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THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE AND
THE SOVIET ZONE OF GERMANY

Report by the Expert Working Group(1)

I. GENERAL

The lack of uniformity in the foreign policies of the Eastern European countries was highlighted by their varying reactions to the initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany in seeking further rapprochement with Eastern Europe. In an endeavour to buttress the status quo, the creation of a network of mutual assistance treaties was begun. The absence of Rumania and Yugoslavia from the Karlovy Vary Conference demonstrated the continuing difficulty of re-establishing uniformity under Moscow's authority.

2. Internally, the East European leaderships appeared generally stable and most of their attention was devoted to the implementation of slowly progressing economic reforms.

3. The interest of these countries in developing contacts with the West continues.

II. INTERNAL

4. Stability in governing circles was accompanied by a tendency to give more weight, in the Party and in the Government of several countries, to leaders skilled in economic affairs.

5. The need for some readjustment in the economy is now admitted by all the countries. However, the régimes which have adopted or contemplate economic reforms continue to harbour apprehensions regarding their political implications.

6. After the polemics attending the Millenium celebrations, there is no evidence that apparent efforts by the Polish Government to find a way out of the stalemate in church-state relations have met with any success.

(1) The Working Group completed this report on 12th May, 1967.

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III. RELATIONS INSIDE THE COMMUNIST WORLD

7. The East European régimes, except those of Rumania and Albania, supported the Soviet line on China.

8. Faced with the varying degrees of enthusiasm shown by the Eastern CP's towards the idea of a World Communist Conference, Moscow used the theme of European security to convene a European Communist Conference at Karlovy Vary. The Rumanians and the Yugoslavs refused to take part, seeing this initiative as much as anything as an attempt to increase Soviet influence and re-establish conformism.

9. The cohesion of the Warsaw Pact was challenged by the interest shown in the East European policy of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Soviet Zone and Polish reaction to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bonn and Bucharest was at least partly motivated by fear of isolation.

10. The bilateral Friendship treaties concluded by the Soviet Zone with Poland and Czechoslovakia, which emphasise the general trend to bilateralism in Eastern Europe, are on similar lines to the Treaty of 1964 between Pankow and Moscow. Their provisions go no further than the obligations assumed under the Warsaw Pact Treaty and do not appear to be incompatible with the establishment of relations with the Federal Republic. Similar treaties between the Soviet Zone and Hungary and Bulgaria are expected. It is too early to assess the full implications of these developments, but they are at any rate likely to delay or obstruct further moves for the establishment of relations with the Federal Republic of Germany.

IV. YUGOSLAVIA

11. Tito remained solidly entrenched, with the succession question still wide open. There has been no retreat from the Party's declared intention to relinquish positions of command or from the trend towards greater economic decentralisation. Longstanding friction between Croats and Serbs has erupted again, this time over the language equality issue.

12. Moscow's irritation with Tito most recently stems from doubts about the rôle of the Yugoslav Party and his opposition to Soviet-backed Communist conferences. On many major international issues, however, Yugoslavia continues to hold views similar to those of the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe.

13. Yugoslavia's turn towards Europe, motivated by a desire to promote Yugoslav economic development and by her persistent aspiration to a conspicuous international rôle, has overshadowed her somewhat reduced commitment to Third World statecraft. This can be seen in Yugoslav promotion of an all-European conference of Parliamentarians, circulation of an aide-mémoire on European co-operation, and activity in the "Group of Nine".

V. RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

14. Eastern European states continued their interest in greater contacts with many Western countries. This was shown by exchanges of official visits and by the development of commercial and technological ties as well as by the implementation of cultural agreements and the promotion of tourism.

15. In the political sphere there was no real evidence of a more flexible attitude on the Communist side. There were, in fact, a number of indications, including references in the Karlovy Vary Declaration, of a harsher line toward the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany and NATO. The Declaration foreshadowed a developing propaganda campaign for the abolition of NATO and continued emphasis on the Communist conception of European security.

16. Economic considerations explain the fact that a number of Eastern European states, while keeping their strong preference for bilateralism in dealings with the West, have displayed a growing interest in such multilateral economic organizations as GATT, IBRD and also ECE, as demonstrated at its 22nd session.

VI. THE SOVIET ZONE OF GERMANY

17. The period was characterised by a hardening of attitude towards the Federal Republic, essentially based on the fear that a policy of détente would endanger the position of the régime. This could be seen in particular in the régime's rejection of Bonn's proposals for inner-German relaxation, the passage of a separate East German Citizenship Act, and the development at the seventh SED Party Congress of the theory of class struggle between the two parts of Germany.

(Signed) W.M. NEWTON
Chairman

OTAN/NATO,
Paris, (16e).