

October 13, 1965

Research Memorandum RSB-115 from Thomas L. Hughes to the Secretary, 'Soviet Views of Nuclear Sharing and Nonproliferation'

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Summary:

INR looked closely at Soviet positions on an NPT arguing that the Soviets appeared to "attach a higher priority in using the nondissemination issue as a means of attacking possible NATO nuclear arrangements than in concluding an agreement."

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RSB-115, October 13, 1965

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes
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Subject: Soviet Views of Nuclear Sharing and Nonproliferation

The Soviet draft treaty of September 24, 1965, was examined in Research Memorandum RSB-106, "Soviet Conditions About Nuclear Arrangements for a Nondissemination Treaty," September 29, 1965 (SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM). The present paper carries forward the analysis of the Soviet position on this subject through a detailed review of the intricate bidding in subsequent conversations.

ABSTRACT

The Soviet position on what forms of nuclear sharing might be permitted under a nonproliferation treaty appears to be an exquisitely contrived obfuscation. Indeed, Moscow has done such a good job of wessel-wording that even one usually well-informed Soviet officer seems to have been led to contradict himself in two successive luncheon conversations. Although the Soviets have given some hints that their opposition to the Select Committee may not be unalterable, they have carefully avoided taking any clear position on it. The Soviet Union appears to be trying to put off any final definitions of what it will tolerate in the way of NATO sharing and still conclude a nonproliferation agreement. By putting off any such definition, Moscow apparently hopes to put itself in a position where it can pass judgment on present or developing Western nuclear arrangements and thus inject itself into intra-NATO relationships.

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From UNDC to ENDC

On June 2, 1965 Tsarapkin, speaking to the UNDC, set out Moscow's basic position on the McNamara Select Committee proposal -- that it was another analogue to the MLF as a means of slipping the West Germans nuclear weapons and that consequently a non-proliferation treaty ought to forbid it.

In Geneva he blurred the Soviet position a bit when he made no specific reference to the McNamara proposal as such. But, in using much the same sweeping language as the Soviet draft treaty subsequently tabled in New York, Tsarapkin amply protected his previous stand which denounced the Select Committee as another analogue to the MLF.

Gromyko on the Draft Treaty

The sweeping language of the Soviet draft treaty of September 24, 1965 can, of course, be read as prohibiting not only the MLF and ANF, but the Select Committee and existing two-key arrangements as well. Indeed, we believe that, if all of the New York draft is taken completely literally, it would prohibit current Warsaw Pact practices as well. Later this month Soviet, Polish, East German, and Czech troops are to carry out a joint exercise in East Germany under what the East German press called conditions of modern warfare; at the very least that would signify the exchange of enough weapons-effects data to make simulation of nuclear battlefield conditions meaningful, and would come under the stricture in the Soviet draft treaty against passing information about the "application" of nuclear weapons.

In his New York conversations, Gromyko stated that the only issue in nonproliferation was the "MLF." While it was clear that his remark meant Moscow was not drawing a direct link between the Vietnam crisis and nonproliferation, the further implications of his remark were hard to fathom. Presumably, he did not mean that Moscow intended to accept the US provision of IAEA or equivalent safeguards; he may believe that the US will cave easily on that score. Be that as it may, the main problem in Gromyko's remark was that he never explained what he meant or did not mean by "MLF." While he denied that his basic purpose was an attack on NATO, his use of the term "MLF" left standing all of the questions raised by the Soviet draft treaty. For he could hardly have intended not to

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include ANF, and he did not explicitly exclude existing nuclear arrangements (indeed, he did not indicate that he knew of any way to draft language which would permit them and rule out the ANF and MLF) or the Select Committee from the broad-ranging prohibitions of the Soviet draft treaty.

A French official has told us that in his talks with Couve in New York Gromyko had indicated that the Soviets were equally opposed to the Select Committee as to the MLF or ANF even though they did not quite understand what the Select Committee was about.

Other Soviet Officials Give Evidence of Waffling

Meanwhile, conversations with other Soviet officials confirm the existence of a degree of possible flexibility on the subject of the Select Committee, together with a measure of unsureness as to just what the Soviet position is.

Three Soviets have hinted that Moscow might not be unalterably opposed to the Select Committee, but each expressed some measure of reservation on the point. Zinchuk of the Soviet Embassy in Washington in a September 27 conversation with Mr. Fisher of ACDA noted -- in an almost wistful manner -- that nothing had been heard on the subject of late, but seemingly as an afterthought added that Moscow had not of course approved of it. Pravda Commentator Matveev on September 29 told Mr. Nordness of ACDA that at this stage the Select Committee posed no great problem for the Soviets -- probably because they knew so little about it. He added, however, that as the Select Committee's role became more clear this position could change. On October 3 Lukianov of the Soviet Embassy here told the Norwegian Counselor Vibe that the Soviets would not object to the establishment of a Select Committee, as they presently understood its terms of reference (i.e., that it would not allow any kind of physical control of nuclear weapons).

Karpov Backtracks

The most detailed of these informal conversations were two luncheons with Karpov of the Soviet Embassy here, and his evident backtracking seems to bear out the sense of some confusion among usually knowledgeable Soviet officers on precisely what the Soviet position may be. As we read the two conversations, we suspect that Karpov has been the victim of Moscow's extreme subtlety in leaving certain aspects of its position subject to continuing re-definition.

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On September 28 Karpov lunched with Mr. Barber of ISA. After reviewing the Soviet terms for ownership, disposition, and use which appeared in the draft treaty, Mr. Barber asked:

"Would the Soviet Government intend that this would limit in any way political or staff consultation on these matters?" He [Karpov] replied, "No, not at all. This is directed toward physical access to nuclear weapons." At this point I said; "If I understand you correctly, then it is the position of the Soviet Government that existing nuclear arrangements, political consultation such as NATO Council and Select Committee or similar arrangements are not affected in any way, but that a new nuclear arrangement such as the MLF or ANF would be forbidden. Is this correct?" He answered: "Yes, that is correct."

To pin it down completely, Mr. Barber asked whether Karpov was expressing a personal view or the position of his government and asked if he had any objections to Mr. Barber's reporting the conversation. He had none.

But on September 20 Karpov lunched with Mr. Owen of S/P, and gave quite different answers to the same questions. Mr. Owen's memorandum reads:

He referred to the latest Soviet draft on nonproliferation agreement. I asked what its effect would be on the NATO Atomic Stockpile and the Select Committee. He said that it would preclude the Stockpile and that its effect on the Select Committee would depend on what the Select Committee did. If it discussed only "political" questions, that would be O.K. But if it got into technical matters which involved information about how to use nuclear weapons or gave the non-nuclear countries a say in the use of nuclear weapons, it would be verboten.

Karpov thus backtracked both on the issue of existing NATO arrangements (perhaps he did not understand what Mr. Barber meant by "existing" arrangements) and on the subject of the Select Committee. His second reading -- perhaps based on some further consultations after his talk with Mr. Barber -- is more in keeping with the language of the Soviet draft treaty. It made clear that the Soviets do not hinge their case purely on physical handling of weapons but also on passing certain still ill-defined categories of information not only about manufacture but also about "application" of nuclear weapons.

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Goldblat on a Slightly Different Tack

Polish ENDC delegate Goldblat is still on a slightly different tack. It was he who on September 2 introduced the term "planning" into bloc discourse on what ought to be forbidden by a nonproliferation treaty, and on October 5 USUN reported that he had expressed the opinion that the Soviet draft treaty was meant to exclude the Select Committee. Goldblat's interpretation of the Soviet draft is in keeping with his conception -- one not expressed by the Soviets, except for Karpov's response to Mr. Barber's leading question -- that a nonproliferation agreement ought to freeze the status quo with respect to alliance arrangements. It was thus Goldblat who on September 2 breached the notion that there was in fact a status quo with respect to some degree or other of nuclear sharing at which both sides ought to stop. The notion of a status quo to be frozen was again mentioned by Polish delegate Lachs in New York on October 12.

Where Do We Stand?

To sum up, Moscow has now given us hints that its opposition to the Select Committee may not be unalterable, but the Soviets have -- at the expense of confusing their own officials and perhaps their allies -- carefully avoided taking any clear position on it or on related issues. The Soviets seem to be trying to defer any final definitions of what they will or will not acquiesce in and still conclude a nonproliferation treaty. Rather than offer guidelines which might facilitate a NATO sharing arrangement, Moscow would prefer to sit in judgment on NATO plans as they are developed. Thus, by keeping its position obscure, the Soviet Union apparently hopes to maximize its chances for injecting itself into intra-NATO relationships.

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