MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF USIB
25X1A2g

SUBJECT: General Assessment of [REDACTED] Soviet Plans and Policies Re- 
lated to the German Situation [REDACTED] 25X1X6

1. The report outlines a Soviet course of action in the Berlin crisis which 
is plausible in some respects and considerably more ominous in intention than other in-
formation and experience has led us to conclude. In brief, the report asserts that 
Khrushchev has already decided to sign a German treaty “right after” the Party Con-
gress and “to strike first against the West if the situation warrants action” after the 
treaty is signed. In the meantime apparent Soviet readiness to negotiate is designed 
to keep the situation in hand while Warsaw Pact maneuvers and resumed nuclear 
weapons tests put the USSR in the best posture for eventualities including attack. 
An attack against Iran is also envisaged, and the Communist Chinese will “protect 
against attack from Japan.”

2. The report runs contrary to the current assessment that Khrushchev 

thinks he can make progress towards solving the Berlin situation on his terms through 
negotiations and that he does not regard nuclear war as a means of achieving this 
objective. It suggests that Khrushchev is prepared and willing to run much higher 
risks than we had thought. The report is not entirely clear on the question of what 
“situation” would warrant a Soviet “strike first;” however, the source has earlier 

stated that the signing of the treaty would be followed immediately by blocking 
of access to Berlin on the ground and in the air (an act which the Soviets undoubtedly 
recognize as carrying a high degree of risk). Nor does this report or earlier reports 
by the source define what the first strike would be.

3. In general, we regard the report as relating to contingency plans 
rather than to a firmly decided course of action, although to the source, whose 
contacts appear largely limited to military circles, the distinction between these 
two may have become blurred. We are thus inclined to believe that the report, 
which we accept as an accurate reflection of the source’s knowledge, presents 
considerable information, though incomplete and in a few instances of doubtful 
accuracy, regarding Soviet contingency planning in the Berlin crisis. We do not 
believe, however, that the report reflects knowledge of political factors necessarily 
involved in a decision of such importance as that of “striking first.” It seems un-
reasonable that the Soviet leaders would not wish to give due consideration to de-
velopments in the negotiating process under way between the US and the USSR.
that they would already have made a firm decision to interfere with Berlin access after signing the treaty. We have insufficient evidence to accept or reject the implications of the report that Khrushchev is prepared to launch a general nuclear war if the West does not accept Bloc demands in the Berlin situation. We believe, however, the report must be taken seriously as reflecting a possible sequence of events in the Berlin crisis.

FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WATCH COMMITTEE:

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Director