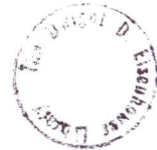


*PC said on April 11
he had noted this*

*Special Staff
services
my files*

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April 10, 1953



MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CUTLER

SUBJECT: CIA Estimate of "Probable Consequences of the Death of Stalin and of the Elevation of Malenkov to Leadership in the USSR (SE-39)

The attached CIA estimate of the effect upon Soviet policies of the death of Stalin speaks with assurance ("almost certainly"), and predicts exactly the opposite of what has happened so far.

I understand that Mr. Allen Dulles said at the Council meeting last Wednesday that the estimate had misfired and a new one is being prepared.

I don't believe it is enough simply to have a correction made, and a new estimate prepared in the light of events that have contradicted the original estimate. If our intelligence estimates are to play a part in policy formulation, we should know how and why they go wrong on such a major event as the death of Stalin.

For one thing, I think it is a great mistake for any intelligence estimate to speak with such apparent assurance as this one did on a subject about which our ignorance is so appalling. What any intelligence estimate of Soviet political intentions boils down to today is the judgment of a group of men who are the heads of the intelligence services of the Government, with very little substantial information to go on, but with a somewhat dogmatic climate of opinion that has been established in the intelligence community over past years.

While estimates of Soviet political intentions are almost completely speculative, those of Soviet economic and military-potential are more substantial. Nevertheless, reliability in the economic and military areas is also subject to question.

In summary, I think it is a mistake to continue putting unsubstantiated estimates in the hands of the NSC members and staff.

Several months back the old Senior Staff had a session with CIA people on the nature and usefulness of intelligence estimates. One suggestion made was that estimates should carry an appendix of

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supporting data for judgments made. This was admirably followed through in the current NIE on Japan.

Perhaps you could discuss this problem with Allen Dulles, and suggest that future estimates might contain some statement as to their reliability and some indication of the nature of the evidence (or lack of it) that supports the estimate.

Respectfully,

Hugh D. Farley



EFFECTS UPON SOVIET POLICIES
(Paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of SE-39)



6. In the near future, the new Soviet leadership will almost certainly pursue the foreign and domestic policies established during recent years. In particular, it will probably continue to emphasize unremitting hostility to the West (including the tactic of splitting the West), the enlargement of the Bloc economic base, and the increase of Bloc military power.

7. The death of Stalin removes an autocrat who, while ruthless and determined to spread Soviet power, did not allow his ambitions to lead him into reckless courses of action in his foreign policy. It would be unsafe to assume that the new Soviet regime will have Stalin's skill in avoiding general war. At least initially, the regime will also lack his freedom of action and his ability to manoeuvre, since it will not possess Stalin's immense prestige and authority. Specifically, in foreign policy, the new regime will probably find it more difficult to abandon positions than did Stalin and might feel itself compelled to react more strongly if moves of the West confronted it with the need for major decisions. Conversely, the new leadership will probably exercise caution in the near future in taking action which it thought would force the West to make comparable decisions. If the West should suggest re-examination of the principal issues which have divided East and West, the new Soviet government would probably adhere to established Soviet positions. However, the new government would probably show a less sure hand in dealing with new issues or in handling new Western proposals.

8. The new Soviet regime probably fears that, while it is in the process of consolidating its power, the West may make aggressive moves against the Bloc. It would probably view with extreme suspicion any new moves made by the West, particularly those involving long-range air forces or military forces close to the Bloc frontiers.

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The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that paragraph 7 should read: "The death of Stalin removes an autocrat who, while ruthless and determined to spread Soviet power, chose courses of action which although causing the Western world to rearm, did not result in general war during his lifetime. It would be unsafe to assume that the new Soviet leadership will either desire or be able to choose courses of action that will avoid precipitation of general war. At least initially, the Soviet regime may lack freedom of action and the ability to manoeuvre since it does not possess Stalin's immense prestige and authority. On the other hand particularly in relation to foreign policy, the new regime may find it more difficult to abandon positions than did Stalin and might feel itself compelled to react more strongly to moves of the West. If the West should suggest re-examination of the principal issues which have divided East and West, the new Soviet government would probably outwardly adhere to established Soviet positions."

