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MEMORANDUM

TO: Permanent Representatives
FROM: Secretary General

The Soviet Declaration on Disarmament
of 17th November, 1956

The attached paper on the recent Soviet declaration on disarmament has been prepared by the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and is relevant to Item VI of the Council's agenda for tomorrow, 19th December.

Part A of the paper outlines the contents of the declaration; Part B is an analysis of the actual disarmament proposals, which has been kindly made available by a member country. In Part C of the paper some general considerations are put forth concerning some propaganda angles of the Soviet declaration.

(Signed) ISMAY

18th December, 1956

NATO CONFIDENTIAL

SOVIET DECLARATION ON DISARMAMENT

On 17th November the Soviet Government issued its latest statement on disarmament. The text was printed in the Soviet press on 18th November together with the letters with which the text was transmitted by Mr. Bulganin to Messrs. Eden, Eisenhower, Mollet, Nehru and Chou en-Lai. The text was sent to the German Government several days later. The letters of transmittal are without any particular significance, those to Mr. Chou en-Lai and Mr. Nehru being considerably warmer in tone than the others. All the letters except that to Mr. Nehru note the primary rôle of the great powers in the disarmament field.

A. CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENT

2. Well over half of the Soviet declaration has only an indirect bearing on the disarmament question. At best it can be described as a background review of the world situation of which the disarmament problem is an element; more properly it can be regarded as a use of the label "disarmament" to secure an audience for a Soviet presentation of their current political propaganda line. The timing of the declaration would seem to indicate strongly that the latter interpretation is the more accurate of the two. Coming at a moment when the world reaction against Soviet intervention in Hungary was at its height, the document appears to be essentially a diversionary propaganda manoeuvre.

3. The FIRST SECTION of the document (about one-third of the whole) takes up the situation in Egypt. The dangers of an expansion of the conflict are noted, and its evil consequences for the economic and military position of the West are dwelt on at length. Developments in Hungary are dealt with in passing as "attempts to whip up a slanderous campaign..." and "part of the general plot of the imperialists".

The net effect (as well as cause) of "all this" is "the further stepping up of the arms race" and "the creation of a tense atmosphere" for the benefit of the monopolists. This is the reason why "all kinds of absurd designs on Western Europe" are ascribed to the Soviet Union.

4. The SECOND SECTION of the document (again about a third of the whole) is devoted to refuting such a view of Soviet intentions. The first and most astonishing argument is that Soviet forces, if they really were minded to do so, could take over Western Europe today even more easily than at the end of the last war. They could do this, it is claimed, "even without the use of up-to-date nuclear and rocket weapons". However, the Soviet Union "does not have any aims other than the maintenance and consolidation of peace". The proofs of these intentions are set forth at length, notably the reduction in armed forces, and basic factors which supposedly guarantee such peaceful purposes are also explained. The Soviet Union, having "no social groups which would profit from war" and having "achieved unprecedented successes" in developing its economy, is confident of victory in peaceful economic competition with capitalism.

5. The next step in the argument is that although these Soviet interests clearly coincide with those of mankind as a whole,

the threat of fresh military conflicts, arising from the "narrow selfish interests" of "aggressive circles of certain powers" still remains. At this crucial moment the Soviet Union therefore "once again raises its voice for the discontinuation of the arms race".

6. The THIRD AND LAST SECTION of the declaration deals with disarmament questions more or less directly. The Soviet Government makes seven specific proposals. Since they are set forth with reasonable succinctness in numbered paragraphs, they are not reproduced here. As a gloss on the seventh (control), the Soviets introduce the only novel feature of a substantive nature, a statement that they are "prepared to consider the question of employing aerial photography... to a depth of 800 kms. east and west of the demarcation line" between the NATO and Warsaw Treaty forces.

7. This disarmament section of the document then puts forward a series of general proposals, all of which follow the usual pattern of Soviet propaganda moves. First, the "complete liquidation of armed forces" is proposed for the stage following the implementation of the seven-point programme. Second, the non-aggression pact between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries is again recommended. Third, the lack of progress on disarmament through the United Nations Organization is cited to support a Soviet proposal for parallel efforts involving a Five-Power Summit Conference (USSR, US, Britain, France and India) to be followed by a much broader summit conference. If the Five-Power meeting is not feasible, the second conference would still be desirable.

8. In conclusion the Soviet Government reaffirms its profound devotion to peace and its deep conviction that ideological differences are no reason for the use of force by one state against another.

B. ANALYSIS OF PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL 1

9. To reduce, in the course of 2 years, the armed forces of the Soviet Union, the United States and China from one million to 1.5 million men for each of these States, the armed forces of Britain and France to 650,000 men for each State, and to 150-200,000 for each remaining State.

10. As a first step to this end, to reduce the armed forces of the USSR, the United States and China to 2.5 million men, and the armed forces of Britain and France to 750,000 for each State during the first year. The States mentioned above must reduce their armaments accordingly.

Comment

11. This proposal goes back to the Soviet plan of 10th May, 1955 in which the USSR accepted the force levels for the great powers proposed by the West in 1952. It was repeated in the Soviet plan of 27th March, 1956. The force levels for smaller powers were first advanced by Bulganin at the summit conference and have been rejected by the West as too low. In recent letters to the President, Bulganin had not repeated the small power levels, leading to speculation that the USSR might be willing to negotiate on them.

12. The two-year time limit has been a part of Soviet proposals since September 1954.

13. The levels for the first year correspond to those proposed by the US in the UN disarmament sub-committee last spring as figures for the "first phase" of disarmament. Soviet Delegate, Gromyko, announced Soviet acceptance of these figures at the Disarmament Commission last July without, however, accepting accompanying measures with respect to nuclear weapons and controls as put forward in the original US proposal. The provision that these intermediary levels have to be reached within one year is a new addition which corresponds to the Soviet practice of fixing rigid, and frequently unrealistic time limits for all disarmament measures.

14. The USSR has never stated clearly how reductions in manpower and armaments are to be correlated.

PROPOSAL 2

15. To put into practice, in the course of the aforementioned time limit, the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, the termination of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the prohibition of their use, the complete destruction of stocks of these weapons and their withdrawal from the armaments of states. As a first step, to immediately stop the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons.

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omment

16. This is the standard Soviet proposal on nuclear disarmament. The USSR on 10th May, 1955 conceded that it is technically impossible to verify the destruction of nuclear weapons stockpiles, but it has nevertheless continued to propose such a measure.

17. By providing that nuclear prohibition is to take effect at the same time as conventional reductions, Moscow apparently has reversed the position it advanced last 27th March and several times afterward that conventional and nuclear disarmament should not be interdependent. Even since then, however, Soviet spokesmen have emphasised that the USSR continues to demand eventual prohibition of nuclear weapons.

18. The USSR first proposed to ban tests on 10th May, 1955 but at that time such a ban was to be part of an integrated disarmament programme. Since last February the USSR has proposed an independent ban on thermonuclear weapons tests and since July on atomic tests as well. The phrase "to discontinue at once", appears to indicate that Moscow adheres to its recent proposals for an independent ban on all tests, even though the measure is now included in a larger package.

PROPOSAL 3

19. To reduce by one-third, in the course of 1957, the armed forces of the United States, the USSR, Britain and France stationed on the territory of Germany, with the establishment of the necessary supervision of this reduction.

omment

20. The details of this proposal are new, but similar proposals of a less specific nature have been made several times before by the USSR and the Satellites. The new points are the reduction figure of one-third and the deadline date of 1957.

21. During postwar negotiations on Germany, the USSR generally proposed withdrawal of occupation forces after completion of a peace treaty. At the summit conference Bulganin proposed a freeze on forces then stationed in Germany. At the subsequent Foreign Ministers' conference, Molotov proposed establishment of a zone in Europe, including both German states and states bordering on them, in which US, UK, French and Soviet forces would be limited to agreed ceilings. The Warsaw Pact powers in a declaration last 28th January added to this explicit provisions for withdrawal or reduction of foreign forces in Germany and for reduction of the forces of the two German states. As in the latest proposal, supervision was mentioned but no details were given. The Soviet disarmament plan of 27th March called on the four powers with forces in Germany to reduce them to levels of their own choosing pending agreement on the European zone proposed earlier. On 10th May, the USSR announced that as part of its 1.2 million manpower cut, 30,000 men would be withdrawn from East Germany, and in subsequent weeks public send-offs were staged in East Germany for Soviet troops allegedly going home. In letters to the resident and other NATO heads of state in June, Bulganin called on the West to emulate the alleged Soviet withdrawals as a prelude to

agreement on "sharp reduction" or withdrawal of foreign forces in Germany.

PROPOSAL 4

22. To put into practice in the course of 1957 the considerable reduction of the armed forces of the United States, Britain and France stationed on the territory of NATO countries and the armed forces of the USSR stationed on the territory of Warsaw Pact member states.

Comment

23. This again is a more specific version of earlier Soviet proposals. The deadline date of 1957 and the explicit stipulation that foreign troops are to be withdrawn from NATO and Warsaw Pact countries are new.

24. The term "considerable reductions" is also a new formulation taking the place of past references to an agreement on "maximum levels". The new language may have been introduced for the benefit of Satellite peoples pressing for withdrawal or at least reduction of Soviet troops on their territories. Should the West decline to accept the Soviet proposal, as Moscow presumably expects it will, Moscow would be in a position to argue to the Satellites that since the West is maintaining its forces on the continent, the USSR's security demands the stationing of Soviet troops in countries adjacent to it. The Soviet-Polish agreement of 18th November suggests that as a "concession" the USSR may offer to enter into status-of-forces agreements strictly delimiting the functions and numbers of Soviet troops stationed in foreign countries.

25. Neither this nor the previous provision mentioned earlier Soviet proposals to prohibit the stationing of atomic weapons in European countries nor do they refer to limiting armaments as distinct from manpower. There is, however, no indication that Moscow has withdrawn these proposals.

PROPOSAL 5

26. To liquidate in the course of 2 years foreign naval and air force bases on the territories of other states.

Comment

27. This is an old Soviet proposal which had not, however, been reiterated in the most recent Soviet disarmament plan of 27th March. The proposal of 10th May, 1955 also stipulated a two-year period for elimination of bases.

PROPOSAL 6

28. To reduce the military expenditure of states in the course of two years in accordance with the reduction of armed forces and arms which is being put into effect, the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, and the liquidation of foreign military bases on the territory of other states.

Comment

29. This is an old Soviet proposal which has also appeared in various forms in Western plans. The USSR has never spelled out

precisely how reductions and prohibitions would be correlated with dietary reductions.

30. The 27th March plan contained a proposal for a 15% reduction in military budgets as a preliminary measure pending agreement on more comprehensive disarmament. This point is not repeated in the latest Soviet proposal.

31. Nor does Moscow repeat the provision in its 27th March plan that funds freed by military cuts should be used for assistance to underdeveloped countries and for a special UN fund for economic development. The USSR, however, remains a vociferous advocate of UNCTAD and other UN technical assistance projects, and omission of these points does not appear to constitute a reversal of this position.

PROPOSAL 7

32. To observe the implementation by the states of the obligations taken upon themselves regarding disarmament, to establish a rigid and effective international supervision which shall be at its disposal all rights and functions necessary for this aim.

Disarmament

33. This is a standard Soviet formulation, leaving all the long-standing questions on control unanswered. Last March, Moscow did provide certain details respecting supervision of conventional disarmament, and in May 1955 the Soviet proposals contained a few specific points on control of nuclear disarmament. In effect, however, the USSR has not put forward a detailed nuclear control plan since June 1947.

34. In view of the obvious summary nature of the latest Soviet proposal, it is possible that if negotiations should resume and if a detailed debate should ensue at the 11th UN General Assembly, the USSR might come forth with a somewhat more detailed control plan. There is, however, no indication of any change in the long and firmly held Soviet view that control measures must not infringe on "national sovereignty".

PROPOSAL 8

35. With the aim of preventing a sudden attack by one state on another, to establish on the territories of states, on a reciprocal basis, control posts in large ports, at railway junctions, automobile highways, and airports, which will see to it that no dangerous concentration of armed forces and arms takes place.

Disarmament

36. This repeats the Soviet proposal first advanced on 10th May, 1955 and now generally known as the "Bulganin Plan".

37. The US has at various times expressed its willingness to agree this ground inspection scheme with the President's "open sky" plan to prevent surprise attack. The USSR has, however, made clear that it would not consider an inspection proposal which is not coupled with actual disarmament measures. In his letter to the President last 11th September, Bulganin stated specifically that his ground inspection plan "has value only if it is carried out as an integral part of the reduction of armaments and armed forces".

of nations".

PROPOSAL 9

38.. The Soviet Government more than once expressed its attitude toward the proposal of the so-called "air photography" plan, and had stated that this proposal does not solve either the problem of supervision over disarmament or the prevention of aggression. Taking into account, however, that the proposal about air photography is proposed as a condition for the conclusion of an agreement on the question of disarmament, which creates a serious obstacle in the achievement of such an agreement, the Soviet Government, to contribute to a speedier attainment of such an agreement, is ready to examine the question regarding the use of air photography in the area of Europe where forces of the Atlantic bloc and Warsaw Pact member states are stationed to a depth of up to 800 kilometers to the west and east from the borderline of the abovementioned armed forces, with agreement of the respective states.

Comment

39. This provision constitutes the principal novelty in the Soviet declaration. At the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference in the fall of 1955 and on 27th March, 1956, Moscow expressed readiness to discuss aerial photography at some future time as one measure of disarmament inspection.

40. The Soviet proposal bears some resemblance to a compromise aerial inspection plan voiced by French disarmament representative, Mr. Jules Moch in the UN Disarmament Commission last 10th July. Mr. Moch, however, specified that reconnaissance would include Scandinavia, Thrace and the Middle East as well as small zones in the United States and the USSR. The Soviet proposal is somewhat indefinite in describing the regions that would be involved. While it does stipulate a depth of 800 kilometers on either side of the "borderline" between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, it does not define clearly the northern and southern limits of the zone involved.

41. Nor is it clear what is meant by the phrase "the area of Europe where forces of the Atlantic bloc and Warsaw Pact member states are stationed". Does this refer only to areas where foreign forces are stationed? Since the USSR claims to have troops only in East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Rumania such an interpretation could eliminate the remaining Satellites from the eastern zone while including virtually all of Western Europe, where foreign troops are stationed.

42. Moscow also fails to give details about the actual operation of an aerial inspection programme.

43. Leaving aside points of detail, if actually implemented, the Soviet plan would place substantial portions of France, parts of eastern England, all of Western Germany and the Low Countries under Soviet aerial inspection; in the east the zone would include East Germany, most of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and a small portion of the USSR due east of Czechoslovakia. It would depend on the definition of the "borderline" between eastern and NATO forces whether or how much of Rumania and Bulgaria would be included.

44. Despite these and other ambiguities, the proposal at least ostensibly seeks to meet the US half way on a point which US negotiators have stipulated to be vital to any agreement. By advancing it, Moscow presumably expects to place the West under substantial pressure to resume negotiations.

45. It is not clear whether this proposal constitutes an integral part of the whole Soviet plan or is separable.

PROPOSAL 10

46. In suggesting the carrying out of the measures outlined above, the Soviet Government considers that after their realisation the question must be raised of the complete liquidation of the armed forces and armaments of all kinds, with the maintenance by states only of such contingents of militia and police as are indispensable of the maintenance of internal security and the defence of frontiers.

Comment

47. This is a novel point in Soviet proposals although the May 1955 plan contained a general provision for eventual reductions beyond the limits set forth at that time. The proposal seems of doubtful practical significance at this time and is apparently included largely in order to document Soviet devotion to the concept of a tranquil world.

48. There is a minor question whether the "complete liquidation" applies only to the European zone or to the world as a whole.

PROPOSAL 11

49. Faithful to its policy of insuring peace, the Soviet Government, wishing to create confidence among peoples that arms will never be used to solve arguments among states, again proposes the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance and the member countries of the Warsaw Pact.

50. Such a pact, taking into account that among its members would be the Soviet Union and the United States - that is, the states which have the mightiest armed forces at their disposal - would introduce a radical change in the entire international situation and contribute to the easing of international tension and the creation of confidence among states.

Comment

51. This is a repetition of Soviet proposals put forward at the Geneva conferences in 1955 and by the Warsaw Pact countries last 28th January. A separate bilateral United States-Soviet treaty was also proposed in two letters to the President by Bulganin last January.

PROPOSAL 12

52. Since the debate on questions of disarmament by UN organs has not yet permitted the achievement of any real results in solving the tasks of reducing armaments and prohibiting atomic weapons, the Soviet Government considers it necessary to search for more effective means of solving this problem, parallel with the continuation of efforts in this direction in UN organs.

53. Taking into account the fact that the present international situation demands the taking of urgent measures to prevent war and terminate the arms race, the Soviet Government considers as usual the convocation of a conference of heads of state of the USSR, the United States, Britain, France and India, as was proposed by the President

of the Swiss Confederation. Such a conference could facilitate the reaching of agreement.

Comment

54. This repeats the Swiss proposal of 6th November which Bulganin accepted on 11th November. The Western powers have declined the Swiss proposal at least for the present.

55. Moscow now states that this meeting should "parallel" the continued efforts of the UN. During the past several months Soviet spokesmen have repeatedly deprecated UN disarmament efforts, but it never seemed probable that the USSR would actually refuse further participation in them

56. By coupling this renewed call for a summit conference with an ostensible concession on the "open sky" plan, Moscow probably hopes to cut some ground from under Western rejection of the Swiss proposal by giving a conference something concrete to talk about.

57. It is interesting that this summit conference, as proposed by the Swiss and accepted by Moscow, fails to include Communist China. By foregoing the latter's participation, known to be unacceptable to the United States, Moscow probably expects to add an aura of seriousness to its own proposals.

PROPOSAL 13

58. Concerning the disarmament problem, the successful holding of a conference of heads of governments of the five states could prepare for the convocation of a broader conference to examine these questions, in which the heads of government of the NATO states and Warsaw Pact countries could participate.

59. The Soviet Government considers it to be desirable that the heads of government of a number of other states participate in such a conference, primarily the Chinese People's Republic, India, Yugoslavia, Indonesia and Burma, who are neither members of the Warsaw Pact nor of such military alignments as NATO, SEATO or the Baghdad Pact.

Comment

60. The USSR has frequently in the past proposed world disarmament conferences. The present provision appears to be somewhat more limited, although the exact composition of the enlarged conference is not clear. It would, of course, include Communist China.

PROPOSAL 14

61. If difficulties were to be encountered in the convocation of heads of government of the five powers, then, in the opinion of the Soviet Government, the convocation of the abovementioned broader conference would be in accordance with the interest of easing world tension and the improvement of the international situation.

Comment

62. This alternative proposal contains an implicit hint that if the Western powers fail to respond favourably to the current Soviet proposal, the USSR might undertake to stage a disarmament conference of its own. There have been several tentative Soviet efforts along these lines before but they never materialised at a governmental level. The Communist-front World Peace Council has, of course, staged disarmament conferences before.

63. It seems probable that if the USSR undertook to sponsor an inter-governmental disarmament conference outside the UN it would receive few acceptances from outside the Bloc. It is possible, however, that if it can obtain a few non-Communist participants, Moscow might go ahead with a propaganda performance of this sort.

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C. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE
PROPAGANDA ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSALS

64. It has been suggested that the Soviet's primary aim in releasing their statement was to divert attention from their malevolent conduct in Hungary and the Middle East. A basic consideration must therefore be how best to frustrate this manoeuvre. For this purpose, some general remarks are submitted.

65. Recent developments within the Soviet bloc suggest that in wording the Western replies, special thought should be given to the potential audiences behind the Curtain, should they have the opportunity to become acquainted with the Western answers. It should be noted that the Soviets have increasingly taken to printing the texts of Western communications when they published their own replies to the Western notes. (For example, Pravda on 16th November printed Mr. Eden's and Mr. Mollet's letters of 6th November and Mr. Ben Gurion's of 8th November, together with the much lengthier Soviet responses thereto).

66. Are the propaganda aspects of the Soviet declaration best dealt with by the briefest possible response or by answering the allegations point by point? In favour of brevity it can be argued that a short, sharp reply could best expose the essential dishonesty of the Soviet diversion, thereby side-stepping the sort of dialogue into which the Soviets would like to draw us. In favour of a longer response, it can be argued that the West must be careful to avoid giving the impression that it is not interested in meeting the Russians half-way on disarmament and that it should take every opportunity to present its side of the broad debate to world opinion, especially to the peoples behind the Iron Curtain.

67. The following aspects of the Soviet propaganda purposes seem to call for particular attention:

- (a) the attempt to revive "co-existence" propaganda;
- (b) the thesis that only Communist states can be honestly peace-loving;
- (c) the associated idea that progress, especially economic progress, is a monopoly of the Soviet bloc;
- (d) the expression of hope that some day national armed forces will become superfluous.

The Hungarian tragedy obviously offers the best field for a rebuttal of most of this propaganda. Nothing could show up Soviet cynicism more plainly than a comparison of their actions in Hungary and their professions in this declaration. The fact that the Egyptian problem, about which the Soviet declaration is so self-righteous, is being handled in accordance with the United Nations resolutions while the Soviet and Hungarian régimes are blatantly "in contempt of court" over the Hungarian problem provides the Western Powers with the basis for a very strong stand.

Soviet actions in Hungary and elsewhere are scarcely calculated to bring any nearer the hope mentioned in (d).

68. In dealing with the proposals for summit conferences, careful wording may usefully avoid antagonising unnecessarily the neutralist opinion which the Soviets are here trying to woo.

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