

[USSR-Czechoslovakia: (Information as of 2300 EDT)

The talks between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders entered their fourth day today amid reports that an agreement is imminent.

The official Soviet description of yesterday's talks was no warmer than previously--"frank and comradely"--but the reported arrival in Moscow of the East German, Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian party leaders suggests an agreement may be near. They will probably be called in, as they were earlier this month at Bratislava, to place their formal stamp of approval on the agreement.

Unconfirmed press reports claim that major elements of an agreement have been worked out. They include the release of all Czechoslovaks under arrest, presumably including those regime leaders who have been detained, an enforced limit on the freedom of the press and radio, and the maintenance of some Warsaw Pact forces in Czechoslovakia for an indefinite period.

The mood in Prague and throughout the country, meanwhile, continues tense. There is a feeling of gloom, apparently stemming from doubts that the Moscow talks will end in Czechoslovakia's favor. There were several scattered incidents of violence in the capital yesterday. The Embassy commented that the occupation was becoming uglier, possibly because of an influx of new troops over the night of 24-25 August. This influx probably was part of a reinforcement, although some of the original occupation forces may also have been rotated.

In Bratislava, the Slovak party central committee yesterday reversed its decision, taken only last Friday, to convene its congress as scheduled today. The Slovaks have decided to await the return from Moscow of Czechoslovak party leader Dubcek]

26 Aug 68

Central Intelligence Bulletin

1

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[and the rest of the delegation. The reversal tends to confirm reports over the weekend that several Slovak party leaders have joined the delegation in Moscow.

Over the weekend the Soviet press showed new signs of defensiveness in its voluminous coverage of Czechoslovak events. The press seemed to be backing away from the claim that the "Warsaw Five" was invited to intervene, and came close to admitting that Soviet occupation forces are meeting difficulties. A lead editorial and an article in Pravda on 25 August emphasized a need for increased indoctrination of the Soviet occupation troops, suggesting that a serious morale problem has arisen because of the unremitting and pervasive hostility of the people.

Moscow's press also has continued to use strong language against Yugoslavia and Rumania, linking them with the NATO powers and Communist China as opponents of the intervention. There is still no hard evidence, however, that the Soviets intend to intervene elsewhere in Eastern Europe. [redacted]

[redacted] (Map)]

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26 Aug 68

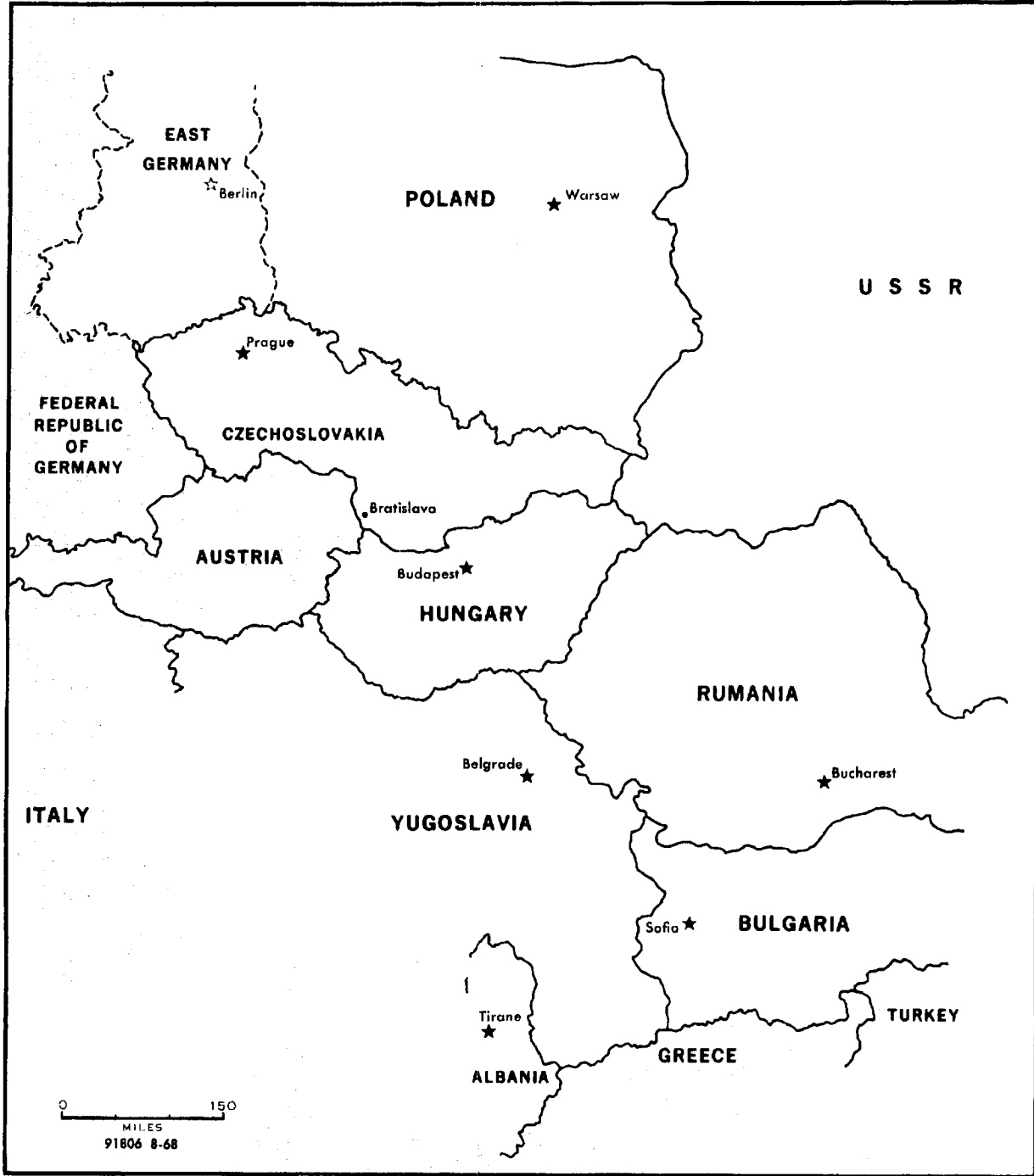
Central Intelligence Bulletin

2

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