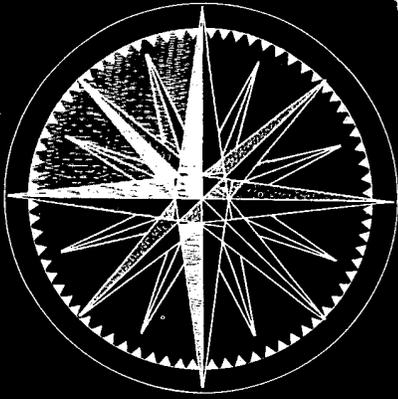


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Berlin

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SPECIAL REPORT

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN BERLIN

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7 June 1963

THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN BERLIN

The most striking feature of the USSR's tactics in Berlin proper for the past ten months has been its attempt to establish a foothold in the Western sectors. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Berlin Kommandatura last August, the Russians have made a variety of direct approaches to West Berlin government leaders, tradesmen, and cultural figures. Moscow's purpose is to undermine the Allies' position in Berlin, cut political ties between West Berlin and the Federal Republic, and lend substance to the notion of a "free city" of West Berlin.

Break in Soviet Allied Contacts in Berlin

On 17 August the East German border guards fatally wounded a would-be escapee, Peter Fechter, and left him to die within sight of West Berlin bystanders. Confronted by renewed Allied demands that the Soviets restrain the Ulbricht regime from further outrages along the Wall and, in effect, exercise the responsibility for day-to-day Berlin developments which they had steadfastly denied having, Moscow answered by peremptorily dissolving the office of Soviet commandant in Berlin. This action killed the four-power Kommandatura set up in 1945 to govern occupied Berlin--which had languished inactive since 1948.

For all practical purposes, relations between the Soviet and Allied commandants had already been suspended the previous December, when East German guards at Friedrichstrasse demanded identification from nonuniformed advisers accompanying the US commandant to a prearranged meeting with the Soviet commandant. In an attempt to solve

this impasse, the US and Soviet commandants subsequently met outside West Berlin--first at Soviet headquarters in Potsdam and then at the US Military Liaison Mission in the same town. However, the Soviets claimed they had no responsibility for the discrimination which had been shown against the US commandant's official advisers and maintained they had no jurisdiction over the "sovereign" East German guards.

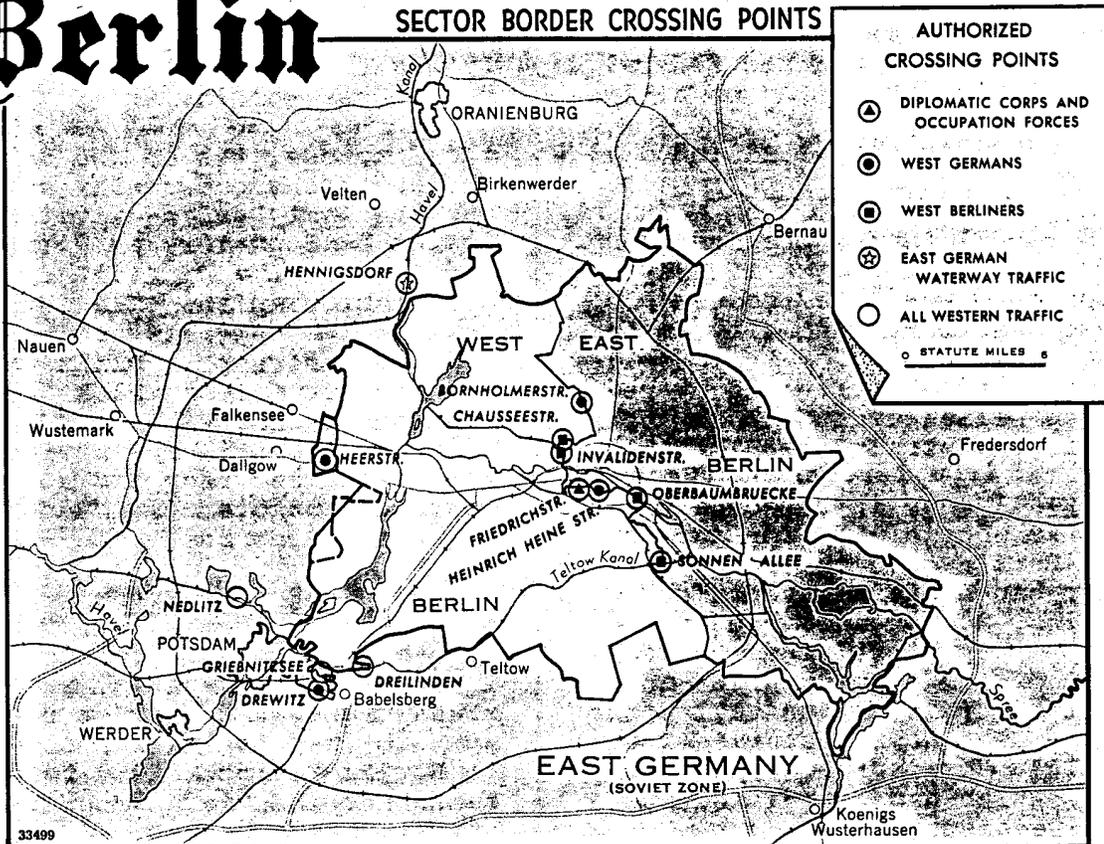
Stopgap Measures

Having cut off contact with the Allied commandants, the Russians transferred Soviet responsibility for Allied access to Berlin "temporarily" to the commander in chief, Group of Soviet Forces Germany (GSFG), located 25 miles outside the city. This left the Soviets with only three "official positions" in West Berlin--Spandau Prison, the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC), and the Soviet War Memorial in the British Sector. The first two are remnants of the old quadripartite control apparatus of Berlin--the very machinery which Moscow has maintained no longer exists. The War Memorial

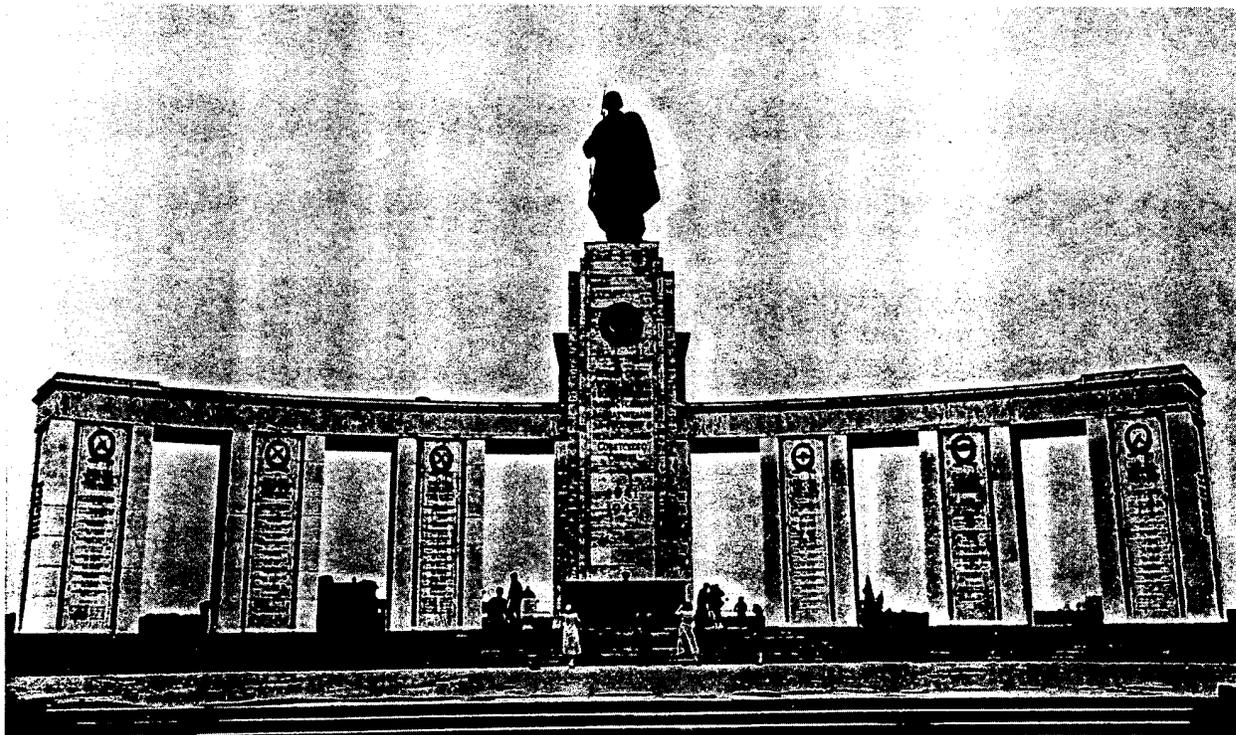
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SECTOR BORDER CROSSING POINTS



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Soviet War Memorial in West Berlin

remained the only uniquely Soviet institution in West Berlin.

Moscow thereupon began to step up efforts to develop a further "Soviet presence" in West Berlin--a "presence" which would support its claimed right to share with the Allies in governing West Berlin. Although Moscow obviously recognizes that what it calls the "occupation regime" is a three-power affair, it clings to the pretense that the USSR holds some vague, undefined rights in West Berlin under post-war quadripartite agreements.

The attempt to invest the GSFG commander in chief--General Yakubovsky--with "temporary" responsibility for Berlin was not altogether successful. The Allied CINCs in West Germany persisted in forwarding communications from General Yakubovsky to the Western

commandants for reply and reminded him that a more expeditious handling of Berlin problems could be had by dealing directly with the top officers in Berlin.

Not long thereafter, during a monthly luncheon at Spandau, the Soviet prison warden, Lt. Col. Lazarev, intimated that he would do whatever he could to facilitate good relations between local US and Soviet authorities. This ploy--designed to obtain tacit Allied concurrence in his role as an official Soviet liaison channel in West Berlin--was ignored.

Harassment With a Purpose

Almost immediately Soviet authorities began to seize upon irregularities or seeming inconsistencies in Western access

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procedures to remind the Allies that "free" access depended on Communist sufferance. On 18 separate occasions between 1 February and mid-March 1963, the Soviets and/or East Germans interfered in some way with Allied rail or vehicular movement en route to or from Berlin or within East Berlin.

On 14 March the East Germans succeeded in getting the British ambassador, Sir Frank Roberts, to flash his identification when returning to West Berlin from a call at the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin.

The most serious incidents involved the processing of Allied freight trains. Beginning on 4 February 1963, the Soviets objected to the US and UK practice of dismounting armed guards to patrol alongside trains stopped in the Marienborn yards for processing. They did not object to having guards dismount at other stops inside East Germany but maintained that Marienborn was Soviet territory and was protected by Red Army troops.

The Soviets seemed to be setting the stage for a quadripartite meeting in Berlin--a meeting between the Allied CINCS in West Germany or the commandants and General Yakubovsky or someone acting for him. The Soviet officers to whom Allied provost marshals protested the train incidents generally were courteous and reasonable. Several times they intimated that such minor "misunderstandings" could be avoided by a four-power discussion of the problems involved. On 18 Feb-

ruary the Marienborn checkpoint commander actually proposed such a meeting. At another luncheon at Spandau, Lt. Col. Lazarev volunteered that he could arrange for the US commandant to visit East Berlin.

A Change in the Embassy

On 30 November 1962, Moscow had appointed a new ambassador to East Germany, Pyotr Abrasimov. However, in line with the general Soviet position that all occupation rights had ended, his credentials failed to list any "residual" authority to act as successor to the one-time Soviet high commissioner for Germany--authority comparable to that vested in all three of the Allied ambassadors and in his predecessor, Pervukhin. This omission was to complicate later Soviet attempts both to open discussions directly with the West Berlin Government and to reopen on-the-spot contacts with the West.

Abandonment of Berlin Settlement Deadline

On 16 January, in a speech to the Socialist Unity Party (SED) congress, Khrushchev virtually conceded that the USSR



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Spandau Prison

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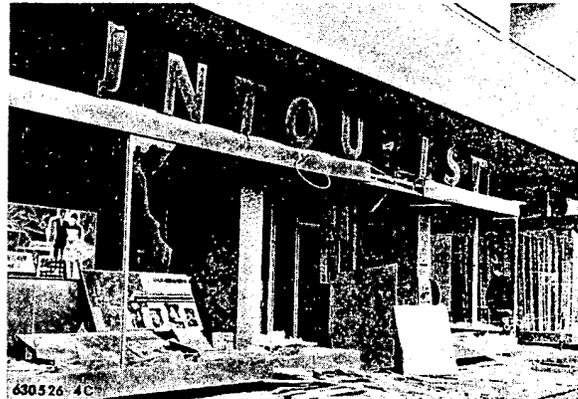
was unable to obtain a Berlin settlement which would meet even minimal Soviet demands and intimated that the Berlin question was not as critical in Soviet policy considerations as it had been at the time of the November 1958 speech in which he first set a deadline for a Berlin settlement.

At the same party conclave, Ulbricht professed to find the Berlin issue still negotiable, allowed that "prestige factors" made it difficult for the West to concede to the bloc on Berlin, and then advanced a seven-point program aimed at "establishing the prerequisites for objective and normal relations between the two German states."

Overtures to West Berliners

Throughout 1962, particularly following the dissolution of the Soviet commandant's office, Soviet officials had sought to establish contact with West Berlin government, trade, educational, and cultural leaders and to obtain a base in West Berlin for quasi-official organizations--such as TASS, Novosti, and SOVEKSPORT. These efforts have not been successful.

West Berlin officials balked at according Soviet Embassy officers special consideration, and local business leaders proved no more amenable. At the urging of the Senat, West Berlin's executive, they pointed out that the Soviet bloc--which currently accounts for only 1.5 percent of West Berlin's total trade--had little to offer in return for their products.



Bombed INTOURIST Office in West Berlin

Finally, the Allied Travel Office would not grant residence permits to Soviet nationals. Earlier, in September 1961, the British had expelled a TASS correspondent who had taken up illegal residence in their sector.

Attempts to Deal With The Berlin Senat

Moscow tried to capitalize on the 5 February 1963 bombing of the Intourist offices in West Berlin to bypass the Allied commandants and deal directly with the Senat. Two Soviet military officers drove into West Berlin on the morning of 6 February to inspect the Intourist offices. The following day junior officers from the embassy "acting on behalf of the Soviet High Commissioner in Germany, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the GDR, P. A. Abrasimov," visited the Senat protocol chief, who agreed to listen to their demand that West Berlin authorities apprehend and punish the bombers.

The Allies decided that the appropriate replies should be signed by the Berlin commandants. At first, their respective military liaison missions

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were rebuffed when they attempted to deliver the letters to GSFG headquarters. But less than 24 hours later, the missions were advised by phone that General Yakubovsky's chief of staff henceforth would accept communications from the commandants.

A New Beginning

A week or so later, the protocol officer of the Soviet Embassy called at the US Mission and presented a letter describing him as an emissary of Abrasimov who, it said, was entrusted with maintaining relations with US, UK, and French representatives in the German Federal Republic "on questions concerning Germany as a whole resulting from the decision of the four powers"--again the authority Abrasimov's initial letter to the Allied ambassadors had failed to mention!

The Lure of Trade

The Soviets clearly are determined to do what they can to further acceptance of the notion of West Berlin as an entity separate from West Germany. To this end, Moscow had protested the clauses including Berlin in the Franco - West German treaty, and bloc negotiators threaten to refuse to sign with West German traders commercial agreements which extend to Berlin. At the same time, other Soviet and bloc economic negotiators hold out to West Berlin businessmen the prospect of lucrative contracts--deals at the expense of West Berlin's ties with Bonn.

During the last week in April the Soviet Embassy's trade counselor invited approximately 50 prominent West Berlin businessmen to an East Berlin meeting at which they were offered contracts and were asked to serve on a special committee to study the possibility of expanding trade between their city and the USSR. A week later, West Berlin Economics Senator Karl Schiller characterized the Soviet offer as unrealistic. In a report to the Senat, Schiller said that the products offered by the Soviets--crude oil, pitwood, furs, crabmeat, caviar, and vodka--were of no interest. On 30 April, the Senat advocated "in principle" the expansion of trade with the bloc; but it insisted that any increase be effected within the framework of agreements between the bloc states and the Federal Republic. It is unlikely that Moscow will agree to such an arrangement.

The Russians reportedly plan to open an export office in West Berlin and are trying to obtain residence permits for TASS, Izvestia, and Novosti correspondents. None of the Allies has comparable facilities in East Berlin. Reuters does maintain an East Berlin office; but its correspondent commutes from West Berlin. The British are sensitive to anything which might jeopardize his activities and, in the Allied Travel Office and quadripartite meetings elsewhere, are inclined to favor the granting of West Berlin residence permits to the TASS and Novosti staffers, if no others. They admit that to grant such permits to one or

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two Soviet nationals would make it extremely difficult to deny other applications and probably would encourage a more lenient policy generally on such requests.

At the present time, the Russians reportedly are using the existing Intourist and SOVEKSPORTFILM offices to contact West Berlin firms, while attempting to obtain a regular listing with the West Berlin Trade Register. The SOVEKSPORTFILM studio has been used for film premiere parties to which Polish and Czech military liaison mission personnel and non-Allied diplomats, such as the Swedes and Swiss, in the Western sectors have been invited. There are reports that officers from the Soviet Embassy again have approached the Senat with a view to scheduling the appearance of Russian cultural groups in West Berlin and have offered to arrange for the exchange of "technical-level" delegations with Moscow.

US officials in Berlin have noted that many of the officers of the West Berlin - based Polish and Czechoslovak military liaison missions, all of whom formerly resided in East Berlin, have within the year transferred their households to the Western sectors. This transfer probably is designed to forestall any retaliatory moves against the Czechs or Poles by the Allies in the event the East German regime incorporates East Berlin into the GDR and seals off the

city sector border to all Allied personnel.

The Immediate Future

Recent remarks by Khrushchev

████████████████████ suggest that the Soviet leaders harbor few illusions about negotiating with an Erhard government. Moscow appears to be marking time until further political changes in Bonn encourage greater flexibility in the overall Allied position or facilitate a direct Soviet approach to the Federal Republic. Moscow has yet to reveal any details of its proposals of six months ago for a "UN in West Berlin," and for the moment seems content to pursue relatively low-level objectives in Berlin.

Among these, obviously, is the reinstatement of military contact with the Allies on a regular daily basis in Berlin, ultimately including the establishment of a regular liaison staff in West Berlin. Another is the expansion of nonmilitary trade and cultural outlets in the Western sectors. It is doubtful that Moscow expects such outlets to result in any economic benefits. Rather, such tactics appear directed toward a future situation in which the USSR could play a direct role in West Berlin affairs. To that end it is concerned with building up the image of an independent West Berlin which deals with foreign governments on the basis of equality and exercises all of the

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other prerogatives of sovereignty. Anything Moscow can do to promote such an image serves to strengthen the credibility of its proposals for a "free city" --which the USSR claims would be able to establish itself as an independent trading partner with both East and West.

Further, Moscow continually seeks to derogate the concept that Allied rights in Berlin

derive from the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. The establishment of Soviet economic and cultural enterprises in the midst of the "occupation regime" would help to support the Soviet contention that 18 years after the end of World War II the status of West Berlin is anachronistic or, as the Russians are fond of saying, "anomalous." ~~(CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM)~~

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