but it would not make it any less necessary for the US to seek to bring its proclaimed policies in line with reality. At the least, in practice, it should be possible, if a public announcement eventually became unavoidable, to devise some sort of formula upholding the right of peoples everywhere to choose their own destiny (and

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and the good results reflected in Embassy telegram 1372, January 3, 1959. In fact, apart from an enhanced exchange program at all levels, it may be desirable in general to multiply and to some extent regularize the number of informal meetings both in the USSR and US of top-level officials (e.g., Johnston and Humphrey with Khrushchev and Nixon with Zhukov) even if no concrete results are sought, provided, of course, that major US allies are taken into full confidence thereon.

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continuing to smother the "German Democratic Republic"), but without any longer seeming to commit the United States (even if our actual though secret goals are more modest than this) to action in Eastern Europe (even of the RFE type or of emigre-support operations) to help to achieve this aim. This might well a bit further discourage satellite peoples seeking "liberation", but their mood is already depressed as a result of US inaction in Hungary, and their political resentments will continue in any case since these are derived much more from poor local conditions than from US incitement.

Nevertheless, despite these acute difficulties, if the new approach itself has promise (as present policies do not), it should be possible to devise a satisfactory means of adopting, implementing, and, where necessary, verbalizing the policies involved. If careful preparation is made, there is no reason why all of the new US cards should be laid on the table at once. Rather, evidence of a new attitude could, perhaps, first be given in a new proposal for greatly broadened bilateral exchange programs or joint foreign aid projects, with other aspects revealed at subsequent times in conjunction with attempts to receive a reasonable *quid pro quo* in each case (though this would in many instances be impractical to obtain). This would involve a series of judgments on tactics, and it is, of course, likely that many changed US policies or approaches would be revealed only through actions (such as changing the tone and content of radio broadcasts) without any announcements thereof being made. Nevertheless, the Soviet side would speedily become aware of changes in the general pattern of US pressures (overt and covert) and indications of the Soviet reaction, which would help to test the validity of new US policies, could then be expected.

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Ambassador's Comments

I am forwarding the foregoing despatch as an interesting expression of opinion by the officer concerned, although I personally disagree with it in many respects. Without attempting an exhaustive commentary, I believe in the first place that the Soviet Union is still in a period of transition from the Stalinist regime, and that it is most difficult at this time to make any predictions as to future developments. Although I am inclined to agree with the conclusion that for the next ten years we will probably be faced with a regime not radically different from that which exists in the Soviet Union today, I consider it possible that the evolution already in process could develop rapidly.

With respect to the recommendations on our policy toward Eastern Europe, it appears to me that the writer does not take sufficient account of the problem of East Germany and the effects which the proposed change in our satellite policy would have in respect to this problem. Moreover, it would seem to me that the writer has himself listed a number of compelling reasons for not adopting the policy proposed. I do believe that at some stage it might be possible to modify certain aspects of our policy toward the satellites, but in return for equivalent Soviet concessions. For example, I believe it might be possible tacitly if not explicitly to trade off such activities as RFE broadcasts against a cessation of

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Soviet jamming. At the present time the failure of communism to win popular support in the European satellites is probably the weakest link in the Soviet armor; and while I would agree that we should not seek active revolution in these countries (and I do not believe our present policies will have great effect upon the prospects of such developments), I do not see in the present circumstances justification for our in effect assisting the Soviets in repairing this weakness and removing the pressure which present conditions in the satellites exert upon Soviet policy.

For the Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.:

David E. Mark

David E. Mark
First Secretary of Embassy

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