

WEST EUROPE



The first Soviet tanks leaving the East German town of Wittenberg yesterday, watched by festive crowds.

Russia pulls out troops in détente gesture

Wittenberg, Dec 5—The Soviet Union pulled tanks and troops out of this central East German garrison town today in the first stage of a forces reduction programme aimed at demonstrating its commitment to détente.

front-line forces of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. Local East German Communist Party officials and steel workers from a nearby plant heaped praise on the work of the Soviet soldiers in speeches at the early morning rally outside the station. A Soviet officer thanked the local people for their friendship and support.

The start of the withdrawal occurred as the foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact alliance met in East Berlin behind closed doors—Reuters. Gertel Spitzer writes from Berlin: The foreign ministers conference is understood to have been summoned in view of the forthcoming NATO ministerial meeting and its impending decision to modernize its nuclear arsenal.

to deploy missiles able to hit Russia. Schmidt stand backed: As the first Soviet tanks rolled back from the GDR, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's Social Democratic Party firmly backed his stance on medium-range nuclear missiles (writes Patricia Clough from Berlin).

European Parliament shapes up to throw out EEC budget

Brussels, Dec 5—The European Parliament is shaping up for an historic contest of wills with EEC member states. Evidence is accumulating that there is an excellent chance of a big enough majority being mustered to reject the draft of the Community's budget for 1980 at the assembly's session next week in Strasbourg.

expressed by Mr Pieter Dankert, a Dutch Socialist and the Parliament's rapporteur on the budget. The draft of the budget, two thirds of all votes cast would be needed and a simple majority of the total membership of the House.

In the meantime, the Commission would have to use an emergency procedure whereby it empowered to dole out on a month-by-month basis the same amount of money as was spent in the previous year. If the deadlock persisted, this would imply a shortfall of some £650m over the £800m budgeted with expenditure now envisaged.

Pledge by France on Rhine pollution

Paris, Dec 5—The French Government today showed itself almost as disappointed as the Dutch at the failure to persuade the National Assembly to join the Bonn convention on cleaning up the Rhine. The Government will announce the international engagements which have been taken by France.

Inbrief

Papal visit to English College: Rome, Dec 5—The Pope will visit the English College in Rome tomorrow to mark the fourth centenary of one of the oldest English institutions abroad.

Red Brigades appeal for attacks on prisons

Rome, Dec 5—The founders of the Red Brigades are appealing for attacks on prisons in Italy. The appeal is directed at members of the terrorist movement still at liberty.

Iceland coalition talks

Reykjavik, Dec 5—President Kristján Eldjárn and his cabinet asked Mr Steingrímur Hermannsson, chairman of the centre Progressive Party, to try to form a new Government.

M Barre uses device to outwit Gaullists

Paris, Dec 5—The European Commission President Jacques Barre, the Prime Minister, has pledged the government's responsibility for the social security contributions of pensioners.

Swiss President

Geneva, Dec 5—Mr Georges André (Chevallaz), aged 65, of the Radical Party was elected President of Switzerland for 1980.

No time to rhyme

Stockholm, Dec 5—Olof Johansson, Elytis, a Greek poet who won this year's Nobel prize for literature, said here that he had no time to rhyme.

Secret weapon

Bonn, Dec 5—West Germany's defence budget for 1979 is expected to be 10 per cent higher than last year's.

OVERSEAS

Iran prepares for trial of the American hostages but they would 'be set free if acquitted'

From Our Own Correspondent Tehran, Dec 5—After two weeks of repeated warnings to President Carter, the Iranian Council of the Revolution has started preparations for the trial of the 49 American embassy staff held hostage in Tehran by student followers of Ayatollah Khomeini.

extradite the former monarch and that the students' threat to try the hostages will lose much of its meaning if the Shah leaves the United States for Egypt or some other country prepared to offer him asylum.

1,700 "volunteers" to fight for the Palestinian cause in Southern Lebanon. Hojratollah Mohamed Montazeri said that the Iranian Council had been issued with passports and that their first contingent would enter Lebanon on Saturday.

Autonomist leader inspired by Marx and Islam

From Robert Fisk Mahabad, Iran, Dec 5—Shaikh Ezzeddin Hussaini, spiritual leader of five million Kurds in Iraq, has been inspired by the Marx and Islam to reduce its troops in East Germany, Nato said today that the withdrawal would represent but a fraction of the present great superiority to Iraqi forces and armaments.

Kurds seek political solution

From Robert Fisk Mahabad, Iran, Dec 5—Shaikh Ezzeddin Hussaini, spiritual leader of five million Kurds in Iraq, has been inspired by the Marx and Islam to reduce its troops in East Germany, Nato said today that the withdrawal would represent but a fraction of the present great superiority to Iraqi forces and armaments.

created press censorship. He changed the Assembly of the People into an Assembly of Experts. We do not agree with that as Ayatollah Khomeini is doing.

Shah diverted \$1,000m for own use, investigators say

Tehran, Dec 5—Documents uncovered in an investigation into the finances of the deposed Shah show that more than \$1,000m (about £300m) of the Shah's funds was diverted or misappropriated by the Shah and his family to various banks and other institutions, it is claimed.

UN decision 'new basis for action'

Washington, Dec 5—The American Government believes that the United Nations Security Council resolution on Iran sets a new basis for action in the Middle East towards obtaining the release of the Tehran Embassy hostages.

Conference bars South Africa

Delhi, Dec 5—The International Atomic Energy Agency today barred South Africa from the annual conference in Geneva because of the country's apartheid policies.

Weather facts gathered from 150 countries

From Our Correspondent Geneva, Dec 5—A global weather experiment which ended on November 30.

Iraq ultimatum to Tehran over mission attacks

Baghdad, Dec 5—Iraq today issued an ultimatum to Tehran that if attacks against Baghdad's diplomatic missions did not stop by one week, Iranian diplomats will be withdrawn from Iraq.

Moderate general named Argentine Army chief

Buenos Aires, Dec 5—General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri has been nominated as commander in chief of the Argentine Army to take command at the end of the year.

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Russians accuse US of resorting to blackmail

From Michael Binyon Moscow, Dec 5—The Russians today accused the Americans of a gross violation of international law in threatening to use force against Iran. They said the United States was deliberately stirring up the most serious crisis since the Second World War.

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Liza Minnelli wedding

New York, Dec 5—Liza Minnelli, the film and television star, married Mr Mark Gero, of the Broadway producer, in a private ceremony attended by her family and a few friends. It was her third marriage.