

SECRET**CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY****SOVIET MOVES IN THE BERLIN SITUATION**

Soviet response to the US display of force at the Berlin sector border last week reflects Moscow's desire to give strong support to East German claims to authority over East Berlin without bringing on a test of strength on this issue prior to formal East-West negotiations or the signing of a peace treaty with East Germany.

The new East German demands that US personnel in civilian clothes identify themselves to East German police before crossing into East Berlin constituted a further move to maneuver the US into recognizing East German sovereignty in East Berlin. This latest move probably was based on the assumption that the US would acquiesce in the new identification procedures, particularly since the British have long complied with them in practice. The US response in providing armed escorts to accompany officials in civilian clothes crossing the border, backed by a display of US armor on the sector border, seems to have caught the Soviet and East German authorities by surprise.

After a period of apparent hesitation, the Soviet commandant in East Berlin sent a letter to the US commandant on 26 October rejecting the US demand that a Soviet officer be stationed at the checkpoint and warning that use of force by the US would be met by "countermeasures" from the Soviet side. Following two additional US armed probes into East Berlin on 27 October, seven Soviet T-54 tanks were moved up to the Friedrichstrasse checkpoint.

On the same day, Foreign Minister Gromyko rejected Ambassador Thompson's protest re-

garding the East German actions and delivered a counterprotest which warned that if the US probes continue, "they will be regarded as an act of provocative armed invasion of GDR territory, and the German Democratic Republic will be given necessary support for purposes of ending such actions." Gromyko also rejected the US demand that a Soviet officer be stationed at the checkpoint and asserted, in effect, that the East Germans have the authority to permit or deny all passage across the sector border. He acknowledged, however, that US military personnel are permitted to visit East Berlin without hindrance, provided they observe the "necessary formalities."

Gromyko made no response to Thompson's suggestion that discussions could be continued in Moscow or Berlin. He charged that US countermeasures were in violation of his understanding with Secretary Rusk that neither side would resort to unilateral action and asserted that the US evidently had changed its position. The USSR, he added, would be compelled to draw the "appropriate conclusions."

On 28 October, the Soviet tanks were drawn back from the crossing point after facing US tanks for 15 hours. The Soviet tanks left first, but Soviet armed troops began patrolling the half-mile stretch of road between the Soviet tank park near Unter den Linden and the checkpoint.

The Soviet show of force seems to have been held to the minimum judged by the Soviet leaders as sufficient to avoid any appearance of retreating in the face of the US display of force and to maintain the credibility of repeated Soviet

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SECRET**CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY**

commitments to defend East Germany in the event of a Western resort to force over the Berlin issue. The intervention of Soviet forces tends to undercut the USSR's contention that it has no further responsibility in a matter which is the concern of the East Germans alone. However, Moscow apparently felt obliged to take actions to induce the US to forego further use of armed escorts, to protect the East Germans against further blows to their prestige, and to prevent a test of strength which might jeopardize the prospects for formal East-West negotiations.

Despite Gromyko's defense of East German claims to sovereignty over East Berlin and his insistence that these "sovereign rights" are not subject to negotiation, the Soviet leaders probably recognize they are on weak legal ground in challenging Western military access to East Berlin prior to the signing of a peace treaty, which they claim will liquidate all vestiges of the four-power status of Berlin.

Despite the tense situation in Berlin on 27 October, Khrushchev in his speech to the party congress that day reiterated his previous statement withdrawing a deadline for a German treaty and urging a "businesslike and honest solution" of the German problem. He also endorsed further US-Soviet exploratory talks in order "to prepare fruitful negotiations," although he coupled this with a warning against the use of talks merely to delay a settlement.

Khrushchev did not touch directly on the events in Berlin, but he stressed his usual line that it was time the West realized that it could not negotiate with the Soviet Union

on the basis of "positions of strength."

Demarche to Finland

On 30 October, Foreign Minister Gromyko handed the Finnish ambassador a note requesting that consultations begin under the terms of the 1948 mutual assistance treaty, which provides that the two countries will confer "if it is established that the threat of an armed attack" by Germany or an ally "is present." The Soviet note cited the "alarming situation" in Germany and proposed to hold consultations on "measures for ensuring the defense of the frontiers of both countries" from the threat of attack by West Germany.

The immediate Soviet aim probably is to represent Finnish agreement to hold such consultation as an endorsement of the Soviet contention of an increasing military threat from West Germany.

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In view of Khrushchev's open support for Kekkonen, only recently reaffirmed during Soviet President Brezhnev's visit to Finland, it is doubtful that

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

Moscow will make extensive political demands or requests for military bases. In a recent interview with an American journalist Khrushchev once again took personal credit for the decision to relinquish the Soviet base at Porkkala. It is likely, however, that the Soviets will make it clear that they expect a Finnish signature on any German peace treaty.

Pressure on Finland will also be used by the USSR to influence the German policy of the other Northern European countries. The Soviet note, which was also given to Sweden for information, accused "leading Swedish circles" of underestimating the danger of German militarism and made extensive charges against Norway and Denmark for cooperating with Bonn's alleged aggressive plans. Norwegian Foreign Minister Lange will visit the USSR in mid-November, and the demarche to Finland may have been timed to set the stage for a more aggressive Soviet line against both Norway and Denmark.

Finnish, Scandinavian Reaction

The Soviet note took the Finns by surprise and demonstrated that their profession of neutrality--the so-called Paasekivi-Kekkonen line--does not ensure noninvolvement in "great-power conflicts." Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen has flown back to Helsinki from the United States, where he was accompanying President Kekkonen on his tour ending 2 November.

The Finnish Government will undoubtedly agree to some kind of "talks" with the USSR. The Finns would, however, be reluctant to accept the Soviet view that present circumstances correspond to those

specified in the treaty as requiring mutual defense consultations. Acceptance of this Soviet contention would open the door for Soviet demands for closer military cooperation. A leading Helsinki newspaper stresses that mutual verification of the existence of a threat of aggression by Germany against Finland or the USSR through Finland is the prerequisite for consultations as proposed by the USSR; the paper urges the Finnish Government not to be too hasty in the matter.

The Soviet note has greatly alarmed the Scandinavians, particularly the Swedes. The Russian move, however, is regarded primarily as a cold war measure directed against West Germany. The three Scandinavian cabinets have met in emergency sessions, and the Norwegian and Danish governments have rejected the charges against them in the Soviet note by stating that their association with NATO is solely defensive in character.

Within Finland there is considerable depression over the involvement of Finland in world politics. The question of relations with the USSR will assume an even more prominent role in the presidential election campaign, already under way. Kekkonen's opponents may argue that the Soviet note indicates that Finnish-Soviet relations are not as firm as claimed by him, but most Finns will be disposed to support Kekkonen's re-election as the only alternative to a crisis in relations between the countries which would be almost inevitable if an individual more closely associated with pro-Western elements were elected.

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