

POTENTIAL DISSOLUTION OF THE COMINFORM

1. Current indications. Several press reports have recently indicated that the USSR may be considering the dissolution of the COMINFORM. These reports include a statement in the Indian newspaper Hindustani Times on 7 June according to which Nehru intended to suggest to Moscow that the dissolution of the COMINFORM would be in the interest of relaxation of international tensions and that accession of the Soviet leaders to this proposal was probable. Another report is contained in a Berlin INS story of 13 June reporting that an East German Communist official who would not give his name stated that the dissolution of the COMINFORM prior to the Summit meeting is "most likely."

2. Although there is no substantial direct evidence to support these indications, a dissolution of the COMINFORM, or any drastic change in its external status, appears a marked possibility in the light of (a) the general Soviet line; (b) the present setting, particularly the approaching four-power negotiations, and certain parallels with the situation at the time of the dissolution of the COMINTERN; (c) the ease of handling the COMINFORM's job in other ways, conceivably through the political machinery of the recent Warsaw Pact.* If the COMINFORM should be dissolved, the technique would almost certainly involve every effort to make it appear as a collective action, and the move probably would be publicized as a move to peace and relaxation of tensions.

3. Present Status of the COMINFORM. The COMINFORM operates as one of several world Communist organizations, under the Foreign Section of the CPSU Central Committee. The Foreign Section is the actual, covert control apparatus of the CPSU. It uses the Cominform as well as other international fronts (such as WPC, WFTU, WIDE, WFDY) to coordinate and control the world Communist movement. Membership in the COMINFORM is limited to the Communist Parties of the USSR, the Eastern European Satellites (except East Germany and Albania), France, and Italy. Its activities have been confined almost entirely to the field of information. Its principal functions have been to spread the current "line"

* The possibilities of the Warsaw organization for Communist purposes are clearly indicated in Article 6 of the Eastern European agreement which reads as follows:

"For the purpose of the consultations among the Parties envisaged in the present Treaty, and also for the purpose of examining questions which may arise in the operation of the Treaty, a Political Consultative Committee shall be set up, in which each of the Parties to the Treaty shall be represented by a member of its Government or by another specifically appointed representative. The Committee may set up such auxiliary bodies as may prove necessary."

POTENTIAL DISSOLUTION OF THE COMINFORM

1. Current indications. Several press reports have recently indicated that the USSR may be considering the dissolution of the COMINFORM. These reports include a statement in the Indian newspaper Hindustani Times on 7 June according to which Nehru intended to suggest to Moscow that the dissolution of the COMINFORM would be in the interest of relaxation of international tensions and that accession of the Soviet leaders to this proposal was probable. Another report is contained in a Berlin INS story of 13 June reporting that an East German Communist official who would not give his name stated that the dissolution of the COMINFORM prior to the Summit meeting is "most likely."

2. Although there is no substantial direct evidence to support these indications, a dissolution of the COMINFORM, or any drastic change in its external status, appears a marked possibility in the light of (a) the general Soviet line; (b) the present setting, particularly the approaching four-power negotiations, and certain parallels with the situation at the time of the dissolution of the COMINTERN; (c) the ease of handling the COMINFORM's job in other ways, conceivably through the political machinery of the recent Warsaw Pact.* If the COMINFORM should be dissolved, the technique would almost certainly involve every effort to make it appear as a collective action, and the move probably would be publicized as a move to peace and relaxation of tensions.

3. Present Status of the COMINFORM. The COMINFORM operates as one of several world Communist organizations, under the Foreign Section of the CPSU Central Committee. The Foreign Section is the actual, covert control apparatus of the CPSU. It uses the Cominform as well as other international fronts (such as WPC, WFTU, WIDF, WFDY) to coordinate and control the world Communist movement. Membership in the COMINFORM is limited to the Communist Parties of the USSR, the Eastern European Satellites (except East Germany and Albania), France, and Italy. Its activities have been confined almost entirely to the field of information. Its principal functions have been to spread the current "line"

* The possibilities of the Warsaw organization for Communist purposes are clearly indicated in Article 6 of the Eastern European agreement which reads as follows:

"For the purpose of the consultations among the Parties envisaged in the present Treaty, and also for the purpose of examining questions which may arise in the operation of the Treaty, a Political Consultative Committee shall be set up, in which each of the Parties to the Treaty shall be represented by a member of its Government or by another specifically appointed representative. The Committee may set up such auxiliary bodies as may prove necessary."

~~SECRET~~

6. Timing

a. Although the COMINTERN at its height was of course a much more extensive and active organization than the COMINFORM, the circumstances of the former's dissolution may give some indication of the possible timing of a comparable move now. By the spring of 1943, wartime communications difficulties and other factors had made the COMINTERN practically ineffective. At about that time, the appointment of Joseph E. Davies as special US emissary on Lend-Lease was announced. Almost immediately thereafter, about May 15, 1943, Moscow took the initiative of proposing dissolution, and various telegrams were sent to foreign Communist parties to round up support. The dissolution was announced on 22 May 1943. This was several days before Davies arrived, in what was to prove a forerunner mission to Secretary Hull's trip in October. Thus, there is a good circumstantial case that the dissolution was timed for its maximum effect on the US -- then the prime Soviet target -- and was probably designed in part to set the stage for the later negotiations. The design, nevertheless, was met with a measure of sound skepticism.

b. This parallel would certainly suggest the likelihood that action on the COMINFORM will precede the Summit meeting. Moreover, it could well be timed to coincide with, or just precede or follow a visit to Moscow by some statesman such as Nehru, Ali of Indonesia, U Nu, or a similar neutralist representative.

c. It may be argued that dissolution would be left as a card to be played at the Summit. This seems most unlikely, however, because it would give US, UK, and France the strongest possible chance to argue that the COMINFORM was in fact a form of interference. Above all, it would be an admission that the USSR controlled the COMINFORM unilaterally, and destroy the impression, almost certainly highly desired, of collective action (as in the COMINTERN case). Dissolution of the COMINFORM would also be uncomfortably close to the issue of Satellite control, which the Soviets have so far shown strong indications of wishing to exclude. Nor, finally, would the Soviets expect to get any useful Western quid pro quo, as they must anticipate that the West is fully aware of the fact that the dissolution of the COMINFORM would be an empty gesture and organizationally insignificant.

7. Availability of Substitutes. The activities of the COMINFORM could very easily be taken over by other parts of the Communist structure, in a variety of ways. To the extent that "For a Lasting Peace" is used as a channel for Moscow's views, this could easily be done by Soviet publications themselves or by covert channels. The line could be propagated in the same way -- or conceivably a substitute periodical could be devised. In this

connection, the political machinery of the new Warsaw Pact may offer possibilities. The Political Consultative Committee -- or another body under the Warsaw Pact -- would have certain advantages over the COMINFORM in that Albania and East Germany are members, while Communist China has participated as an observer in the founding conference -- although so far as is known it has no membership status. Moreover, the Warsaw Pact is part of the facade of a looser confederation-like structure that Moscow is apparently seeking to present, perhaps to argue its case better at the Summit. On the other hand, use of the Warsaw machinery, designed for the Satellites and associated with a military structure, may be a poor way to get the non-Satellite foreign Communist parties into the play on an ostensibly equal footing. In any event, dissolution of the COMINFORM need not constitute any substantial sacrifice whatever in the effectiveness of the international Communist apparatus.