

May 29, 1953

Cable from Ambassador Charles Bohlen to John Foster Dulles regarding Transfer of Soviet Control in East Germany to Soviet High Commissioner Vladimir Semyonov

Citation:

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Summary:

Bohlen informs Dulles of the transfer of Soviet Control in East Germany, which does not yet provide much indication of future Soviet policy in East Germany except the solidification of East Germany's continued existence under the control of the USSR.

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English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Secret Security Information

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Taken by itself and pending further clarifying developments, transfer of control in Germany to High Commissioner does not (rpt not) in our mind, provide clear clue to Soviet ultimate intentions in Germany but following interesting features may be noted at this time.

1. Arrangement equates status of Soviet control in Germany to that of western powers after a delay which to German eyes must seem long overdue and with a lag concerning next step which in case Western Germany is projected in establishment Embassies following EDC ratification.
2. Certainly no (rpt no) abandonment of East German Republic is indicated, but on contrary, latter's continued existence seems confirmed by reference to representation Soviet interests in Republic and control over its authorities. This represents follow-up of line taken by Ulbricht and Grotewohl in their May 9 anniversary declarations (EMBTEL 1571, May 8).
3. Potsdam is reaffirmed as basis authority occupation powers, thus offering justification for continuation of rigorous economic and reparations policy in Soviet zone.
4. By reference to area of four-power contact in matters of "all-German concern" (a transparent inconsistency at this juncture) decree seems to leave door open nevertheless to conclusion of four-power arrangements on modus vivendi basis in such matters perhaps as air corridors, transport, etc.
5. No (rpt no) mention made controversial issue of Berlin nor status Soviet command in that city.

Decree which is published without comment today's press represents significant reversal of appointment a month ago of person of Yudin's past prominence to post political advisor in place of Semenov [Semyonov] who was then assigned to Foreign Ministry. Reorganization may conceivably have been prompted in part by pressure from East Germany whose leaders have recently shown assertive mood and who are rumored to be seeking consolidate their control by freezing out remnants of liberal and church parties in Soviet zone. There has been some speculation here that Yudin was sent to Germany to remove him from Russian scene where he seems to have been involved in intricate machinations under Stalin regime. As to Semenov, he is tough, capable, realistic, cynical and tricky. Respect paid to him by Sokolovsky [Sokolovskii] whom he served as post-war political advisor in Germany, and by Gromyko at Palais Rose Paris Conference, seems to indicate that he has always enjoyed considerable power in German affairs, possibly extending beyond Foreign Office support connections with the highest circles, including Soviet police and Army.

Bohlen

BB :KC/11

Note: Passed Bonn, London, Paris 5/29/53 1:25 p.m. JP

[Source: NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-2953.]