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Central Intelligence Agency Report, "Effects of Soviet Restrictions on the US Position in Berlin"

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Summary:

Describes effect of Soviet restrictive measures in Berlin on US intelligence and propaganda activities and on operations of the joint military government.

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EFFECT OF SOVIET RESTRICTIONS ON THE US POSITION IN BERLIN

SUMMARY

Contrary to many published reports, the chief detrimental effect on the US of the Soviet restrictive measures imposed in Berlin, since the walkout of the USSR from the Allied Control Council, has not been interference with transportation and supply but curtailment of certain US activities having to do for the most part with intelligence, propaganda, and operations of the quadripartite Kommandatura.

Concurrently with attempted inspection of US military rail traffic, the Soviets both tightened their "security" measures and manifested greater intransigence in all city affairs. As a result: (a) the general usefulness of Berlin as center of an intelligence network has been impaired, while in particular, access to Soviet deserters and anti-Communist Germans has been made more difficult; (b) since friendly Germans cannot move freely to and from the Soviet Zone or within the city, the US cannot as before, support anti-Communism within the Soviet Zone; (c) US propaganda cannot be freely disseminated except by radio; (d) commodities manufactured in Berlin cannot be shipped to the Western zones; and (e) the ACC and the Kommandatura have, at least temporarily, lost their usefulness in keeping up German hope of unity, revealing coming Soviet moves, and easing US-Soviet tension below the governmental level.

Note: The information in this report is as of 1 June 1948.

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, and the Navy have concurred in this report; the Air Intelligence Division, Air Intelligence Directorate, Department of the Air Force, concurs with those portions which pertain to air intelligence.

EFFECT OF SOVIET RESTRICTIONS ON THE US POSITION IN BERLIN

Imperative as it is for the US to remain in Berlin, its mere physical presence there does not insure continuance of all the strategic benefits that might be derived therefrom, and this strategic position has, in fact, been undermined already by unpublicized Soviet action, taken for the most part in general security and local political matters. The hindrances imposed by the USSR during the past several weeks on transportation to and from Berlin have not seriously interfered with the logistic position of the US but rather with its strategic position.

Continued US occupation of Berlin requires supply from the west of food and such other necessities as coal for both the US personnel and the German population of the US sector of the city. Incoming barge transport, carrying the bulk of food for the western sectors of the city, reportedly is unchanged and continues adequate, notwithstanding stoppages of short duration on British transport through the Soviet Zone. Inbound military and civilian rail freight, hauling the necessary coal and other supplies, continues to move as before, except that the civilian freight routes have been somewhat restricted.

The present transport situation is the result of Soviet efforts to extend the right of civilian rail traffic inspection, which the USSR has always exercised, to Western Power military traffic. Civilian passenger traffic apparently continues unchanged, but military passenger traffic does not function because of Western Power refusal to accede to Soviet demands for the right of personal inspection. Incoming road transport continues normal except for slight difficulties in routing; as yet, the USSR has not attempted seriously to restrict Western Power air transportation. The transportation situation, as outlined above, indicates that the necessities for the German population and for the US personnel in Berlin are still being supplied.

The US strategic position in Berlin, as contrasted with its logistic position, has been impaired both by the Soviet transportation restrictions and, more particularly, by other Soviet measures taken concurrently with the imposition of logistic hindrances. These comparatively unpublicized measures, which soon followed the walkout of the USSR from the Allied Control Council, have involved: general tightening of Soviet "security" measures throughout the Soviet Zone; greatly increased police controls in and around Berlin; and Soviet efforts to block the operations of both the Allied Kommandatura and the non-Communist city government. As a result the following material benefits to the US arising from the presence of US officials and troops in Berlin have been reduced or eliminated:

(1) The value of Berlin as a center of an intelligence net covering the city itself, the Soviet Zone of Germany, the eastern satellites, and the USSR has been threatened.

(2) The value of Berlin as a sanctuary and transfer point for anti-Communist refugees or Soviet Army deserters has been reduced, in that: (a) heightened Soviet security precautions make access to the western sectors of Berlin from the adjacent

Soviet Zone increasingly difficult; (b) Soviet travel restrictions on westbound passenger rail traffic have curtailed the means of evacuation of refugees and deserters, who must now be limited to relatively high-level personnel warranting air transport.

(3) Except for the capacity of the Berlin radio of the US sector, the value of Berlin as point for the dissemination of Western propaganda through the Soviet Zone has been, and despite new Soviet assurances is expected to be, curtailed by Soviet interference with the dissemination of Western publications and impediments to the issuance of any German pro-Western material in the Soviet Zone.

(4) The security and transport regulations have limited the value of Berlin as a base from which the US can support anti-Communism in the Soviet Zone. Western Zone Germans can no longer easily enter or leave the Soviet Zone, while tightened police controls have reduced the capabilities and the freedom of movement of anti-Communist elements already within the Zone.

(5) The Soviet-imposed demands for inspection of all westbound freight have prevented the shipment of Berlin manufactures that contribute to the finished production of the Western Zones and eliminated almost all commerce between Berlin and the west.

(6) Although the Allied Control Council remains in the city to embarrass the USSR as a symbol of quadripartite agreement in Germany, its functional impotence and failure to meet since the USSR abruptly terminated the 20 March session has: (a) diminished remaining German hope of implementing the Potsdam method of unifying Germany politically and economically; (b) eliminated a sounding board for the revelation of future Soviet moves; and (c) eliminated a useful safety valve for easing US-USSR tension below the governmental level.

The USSR still has at its disposal further means for harassing the US and making the latter's position in Berlin more difficult. These means include: imposition of unilateral traffic regulations on inbound food and freight shipments, attempted enforcement of unilateral regulations on the flight of Western Power aircraft over the Soviet Zone, complete repudiation of quadripartite Kommandatura jurisdiction over the Soviet sector of the city and the incorporation of that sector into the Soviet Zone, and, finally, increased efforts to create unrest among the civil population of the Western sectors of the city.

Strategic losses such as the damage to US propaganda machinery, to intelligence operations and to the use of the US sector as a sanctuary for refugees from the Soviet system, cannot be completely retrieved except by the removal of all the Soviet-imposed restrictions and impediments referred to above. Though the US could recapture a degree of the strategic initiative by intensified clandestine intelligence operations, such action could do nothing to remedy the unfortunate situation in which recent Soviet hindrances have placed the anti-Communist Berlin city government or to relieve the tension brought by increased Soviet intransigence in the quadripartite Kommandatura.

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