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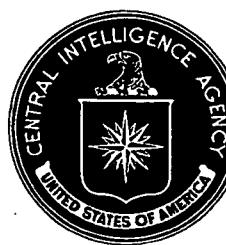
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CENTRAL

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Berlin Situation

Western officials in Berlin and Paris feel the situation in Berlin is not one of immediate danger, although the long-term dangers remain undiminished. The US Mission in Berlin does not see in the detention of American military vehicles on 14 November either the beginning of a blockade or the actual implementation of Khrushchev's threats concerning Berlin. The mission considers that the first sign of such implementation would be the abolition of the Soviet Kommandatura in Berlin or the turnover of one or more access controls to the East Germans. Premier Grotewohl's statement on 17 November that he would be "abroad" on 13 December supports a report that East Germany and the USSR will negotiate in Moscow in December concerning a transfer of Soviet quadripartite functions to the East Germans.

Harassment of allied access to Berlin is likely to continue, however, and Soviet authorities have insisted they have the right to inspect covered allied vehicles en route to or from West Berlin.

Top French Foreign Ministry officials believe there is no limit to the potential seriousness of the Berlin situation or the extent to which Moscow may be prepared to go. Paris is backing a strong show of unity among the NATO countries and has expressed a willingness to take a larger share in an airlift than it did in 1948.

On 17 November, Pravda reiterated Khrushchev's contention that the allies have forfeited their right to stay in Berlin and further asserted that the allied position did not rest on Germany's unconditional surrender, as maintained by the West, but on the Potsdam Agreement which, it declared, had been voided by allied actions.

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West Berlin officials, while publicly dismissing Khrushchev's threats as a "bluff," are privately concerned at the possible long-term effects on West Berlin of a period of tension. They feel that while in 1948 Berliners had little to lose, West Berlin's present prosperity may have undermined the readiness to undergo another blockade. In this situation, West Berlin's mayor reluctantly believes that the acceptance of East Germans at control points as agents of the USSR represents the best alternative, although West German officials fear that any policy which could be interpreted as a retreat by the West would lead to public unrest in West Berlin.

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