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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUMDISSIDENT ACTIVITY IN EAST EUROPE: AN OVERVIEW

To those who think history unfolds in cyclical patterns, the recent events in Eastern Europe have an ineluctable logic. Twenty years ago or so it was the street upheavals in East Germany, the Poznan riots in Poland, and the Hungarian revolution. A decade later it was the "Prague Spring" and then the food riots in Polish coastal cities. And now, there is again very serious trouble in Poland and a recrudescence of unrest and dissident activity in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Yugoslavia and, to a lesser extent, Hungary and Romania.

The underlying causes remain essentially unchanged:

- All of the regimes in Eastern Europe are, to varying degrees, repressive and do not command the loyalty of their people.
- The geopolitical ties to the USSR are at war with strong nationalist sentiment and the emotional and cultural pull of the West.
- The economic performance of the regimes is deficient.

But there are new elements contributing to the current problems in Eastern Europe. Foremost among them is the USSR's detente policy. It has:

- Promoted and therefore made legitimate the idea of increased interchanges with the West.

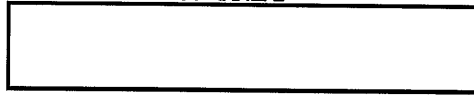
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- Resulted in a series of agreements, notably those involving increased contacts between the two Germanies and the Helsinki accord that reduced the isolation of the East European people (particularly its elites) and raised expectations of more to come.
- Fostered an atmosphere that has made it more difficult for the regimes to deal with their internal control problems in authoritarian ways abhorrent to Western sensibilities.
- Increased Moscow's stake in order, stability, and quietude in Eastern Europe even while it increased pressures from the West that tend to be destabilizing.

The flowering of Eurocommunism in Western Europe is another new and troublesome problem for the East European regimes and Moscow--not only because its leading proponents have given verbal aid and comfort to East European and Soviet dissidents but, more important, because it has appeal within the ruling parties in Eastern Europe.

The Soviets and East Europeans must also be concerned that President Carter's statements on human rights and particularly his exchange of letters with Soviet dissident spokesman Andrey Sakharov, give evidence of a new policy that is designed to cause trouble for the USSR in its own backyard. Even if the Soviets believe that is not Washington's intention, they will be worried that the effect will be the same. Moscow's misgivings in this regard will be in proportion to its concerns about the degree of unrest in Eastern Europe. Given the history of the postwar period, Moscow may well have a bias toward alarm. But in view of the prevailing situation in Poland, even an outside observer would conclude that Moscow has cause for concern.

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The Dissidence: Where Things Stand

Poland --The situation in Poland is by far the most volatile in Eastern Europe. A major blow-up could come at any time. The popular mood has remained tense and sullen since the outbreak of workers' unrest last summer, although the regime has taken steps to dissipate the discontent. Dissatisfaction is rooted in economic problems that the regime cannot solve nor significantly ameliorate any time soon. Moreover, the dissatisfaction of the Polish people extends beyond the economic and into fundamental questions regarding the competence and legitimacy of the entire system and its leaders. Under these circumstances, Poland's professional intellectuals and dissidents have a good deal to work with. They established a Workers Defense League, raised funds for the families of workers jailed after the June rioting, and are now calling for an amnesty and an investigation of police abuses. Not surprisingly, while the Polish dissidents have given some verbal support to the Czechoslovak Chartists, they have been preoccupied with their own problems and opportunities in Poland.

The authorities who beat a hasty retreat before the workers' wrath last summer have, since last fall, handled the intellectuals with kid gloves. The leadership is acutely aware that they face a volatile situation and that a direct confrontation, with the potential creation of martyrs, must be avoided. The regime is trying to prevent the growth of cooperation between the workers and the dissident groups, and Gierk has released some workers and promised an amnesty for others, even while he has refused to undertake the investigation the Workers Defense League hopes will provide a focus for more fundamental criticism.

East Germany --The problem in East Germany is somewhat analogous to that in Poland in that it also involves popular unrest. It is different in that disquiet has not manifested itself in violence or overt acts of hostility to the regime. The temper in East Germany seems to be less churlish than in Poland and far less volatile. There is no evidence that any of the dissident groups are united.

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The Honecker regime is greatly concerned about the attraction of the West, particularly West Germany, for the East German population. Three out of every four East German homes receive, and presumably watch, West German television. Millions of travelers from the West enter East Germany every year. Against this kind of "subversion," Honecker's attempts to create an East German nationalism have faltered, and the regime's classical means of control seem almost irrelevant.

The Helsinki accords have made life ever more difficult for the East German regime. Acting under its provisions, large numbers--perhaps tens of thousands--of East Germans have applied for exit visas to emigrate to the West. The regime is taking steps to discourage such applications, and it is doubtful that it will allow many East Germans to emigrate no matter what the pressures from the West. No one knows the degree of skepticism or cynicism with which such applications are made, but disillusionment and resentment toward the regime could prove to be a problem.

We have seen some signs of increased restiveness among workers manifest in complaints about working conditions, wages, and hours. It is hard to tell how serious this is. So far, we see little evidence that the regime feels itself under great pressure from the workers. A worsening of the economic situation could lead to unification of the various groups dissatisfied with the regime's policies.

Last fall, the regime had some trouble with clergy in the Lutheran church and with a few outspoken dissident intellectuals. The latter have not been overtly sympathetic with the Czechoslovak Chartists, nor have they brought organized sustained pressure on Honecker. The regime's carrot-and-stick tactics have been relatively successful in keeping things quiet within the intellectual community.

--The Czechoslovaks have taken center stage among East European dissident intellectuals by their direct challenge to regime practices regarding civil rights, as outlined in "Charter 77," a manifesto which was prepared early last fall but not propounded until January. The Chartists--a mix of

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well-known oppositionists who were active in the political arena during the "Prague Spring" and a surprisingly large number (more than 600) of other intellectuals and technocrats--clearly have the authorities worried. One Czech diplomat abroad has reported that nervous colleagues have been watching what the Chartists say, particularly on ideological questions, since they went public. One reason the regime is concerned is that the Chartists represent, in a figurative sense, the plight of a vastly larger number of people (perhaps as many as half a million), who were purged after 1968 and whose political and other rights remain severely circumscribed. As apostles of the aborted effort to give socialism a "human face," many of the Chartists consider themselves forerunners of the Eurocommunism of the 1970s. The government has harrassed the Chartists and has arrested several, but has not initiated a thoroughgoing crackdown. One of the Chartists' leading spokesmen, Jan Patocka, died shortly after interrogation last month (he was not physically abused), but his funeral took place without incident, and as far as we know there was no popular reaction to his death.

mania --The small number of Romanian dissidents have been deeply divided by personal feuds and different goals, but some common ground has been found in Charter 77. The dissidents consist mainly of unknown artists and intellectuals who do not command national prestige. Novelist Paul Goma's "open letter" in support of the Chartists and a Romanian version of the Czech manifesto are the only recent evidence of vitality. The dissident's letter strongly criticized party leader Ceausescu's personal role and his authoritarianism. In Romania, they make clear, the problem is not the Soviets, but Ceausescu himself. This personal attack may account for Ceausescu's vitriolic speech blasting the dissidents, but the Romanian leader did not follow up with harsher measures. On the contrary, Goma was allowed to see the party number-one man on cultural affairs, and there were even suggestions that some of Goma's work might be published. Goma has not backed off and joined by a hundred-odd known sympathizers who signed his manifesto, he continues his struggle.

ingoy --Dissidence in Hungary has elicited no signs of serious concern from the regime. A small number of intellectuals have

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publicly supported the Chartists, but thus far they have not criticized conditions in Hungary. Ironically, while party leader Kadar's soft line has been successful at home, it has caused him some troubles with colleagues in Eastern Europe and perhaps the USSR as well. He is in a strong position as long as the Hungarian dissidents behave themselves and Hungary continues to be one of the quieter countries in Eastern Europe.

Bulgaria --There is little active dissent in Bulgaria, still Moscow's most dependable and ideologically conformist ally. Some passive resistance and unhappiness with living standards is evidenced by occasional work slowdowns and a widespread apathy, but this is nothing new. The aged top leadership will inevitably need to be replaced before long, and this might provide a new climate that would stimulate dissent.

Yugoslavia --Opposition to the political establishment in Yugoslavia is unorganized, and factionalized, but is nevertheless worrisome to the Tito regime. Evidence of dissatisfaction, and the employment of harsh measures to suppress it, would bring into the open the regime's repressive character and make it more difficult for the leadership to argue that Yugoslavia is qualitatively "different" from other communist states. The regime's attitude toward dissent is colored by its abiding concern regarding the nationalities problem; all dissent is seen as potentially destabilizing.

Although such well-known personalities as Milovan Djilas and Mihajlo Mihajlov have long spoken out against government policies and communist practices, the intellectuals and students now criticizing passport policies and supporting the Chartists are not known to the general public.

The government has responded cautiously to dissident accusations that it is ignoring the human rights provisions of Helsinki. But it quickly expelled three West Germans who tried to publicize the issue in February, and is making strenuous behind-the-scenes efforts to keep dissent under wraps. The regime is also showing the stick to Yugoslav protesters. Two signers of the petition on passport policy have reportedly lost their jobs, and more punitive actions may be taken. The Constitutional Court rejected their appeal on 24 March. Belgrade's immediate concern is to limit adverse

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international publicity, as this would seriously embarrass the regime in view of Yugoslavia's role as host of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) review meetings.* It has circulated the word that it may pardon some well known dissenters such as Mihailov before the meeting as a gesture of Yugoslavia's good intentions on the human rights front.

The Dissidents

There have always been individuals in Eastern Europe, even in quiet times, who have called themselves or have been called "dissidents," and have come forward to criticize the existing socio-political order. In recent months nascent dissident organizations in two countries of Eastern Europe, Poland and Czechoslovakia, have come into the open. The Workers Defense League in Poland, by the very act of adopting a name, has sent a signal that it aspires to, if it is not in fact, a corporate organization. The Charter 77 group in Czechoslovakia has not been quite so adventuresome; indeed, because organizing or joining political groups is illegal, the Chartists have denied that they constitute a political organization. How close the League and Charter 77 have the attributes of real organization--active membership, coherent structure, recognized leadership and thought-out programs, strategies, and tactics--we do not know. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe the dissidents tend to be small, loosely organized groups of dissatisfied persons, whose political philosophy in many cases comes close to social democracy, but who frequently have varying views, interests, and objectives.

By and large, the leading figures and spokesmen for the dissidents are individuals who have had a history of fighting for increased freedoms. No new charismatic figure has emerged. But a large number of new people who have not previously been identified as dissidents have signed letters and petitions in

*It was agreed at Helsinki in August 1975 that the 35 participating nations would meet in two years to review implementation of the act's provisions. A preparatory meeting of experts is scheduled to be held on June 15 in Belgrade to decide on the dates and agenda for the main follow-up meeting, at, or below, the foreign minister level, which also is to be held in Belgrade this fall--possibly starting in early October and lasting up to three months.

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Czechoslovakia and Poland. The emergence of such people must be of concern to the regimes. One danger in instituting a harsh crackdown on the petition signers is that these new people who have come forward will be turned into hard-core activists.

There is evidence of some contacts among East European dissidents, but it is doubtful that there has been much consultation or coordination of tactics. Not surprisingly, the dissidents are not only preoccupied with their own problems, but also must be aware of their limited power to influence political developments elsewhere in Eastern Europe. More important are the practical difficulties that stand in the way of a coordinated effort.

Still, there is no question that, despite the problems of communication and the like imposed by operating in closed societies, a dissident movement now exists in Eastern Europe. It finds expression in the open support given to the Czechoslovak Chartists by dissident groups in several East European states. The East European dissidents have also learned from one another, and particularly from their Soviet counterparts. The Soviet dissidents have led the way in showing how the Western media, especially under the conditions of detente, can be used to embarrass the regime and to promote the activities, and even well-being, of the dissidents. More than that, Sakharov and others have shown that it is possible to speak out and be heard and still survive.

The Soviet dissidents, for their part, have gone on record that they share a common cause with like-minded individuals in Eastern Europe. Sakharov, for example, recently noted that his efforts "are part of a struggle throughout the world, a struggle that seems especially important at this moment when in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other countries of Eastern Europe the movement is reaching a new level." A statement signed by 62 Soviet dissidents, released in early March, specifically expressed support for the Chartists, and the so-called Helsinki monitoring group in the USSR has also praised the efforts of the East European dissidents.

The impact of such statements is to buttress the concept of a common cause among the dissidents and to encourage them

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	<i>Characterization of Dissidents; New Faces, New Leaders?</i>	<i>Popular Support for Dissidents</i>	<i>How Might Dissidence Develop? Reliability of Security Forces</i>	<i>Government Response to Dissidence</i>
ROMANIA	No real "dissident movement" only dissatisfied persons with disparate interests and objectives deeply divided by internal feuds. Only well-known personality is writer Paul Goma. Signatories of "open letter" to Czech Chartists have no influence and are mostly artists and intellectuals.	Apparently very little support or popular following.	Security forces very effective and reliable; they closely monitor suspects. Romanian society is harshly authoritarian and this inhibits plotting. Doubt that dissent will grow bolder. If Goma letter attracts more signatories—which unlikely—authorities will quash.	Lack of popular support has led authorities to take moderate approach to dissidents; they are relatively unharassed. Allows dissenters to depart country.
BULGARIA	Virtually no tradition of active political dissent; scant evidence of any organized opposition. No meaningful threat to regime. There is passive resistance in form of work slowdowns, theft, etc., as well as widespread apathy.	N.A. Peasantry has shown no unrest since 1951; student agitation has diminished.	Little prospect that significant dissent will develop; some groups have the potential for provoking to be occasionally troublesome. Security forces effectively blunt open opposition. Populace aware organized resistance would provoke Soviet intervention.	N.A.
YUGOSLAVIA	Dissident leaders and signatories largely unknown; signers of petition are mainly students and intellectuals. Familiar names—such as Djilas and Mihajlovic—do not lead any organized movement.	Difficult to gauge, especially as basis for current protests do not affect man-in-the-street. Mass identification with dissidents presumably fairly low.	Regime's interest in protecting its image abroad may invite new protests. Closer CSCE approaches, likelihood of more protests challenging regime authority; possibly might demonstrate during meetings themselves. Security forces loyal and maybe overzealous to stifle dissent; they are under tight control.	Response has been cautious because they do not want to be lumped with Warsaw Pact countries, nor tarnish their image as hosts for CSCE talks. Expulsion of 3 West German human rights protesters was prompt and decisive. They assume weaker response would only encourage domestic dissidents. Dissident appeal rejected by Constitutional Court on 24 March.
POLAND	Cover wide spectrum of political positions and few common grievances, although they can come together for tactical reasons. Dissident activity quiescent between 1968 and late 1974. No new faces of note; mostly persons with history of dissident activity. A broader spectrum of intellectuals is participating. Hard core is in Workers Defense League established last fall. New organization entitled Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights announced on 27 March. Regime responds immediately with strong criticism.	People undoubtedly tense and unhappy but probably little active support for intellectuals' political goals. Workers would not demonstrate if WDL leaders imprisoned. Popular discontent due to shortages of consumer goods and other economic factors, compounded by latent hostility to political system and ties to Soviets.	WDL's long-term goals are to secure Soviet acquiescence in a more open Polish political system, less censorship, etc. Economic problems will continue and keep population tense and frustrated; confrontation will thus continue. Worker discontent will have to be kept under control; if it subsides then the intellectuals' clout diminishes. Offer of amnesty may take some wind out of intellectuals' sails. Security forces reliable and under tight rein. Perhaps unreliable under crisis conditions (massive rioting) and regime takes this into consideration. Active military might not fire on workers.	Intellectuals handed with kid gloves as Giersek does not want to create martyrs and does not want confrontation or bad press.
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	Members of Charter 77 are mostly intellectuals and technical intelligentsia. Leaders not new, several were prominent in 1968. 600 signers represent new element on scene and their forwardness and activism are of concern to regime.	Most signatories apparently joined cause since Charter 77 signed; they are mostly intellectuals. Cause has not apparently garnered wide support nor emboldened others to air their grievances.	Charter is a bold act difficult to top. Authorities now on alert and will take strong measures to inhibit dissent. Security forces reliable and competent but there are unconfirmed reports that Party leader Husak not entirely happy with them. Overreaction possible but not likely at present.	Campaign of harassment and intimidation and several arrests but has stopped short of a major crackdown.
HUNGARY	Thirty-four Hungarian intellectuals have expressed support for Chartists but have not criticized conditions in Hungary.	N.A.	Dissidents may have little compulsion to press for more liberties as Hungary relatively tolerant. Some intellectuals may believe that demonstrative public stands can be counterproductive. Regime has come to terms with dissenters and no flare-up during last several years.	N.A.
EAST GERMANY	Probably no common anti-regime front formed by general masses of dissidents. Dissent found in varying forms in church, youth, intellectual and worker sectors. No leaders; only in intellectual circles do we find specific names. Present leaders are those active in 1960s, although new blood at lower levels.	Youth, church and intellectual dissenters have little support outside their individual circles. Massive discontent with restrictions on travel and human contacts. Dissent has popular support only in that several large, amorphous groups have a variety of complaints. Helsinki and the economy are most serious areas of possible fusion of sentiment.	Dissent may increase. The reliability of security forces—plus 20 Soviet divisions—is certain. Regime cannot do much about economy but can reduce personal contacts with West. This would be unpopular but possible if regime careful.	Uneven—at times hesitant and others hard-biting. In general, uses salami tactics. Lesser known figures bought off or "persuaded". No known arrests; one dissident expelled. Church quiet; intellectuals pressure forces lesser-known lights to be quiet; there are not enough others to cause problems; exit visa applicants; have been told to forget it; subtle pressure at job level. Stricter measures possible; workers only grumbling to date. More problems likely if economy stagnates.

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KEY ELEMENTS OF DISSENT BY COUNTRY

Coordination Between East European Dissidents	Soviet Role	Dissident Strategy	Regime Labelling of Dissent as Inspired by Western Forces Impact of US Policy on Human Rights	CSCE as Pretext for Dissident Activities, Other Factors, Including Economic Conditions	Leadership Unity
Evidence that Romanian dissidents coordinate activities with other East European dissidents. No evidence that authorities discuss matter bilaterally with other East European governments.	Moscow may not be completely unhappy over Party leader Ceausescu's dissident problem as long as it does not get out of hand. Soviets advise on many subjects but it is seldom followed. No evidence that Soviets are concerned over internal developments in Romania.	No "strategy" as such. Goma letter accuses regime of crushing civil liberties and disregarding commitments to human rights provided for in Constitution and international agreements.	Romanian commentary becoming more strident in maintaining that Belgrade CSCE meeting not indict East European regimes for violating human rights. Doubt that dissidents feel that new support from West increases their maneuverability.	Goma letter is referred to CSCE and Charter 77; at Belgrade focuses on emigration and freeing foreign travel. Economic issues do not play a role at present.	Cannot determine. As disagreement with Ceau
Evidence of coordination with other East European dissidents. Individuals like Djilas and Jlov are reaping support from Eurocom.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Evidence of coordination with other East European dissidents. Individuals like Djilas and Jlov are reaping support from Eurocom. Minimal-to-government coordination on issues minimal, but exchange of views possible during recent state visits.	Probably a general discussion of problem with Soviets.	Group of 60 focused on narrow travel rights issue; group of 90 dissidents have signed letter of support for Czech Charterists. If foreign press coverage doesn't produce desired impact on policy, groups can readily stimulate more such coverage. Individuals, such as Djilas, make sweeping condemnations of regime but impact at home has not been great.	Western support has shored up morale of Yugoslav protesters. Regime has hardened its tone on Western interference. Trend of propaganda response is to countercharge on human rights in West and question Western motives. Denunciations of "false alarms" and "fabrications" in Western press now predominating over earlier implicit criticism of overreaction in Warsaw Pact countries.	Dissident resurgence linked to CSCE; also plays on signs of disagreement at top levels on domestic policies. Economics play no role; economic performance is, in fact, improving a little. Nationality issues of concern and always prospect of trouble arising from this area.	Clear divisions in leadership. Current framework of overall Y of authoritarianism.
Evidence of coordination, or even direct contacts, with other East European dissidents. Polish problems dominate dissident relations. Poles admirably try to hold coordination to a minimum. Poles are the most lenient toward dissidents and to sidestep pressures.	Moscow generally concerned about "Polish problem" but no concrete evidence of strong pressure, which Poles would resist in any event. Poles admire Soviet dissidents and may be encouraged by their example.	Various, mostly short-term specific aims (i.e., release of imprisoned workers, parliamentary investigation of police brutality). Main thrust is not to challenge the regime on the grounds that legality is violated. There is not a common thread in dissident strategies.	Claim that dissidents are only a small group of long-line, anti-socialist aided and abetted by "anti-detente" forces in the West, mainly Polish emigres and RFE. The US position on human rights probably has not had much impact, at least as yet.	CSCE is important factor; Belgrade meetings come at a time when could be used as peg for intellectuals' efforts.	No real evidence; leader than in years past. Mos and are annoyed by dissident from dealing with e is to prevent growth of workers and intellectual
Evidence of coordination with other East European dissidents. GDR's actions coordinated most closely with GDR, although other East European States sent fact-finding missions to Czechoslovakia.	Prague has undoubtedly kept Moscow fully informed and heeded Soviet "advice". Several Soviet delegations have visited Czechoslovakia to assess situation. Soviets probably hope signs of tougher attitude in Moscow will inhibit dissent in Czechoslovakia.	Dissidents profess to seek dialogue with regime that would lead to some relaxation of harassment they have suffered since 1968.	Prague certainly sees a large Western hand behind Charterists from the beginning and has reacted strongly to US statements. It must be concerned over how the US will press issue. Dissidents may be ambivalent about utility of US support and hope Washington ties human rights issue to bilateral issues.	CSCE appears to be major factor prompting dissidents' action. Economic developments could narrow the gap between the masses and intellectuals but shortages thus far have not shook political lethargy of most of the population.	Hardliners would u crackdown but appear Soviets. Differences within the le ly would be bridged by wans.
Some reports that the Soviets criticized Budapest for not rebuking those who supported the Charterists and is pressing Hungary to take a harder attitude.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	No meaningful dissent; policy problem for leader
Evidence of any coordination between dissidents. Evidence of inter-government coordination, from Warsaw Pact consultations, but by matters no doubt discussed during recent visits.	The Soviets are presumably concerned about Western influences on GDR population. Regime leaders doubtless in frequent contact with Soviets on GDR dissidence. If GDR cannot resolve matter of Western contacts, Soviets may pressure it to take stronger measures.	Dissidents involved in exit visa issue are challenging regime on basis of CSCE and UN resolutions. Remainder of dissidents are motivated by more parochial issues.	GDR most susceptible to influence from "Western forces"; availability of FRG media and contacts enables regime to rationalize that such forces responsible. So far somewhat cautious in attacking new US administration but has attacked West's stance on dissidents. GDR dissidents are already supported by FRG and West Europe and US policy does not appear to be a decisive factor.	Many incidents showing dissent have occurred in past nine months. CSCE has been a major basis for much of GDR dissent, especially the exit visa issue. Economic conditions are a latent base for further discontent but not now serious. Could provide a rallying point for many of the, to date, uncoordinated dissident groups. GDR intellectual dissidents too few to have much impact, and thus economic problems will only temporarily narrow gap between intellectuals and workers.	No hard evidence but r on how to deal with, di have divided, no Bierm winning out. Regime does not appear firm policy toward dissid cease and economy wo would likely be forced it