

USSR CONTINUES TO CLAIM AUTHORITY OVER BERLIN ACCESS

The USSR is continuing its efforts to document the claim that US military convoys on the Berlin autobahn have violated "established procedures." It contends that these practices have their basis in certain agreements reached immediately after World War II.

On 7 November, in discussing the autobahn incidents, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told Ambassador Kohler and UK Ambassador Trevelyan that an agreement had been concluded between Soviet and Western military representatives in 1945 which specified that military authorities should establish access procedures. He asserted that this agreement and a communication sent in 1958 by the Soviet military commander in East Germany to his US counterpart were "the basis of established practices respecting autobahn traffic."

Moscow's immediate purpose in setting forth these claims probably is to establish its right to a voice in determining access procedures prior to making a bid for new negotiations on this issue.

In his remarks to the two Western ambassadors, Gromyko implied that a formal statement from the Soviet Government on the question of access would be forthcoming. The USSR may have decided to avoid further harassment of Allied convoys at least until it has presented the Western governments with such a

statement. On 12 November, a US convoy which fell within the Soviet--but not the Western--criteria for dismounting transited the autobahn without a formal challenge.

In alluding to the 1945 agreement on the access question, Gromyko apparently was referring to a conference of US, UK, and Soviet military representatives held in Berlin on 29 June 1945. At this meeting, a number of decisions were made regarding the practical implementation of the four-power occupation of Berlin. General arrangements were agreed upon for the use by the Western powers of specific roads, air corridors, and rail lines in exercising their right of access to Berlin, but the agreement was never formally adopted by the four powers. According to a US memorandum of the conversation, General Clay asked Marshal Zhukov "only for the right to move without restriction under whatever Russian regulations are set down." Zhukov later replied that it would be "necessary for vehicles to be governed by Russian road signs, military police, document checking, but no inspection of cargo...."

Gromyko's second reference appears to be a letter sent by General Zakharov on 17 July 1958 to the US commanding general in Europe in response to a Western statement on procedures in conveying movement orders of Allied convoys. Zakharov accepted the proposals but reserved the right

15 Nov 63

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

Page 5

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70-14
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15

to inspect individual covered vehicles. On 29 July 1958, Zakharov contended that the USSR retained this right in accordance with the 1945 agreement "which confers responsibility for control of traffic exclusively to the Soviet side."

In asserting a right to control Allied military traffic, Moscow may be laying the ground-

work for calling for a major four-power review of the whole access question. Soviet leaders may, for example, revive the proposal they made last year for an international access authority. Soviet diplomats have recently hinted privately that the USSR may be prepared to negotiate a new access arrangement.

