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"What Mr. Hammarskjöld thinks of Berlin"
- from Foreign Report

WHAT MR. HAMMARSKJÖLD THINKS OF BERLIN

Mr. Hammarskjöld, the United Nations Secretary-General, has told a few of his closest associates that in his recent conversation with Mr. Khrushchev, he gained the clear impression that:

1. The Russians are eager for a summit conference and will be at pains to avoid actions likely to endanger the prospect of one.
2. They will therefore not cause a major crisis over Berlin while the Foreign Ministers are negotiating.

This impression needs to be seen in the context of Mr. Khrushchev's statement this week to visiting west German Socialist journalists that he expects the Foreign Ministers' conference to reach deadlock.

Mr. Hammarskjöld was, not unexpectedly, kept guessing on one important point: he does not know whether the Soviet desire for negotiations with the West arises from a) an honest search for a compromise that would relieve international tension, or b) a desire for a propaganda success. Among his confidants, the following beliefs prevail:

1. If the Russians intend to make any concessions, they will hold them in reserve for the summit where, in his own country, Mr. Khrushchev himself would reap whatever glory attaches to an east-west agreement.
2. The western powers, on their part, will do their best to avoid a collapse of next week's Geneva talks - among other reasons, because a collapse would, his associates believe, severely impair Conservative Party prospects in the forthcoming British elections.

Mr. Hammarskjöld's well-publicised statement in Copenhagen last Saturday, about the prospects of a summit under UN auspices, can now be supplemented from the private explanations he made since his return to New York, writes Foreign Report's special correspondent lately at UN headquarters. Mr. Hammarskjöld's views of the possible part the United Nations could play in the Berlin crisis fall under two headings:

A. - The things the United Nations should not attempt to do include these:

(i) It should not assume any executive or administrative tasks in carrying out a Berlin settlement. This means, for instance, that if a United Nations commissioner were appointed for Berlin, he would not be the governor - as, to quote a possible precedent, the League of Nations high commissioner was, in effect, the governor of the free City of Danzig.

(ii) There should be no United Nations troops either in Berlin or along its approaches; the stationing of UN soldiers in the Gaza Strip should not be regarded as a precedent applicable to the Berlin situation.

(iii) The United Nations should not undertake to guarantee the observance of any future agreement between the West and Russia on Berlin. Mr. Hammarskjöld's

close associates point out that the UN lacks power to enforce such an agreement and has never yet undertaken a comparable commitment. Moreover, the smaller countries are opposed to a UN guarantee for Berlin because it might involve them in a great power conflict against their will.

B. - The things the UN could undertake include the following:

(i) Above all, it could supply a corps of observers. As one leading delegate at the UN put it, the United Nations could be the "wailing wall" - the repository for Soviet or western allegations that an agreement on Berlin had been violated.

(ii) The east German authorities could inspect allied traffic to and from Berlin in the presence of United Nations observers. This might: a) make it easier for the West to swallow a Soviet transfer to east Germany of control over road, rail, canal and air traffic between Berlin and west Germany; and b) give some assurance that the east Germans would refrain from abusing their newly acquired powers. In this area also, however, Mr. Hammarskjöld would set narrow limits. For example, if UN observers were to detect east German guards molesting western convoys along the highway to Berlin, they would not have authority to order the convoy either to halt or to proceed to its destination; they would simply report the facts. The situation would thus be similar to that in Korea in June, 1950, when UN teams along the border between North and South Korea witnessed the Korean communist attacks and notified UN headquarters.

(iii) The United Nations could also establish a "UN presence" in Berlin itself. Once again, Mr. Hammarskjöld is understood to hold that a UN representative or commissioner in Berlin would be no more than "a watchdog under orders to bark" if peace were disturbed.

(iv) If the United States, Britain, France and Russia were to reach agreement on a new statute for west Berlin, they could submit it to the United Nations, whose Assembly would pass a resolution approving it. Then the Assembly could adopt a second resolution authorising the Secretary-General to give the UN its share in carrying out the new arrangements.

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