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U.S. POLICY ON SOVIET NATIONALITIES

Problem

The Soviet central government will face increasing problems over the next two decades and beyond in dealing with the ethnic and nationality problems inside its borders. The direction and scope of these problems are not fully known, but that there will be problems appears certain. How should the US Government best approach this issue?

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline several aspects of US policy and programs on the Soviet nationalities and make some recommendations for interagency discussion of the problems. The paper is divided into five parts as follows:

- I - State of the Problem (with Annex)
- II - Increasing USG Understanding of Soviet Nationalities
- III - Increasing Contacts and Flow of Information Between US and Soviet Nationalities
- IV - Covert Action Programs
- V - Policy Considerations

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Department of State has prepared a study on nationalism in the USSR which the Department proposes be circulated for comment with a view to obtaining interagency agreement on the scope of the Soviet nationalities problem.

Recommendation: That the attached study of the Soviet nationalities problem be circulated to interested agencies (DOD, CIA and NSC) and serve as a basis for an agreed interagency statement of the problem.

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Proposed Deadline: One month after SCC decision.

II. INCREASING USG UNDERSTANDING OF SOVIET NATIONALITIES

Whatever the policy implications of USG programs centered on the Soviet nationalities, it is certain that we do not know enough about the nationalities/ethnic issue. There have been numerous studies of the problem, some conducted by US Government agencies directly, others contracted out by them to private individuals or institutions. This has been a piecemeal program, however, and there has been, until now, no concerted effort by the USG foreign policy and intelligence community to develop and maintain a comprehensive, fully coordinated program for increasing our knowledge of the Soviet nationalities issue in order to determine its place in US-Soviet relations and in our overall foreign policy structure. A tighter and more focussed effort is clearly needed.

There follow proposals for action to overcome this gap in our knowledge and understanding of Soviet nationalities.

A. Soviet nationality groups should be ranked in priority order in terms of their present and future importance in the USSR.

B. Present sources of information in the US and the West on general and specific elements of the Soviet nationalities issue should be assessed, including governmental, academic institutions, research organizations, and private ethnic groups.

C. A survey of existing USG research holdings should be undertaken to determine the extent of our data base, and recommendations on the management and possible computerization of these holdings should be made.

D. A survey should also be made of the current funding capabilities of US Government agencies in order to determine a coordinated program of government-sponsored research on Soviet nationalities.

E. Interagency recommendations should be made for specific US Government research programs and USG-funded private research contracts. The desirability of centralized management of government-sponsored research should be assessed for the

purpose of avoiding duplication of effort and funding. The question of an interagency group to coordinate such an effort should be studied.

F. A survey of existing governmental resources with a view to developing a program for possible recruitment of a corps of language-qualified US Government experts on Soviet nationalities issues should be undertaken.

Recommendation: That a working group composed of State, CIA, DOD, and drawing on HEW for information, be established to produce a plan for putting the actions above into effect.

Proposed Deadline: One month after SCC decision.

III. INCREASING CONTACTS AND FLOW OF INFORMATION BETWEEN US AND SOVIET NATIONALITIES

Along with increasing USG understanding of the Soviet nationalities issue, actions should be taken, with SCC approval, to find ways of increasing overt contacts and the flow of information between the US and Soviet nationality groups. Among the actions that should be taken are:

A. A comprehensive survey of current overt contacts and information flow and their costs to the United States Government, e.g., US exhibits in USSR, travel programs of US official establishments in USSR, private and governmental exchange programs, radio broadcasts (VOA and RL) in the USSR, overt distribution of USG materials, books, pamphlets, magazines in nationality areas, etc.

B. An assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts by activity in terms of reaching individuals and groups in nationalities areas and influencing their positions.

C. On this basis recommendations should be made for increasing, maintaining at current levels, or dropping current contacts and informational programs based on their estimated effectiveness and costs.

D. US Government coordination and management of contact and informational programs should be assessed. Should an interagency group (formal or informal) be established to coordinate US Government efforts in this area?

Recommendation: That an action paper be prepared by State, ICA, CIA, and, through State and NSC, the Board for International Broadcasting for consideration by the SCC.

Proposed Deadline: One month after SCC decision.

IV. COVERT PROGRAMS

In conjunction with the studies recommended in previous sections of this paper, we need to take a close look at the background, rationale, effectiveness and benefit to national interests of our covert action programs toward Soviet nationalities. Decisions on this aspect of a USG approach to the Soviet nationalities issue must necessarily await conclusion of the other studies proposed, but in the meantime a comprehensive survey and analysis of USG covert action to date should be undertaken to lay the basis for these decisions. This survey should address the following points:

A. The effort to date. A listing and description of all covert action programs targetted on Soviet nationalities since World War II.

B. Discussion of funding and numbers of personnel involved in these programs with comparison of previous periods.

C. Listing of private organizations partially or fully funded by USG involved in covert action programs, with discussion of their orientation, objectives and effectiveness.

D. Assessment of the results of our covert action program toward Soviet nationalities to date. Have our covert programs had a major or marginal effect on the development of nationalism in the USSR? Discussion of relative influence of covert programs as compared with overt programs such as radio broadcasting, exchanges, exhibits, overt dissemination of USG-prepared materials, etc. Awareness of our activity by Soviets and their efforts to combat them. Successes and failures.

E. Recommendations should be made for increasing, maintaining at current levels or dropping existing covert action programs in this area based on their estimated effectiveness and costs.

Recommendation: That an assessment of USG covert action programs be prepared by CIA, State, DOD and NSC with the objective of preparing a decision document for the SCC upon the completion of other studies recommended in this paper. In the meantime, it is recommended that no new covert action programs in this field be initiated.

Proposed Deadline: One month after SCC decision.

V. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Even if there can be agreement on the statement of the nationalities problem today, there are likely to be widely differing views on the implications of existing trends among the nationalities for the Soviet regime, and more importantly, on the implications for Soviet foreign policy and US-Soviet relations in particular. There is one argument that views the evolution of the Soviet nationalities problem -- particularly the increasing importance of the Central Asian peoples -- as resulting in a slowdown of economic growth, a weakening of the Soviet armed forces, and possibly even a breakup of the Soviet state. According to this argument existing trends within the Soviet nationalities can only weaken Soviet power and Soviet capacity to wage war; therefore, these trends are desirable and can and should be promoted. There is another argument which says that even if the present trends continue, Soviet power is at least as capable as any other power in the world of containing the ethnic forces within its borders and that little can be done from the outside to diminish this capability.

There is also disagreement over the implications of the trend toward growing nationalism within the USSR, whether one sees ethnic assertiveness as disruptive to the Soviet state or as a manageable problem for the Soviet leadership. This disagreement centers on whether Soviet handling of national tensions (effective or not) will tend to strengthen great Russian chauvinism and make the Soviet Government behave more repressively at home and more aggressively abroad;

and whether the ethnic forces within Soviet society are so strong and unpredictable and the US capacity to affect them so marginal that the US can and should move with deliberation and care on developing programs designed to foster ethnic division within the Soviet Union. In addition, there is the likelihood that the political philosophies of some ethnic groups would be inimical to US basic values and interests. There are, of course, shadings and variations of these considerations.

Moreover, there are broader policy considerations which need to be examined before determining how best to take advantage of these trends of nationalism in Soviet society.

First, nationalism is at least as divisive a force in certain countries in Eastern Europe as it is in the Soviet Union. Any policy that aims to help centrifugal forces among the Soviet nationalities must take into consideration the possible implications for countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and even Romania, each of which could disintegrate as states or change drastically as a result of national forces.

Secondly, leaving the Communist nations aside, ethnic and national forces are likely to continue to be among the most violent and divisive forces in the world over the coming decades. These ethnic forces have resulted or may result in separatism and/or violence on every continent -- the North American continent is no exception. The United States has not adopted a rigid policy toward ethnic and national issues. Yet the question remains whether we should or can pursue as a matter of principle foreign policy toward one part of the world that is contrary to our policy in other parts of the world. (Do our policies toward Quebec, the Kurds, the Pushtuns, Northern Ireland, the Ukraine, Soviet Central Asia, the Balts, the Palestinians, the Croats, the Macedonians, etc., have to be somewhat consistent? Should they be approached in an ad hoc way, or by region?)

Thirdly, there is the issue of our human rights policy and CSCE, Madrid and beyond.. How does our human rights policy relate in political terms to nationalism? Where do we stand on the self-determination and territorial integrity dichotomy? With respect to the USSR is it our objective to promote human

rights, freedom of expression and maximize cultural identities, or is it to undermine the bases of the Soviet regime? Are the two compatible, directly contradictory or only slightly inconsistent?

Finally, there is the domestic political connection which is so influential in determining how US policy evolves toward ethnic and nationalism issues in our foreign policy. How can we most coherently and consistently evolve policies toward national minorities taking into account the domestic and Congressional pressures that give emphasis to those national groups represented in the United States.?

Recommendation: That on completion of the assessments recommended in the previous sections, an interagency group (State, CIA, DOD, NSC) should draft for SCC approval US policy guidelines toward Soviet nationalities addressing the issues posed above.

Proposed Deadline: One month after completion of the assessments above.