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**INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
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TO: P - Mr. Kimmitt
C - Mr. Zoellick

FROM: INR - Douglas P. Mulholland *DM*

SUBJECT: Soviet Initiative in Asia

MAY 30 1990

Gorbachev's proposed meeting with ROK President Roh Tae Woo in San Francisco and a likely stopover in the Soviet Far East on his return to Moscow suggest an increasing Asian focus for his post-summit travels. The historic meeting with Roh and recent hints of movement on the Northern Territories issue may set the stage for a major Asia policy speech. In anticipation, while in Washington, Gorbachev may want to explore US positions on Asian security issues, especially naval arms control and the Korean peninsula.

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Road to Kamchatka. Gorbachev's stopover in San Francisco and return to Moscow via the Soviet Far East provide him a natural forum for addressing Asia-Pacific issues and Soviet security and economic interests in the region. With a US-Soviet trade agreement unlikely and his domestic agenda facing ever-increasing opposition, Gorbachev may want to bring back to Moscow some visible improvement on the Asian front to deflect attention at home and remind the US that the USSR has other options. Moreover, a stopover in the Soviet Far East gives him the chance to do some politicking before the 28th Congress of the CPSU in July.

Pyongyang expendable. Gorbachev has apparently decided to disregard the likely adverse North Korean reaction to his meeting with Roh. Relations with Pyongyang have been seriously strained recently and at the very least, in meeting with Roh, Gorbachev signals his intention not to let North Korea hold his relations with the ROK hostage. The Soviets are probably expecting a sizeable economic return, and the meeting with Roh will make it harder for the Koreans to refuse Moscow's requests for economic cooperation. A South Korean economic delegation is reportedly scheduled to travel to Moscow later this summer. Moreover, Moscow may be hoping that improved relations with Seoul will prod Tokyo to be more forthcoming.

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Signs of change. Whatever his motives, there are indications that Gorbachev intends to push an Asian agenda: his planned meeting with ROK President Roh is now public. Central Committee secretary and Pravda editor Frolov have just been in Japan meeting with a wide range of Japanese leaders, and Tokyo is abuzz with rumors of an impending Soviet initiative. Japanese media report Gorbachev will make a major speech in Kamchatka on the way home, and a leading Soviet Far East specialist has been reported to favor a softening of the Soviet position on two of the four disputed islands comprising the Northern Territories. Finally, Defense Minister Yazov has been inspecting the Soviet Far East Military District this week.

Old themes, new focus. In both California and the Soviet Far East, Gorbachev is likely to return to the grand themes he has sounded in the past: reducing regional tensions, especially on the Korean Peninsula; extending European-style security structures; and improving Soviet economic relations with Asian neighbors. In past statements, China was the main target; Japan was all but ignored. The meeting with Roh and the hints of some give on the Northern Territories suggest a different focus, however, possibly reflecting a judgment that Moscow has gotten about all it can expect for the moment from Beijing.

Arms Control and CBMS. Arguing that enhancing stability in Asia should not be a forgotten goal as the world focuses on the changes in Europe, Gorbachev could also stress the growing need for naval arms control in Asia. He could emphasize naval confidence-building measures--such as limiting the number, location, participants, and duration of naval exercises and the exchange of observers--as an important step toward the major objective of negotiating agreements that would reduce naval forces and limit the deployment of certain weapon systems on naval vessels. Other Asian naval confidence-building measures could come from the standard Soviet menu: nuclear free zones, incidents at sea agreements, and notification of transfers of naval forces into, or within, the area.

Summit angle. Gorbachev may raise many of these same themes at the summit and give greater emphasis to Asian issues than earlier thought. In addition to Cambodia, he may want to explore US interest in Asian security matters across the board, tying in a pitch for naval arms control and CBMs. Aware of the firestorm likely in Pyongyang over his proposed meeting with Roh, he may devote special attention to the Korean peninsula and the need for superpower cooperation to keep things under control.

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