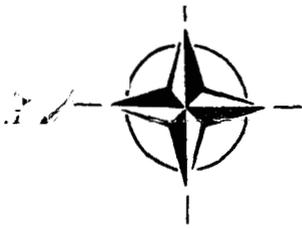


ORGANISATION DU TRAITE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION



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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH
16th October, 1968

NATO SECRET
PO/68/539

To: Permanent Representatives

From: Secretary General

POLITICAL ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
RELATING TO THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

I forward herewith the report by the Chairman of the Political Committee giving a political assessment of recent developments relating to the situation in Eastern Europe. This report was prepared by the Chairman on his own responsibility, but reflects the views expressed by delegations in a discussion in the Political Committee on this subject on 15th October, 1968.

2. I have transmitted this report to SACEUR, SACLANT and CINCHAN; it is also being transmitted to capitals over the NATO-wide Communications System.

(Signed) Manlio BROSIO

NATO SECRET

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POLITICAL ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
RELATING TO THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Report by the Chairman of the Political Committee

1. The Political Committee met on 15th October to review current developments in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and their implications in the context of the Czechoslovak crisis.

2. The Committee observed that, as the result of unrelenting Soviet pressure, there had been a continuing erosion of the Czechoslovak liberalization programme adopted before the invasion. There had also been changes in the Czechoslovak leadership, although these have not affected the top leaders, probably because they still enjoy broad popular support and also because the Soviets have been unable to find any suitable replacements.

3. It was noted that Soviet pressure still continued to encounter passive resistance on the part of the Czechoslovaks, although this resistance seemed to be weakening as their leadership more and more stressed the necessity of the people to face up to the sombre realities of the situation. The acceptance of the Moscow Communiqué of 4th October by the Czechoslovak Delegation was clear confirmation of the absence of any alternative courses open to the Czechoslovak leaders. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union did not appear fully reassured by Prague's efforts to date to achieve "normalization" and the question still remained open whether the Soviets, at some later point, might not have to take more forceful action against the régime.

4. The Committee heard reports concerning the possible removal of substantial numbers of Soviet troops, leaving a sufficient force (60-70,000 men) there, however, to maintain occupation control for an indefinite period. The Committee noted that, if such a withdrawal took place, the subsequent disposition of such Soviet troops, i.e. whether they would return to the USSR or not, would be of particular importance to the Alliance.

5. The uncertainty which prevails concerning the internal Czechoslovak situation, coupled with the continuing, though now less frequent, rumours of possible Soviet military pressure or activity directed against Rumania and Yugoslavia, continues to underline the situation in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. There have also been reports that the USSR seems to be engaged in a systematic effort to lay the ground-work for Warsaw Pact manoeuvres in Rumania and Bulgaria.

6. A further disturbing element was added to this atmosphere of uncertainty by the renewed Soviet emphasis of the doctrine of the Soviet Union's primacy in a "socialist commonwealth" of undefined limits, giving Moscow the right of intervention. This has been viewed by Yugoslavia as possibly promising serious preoccupations over the longer term.

7. There were still no signs of any direct threat to the NATO area inherent in this general situation. However, the uncertainties in the situation which have concerned various countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans have continued to contribute to the atmosphere of tension prevalent in Europe and, therefore, underline the necessity for the maintenance of a continuing attitude of watchfulness by the Alliance.

8. The Political Committee will keep the situation in Eastern Europe and the Balkans under careful review and will request its Chairman to render further assessments as necessary.

(Signed) Joachim JAENICKE