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19. Reliability of the USSR's
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Submitted by

Richard Helms

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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Authenticated:

James A. Lutz
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, USIB

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, and the NSA.

Concurring:

Dr. R. J. Smith, Acting CIA Member of USIB

Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll, USAF, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Lieutenant General Marshall S. Carter, USA, Director of the National Security Agency

Abstaining:

Mr. Howard C. Brown, Jr., Assistant General Manager, Atomic Energy Commission

Mr. William O. Cregar, for Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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RELIABILITY OF THE USSR'S EAST EUROPEAN ALLIES

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the reliability of the East European governments and their armed forces, primarily from the Soviet point of view, in various contingencies of non-nuclear conflict in Central Europe.

SCOPE NOTE

This special estimate has been requested by OSD. The general objective is to explore the factors affecting the political/military reliability of the East European Warsaw Pact nations as allies of the USSR, particularly in respect to the Soviet assessment of those factors. In addition, as specifically requested, the estimate assesses East European reliability under three assumed circumstances in which the USSR might conceivably plan to engage the West in non-nuclear combat: (1) a Berlin crisis; (2) a deliberate non-nuclear attack on Western Europe; and (3) a conflict arising by accident.

CONCLUSIONS

A. In recent years the East European members of the Warsaw Pact, especially Rumania, have shown an increasing tendency to assert their own national interests and to resist Soviet dictation. Nevertheless, these Communist regimes value the Pact as a Soviet guarantee of their survival and territorial integrity. Their object is not to dissolve the Pact, but to gain a greater voice in its decisions. To the extent that they conceived their own vital interests to be threatened, they would support united Pact counteraction. At the same time, they would seek to restrain the USSR from pursuing courses of action which, in their judgment, involved undue risk of precipitating a nuclear conflict.

B. It is evident that the USSR can no longer dictate to its Warsaw Pact allies, but must seek their consent in matters which involve them. In parallel with this political development, however, the USSR has been seeking to strengthen the military command structure of the Pact and to improve the military effectiveness of the East European armed forces. Soviet war planning relies on the availability of East European forces to perform important tasks in Central Europe. Nevertheless, if present trends toward autonomy continue, the Pact will evolve toward a conventional military alliance and the range of contingencies in which the USSR can rely on effective support from its East European allies will narrow.

C. However, apart from political considerations, the Pact is a tighter military structure today because of specific Soviet control mechanisms. The East European armed forces are heavily dependent on Soviet provision of materiel and instruction in its use; Pact war planning is done by a Soviet-dominated staff in Moscow; in the event of war, most East European field commands would be subordinated to higher Soviet echelons of command. In addition, the Soviets probably believe that strict military discipline, Communist indoctrination, and the careful selection of East European officers and career NCOs, will ensure the reliability of the East European forces in the event of war. We too believe that this would be the case, at least initially.

D. In any Berlin crisis deliberately planned and precipitated by the USSR, the Soviets would almost certainly plan to employ only Soviet and East German troops. The East German Government, whose very existence depends on Soviet support, would probably respond promptly. Their troops would almost certainly prove to be reliable in such a limited confrontation.

E. The East European reaction to a Soviet proposal to deliver a deliberate non-nuclear attack in Central Europe would depend on what Western action had provoked such an unlikely Soviet decision. In any case, the East European governments would almost certainly seek to dissuade the USSR, fearing the consequences, but if they really believed their own vital interests to be threatened by the West their resistance to Soviet pressure would be less. If the Soviets persisted in their intention, despite East European dissuasion, the governments of East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would probably feel compelled to go along, perceiving no alternative and, in

In this instance, their troops would prove reliable, at least initially. The behavior of Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria would be more uncertain, but Soviet planning would probably require no more of them than increased readiness to defend their own territories.

F. An accidental conflict arising, for example, from an unplanned incident on the autobahn, a border clash, or a local uprising in East Germany would initially involve only Soviet and East German troops, who would almost certainly prove reliable. The reaction of other East European governments would depend on the extent to which they considered their own interests threatened by the developing situation. In general, it would probably be as described in the Conclusion E.

DISCUSSION

I. MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING RELIABILITY

The Growth of National Communism

1. There have been significant changes in the political climate of Eastern Europe since the repression of the East German uprising in 1953, the Hungarian revolt and Polish unrest in 1956. If there ever was a widespread hope for Western liberation, this has receded. The continuing presence of Soviet forces in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the nearby USSR inhibits revolt against East European Communist regimes. Over the past decade, important segments of the population have become resigned to their lot, while others have acquired a stake in the existing social and economic order.

2. At the same time, most of the Communist regimes have adopted less repressive internal policies and played up to national sentiments. The effect has been to make the regimes seem less like puppets of an alien power and thus to erode a major cause of popular antipathy. In several countries somewhat more liberal policies have permitted intellectual criticism to become more articulate and open. While this has created new problems, more and more leading intellectuals consider themselves to be within the system and the result has been to improve the regimes' stability. Under present circumstances dissatisfaction with the regimes now is more reformist than revolutionary.

3. As the Soviet political and economic control weakens, and as the long-run trends toward economic reforms and more permissive cultural policies continue, the East European peoples will expect from their rulers policies that reflect national rather than supranational interests. Greater contacts with the West tend to encourage hopes of change and improvement. In general, we believe that the regimes will be able to keep the resulting pressures within bounds, with popular dissatisfaction being channeled into attempts to influence policies rather than in challenges to the existence of the regime.

Soviet Strengthening of the Warsaw Pact

4. Since about 1960, the Soviets have increased their efforts to improve the military capabilities of their East European allies and to strengthen the military organization of the Warsaw Pact. Over the last five years modernization of equipment and weapons has been stepped up, military command and control arrangements have been improved, and large-scale multinational training exercises have been conducted. There is an apparent paradox in the USSR's policy of strengthening its East European allies militarily at the very time when they are becoming less compliant politically. However, we believe that the Soviets had a number of reasons—political, economic, and military—for implementing this policy.

5. Politically, the Soviets probably expected these measures partly to offset centrifugal tendencies in Eastern Europe. They probably hoped to reinforce weakening political controls by emphasizing the need for unity and common planning to meet the common danger seen in the growing military power of NATO, and particularly the rearmament of West Germany. From the Soviet viewpoint, the Pact performs an essential political function. It provides the basic treaty obligation binding the East European states to the USSR. It also provides the most convenient multilateral forum for expressions of Soviet Bloc views on outstanding international questions. For example, Moscow finds it particularly advantageous, within the context of the Sino-Soviet contest for leadership in the Communist world, to contrast the Pact's unified stand on Vietnam with China's unilateral course.

6. On the economic side, problems in the allocation of Soviet resources and manpower led to the large-scale force reductions instituted by Khrushchev, largely at the expense of the Soviet general purpose forces. The Soviets probably sought to offset these reductions in part by improving the military capabilities of East European armed forces.

7. At the same time, there has been a growing Soviet realization that conditions of general nuclear war might restrict Soviet reinforcement of the European area, thus causing the war to be fought mainly with the forces in place. They almost certainly also consider that the presence of effective East European national forces reduces the needed number of Soviet forces in the area. While the Soviets are likely to continue the current trend to improve and diversify their own general purpose forces, we believe they will at the same time continue to emphasize greater integration of East European forces into Soviet war plans. Current deployments and continued multinational training exercises indicate that the Soviets do in fact plan to rely on East European general purpose forces to perform important tasks in the event of war. Moreover, East European air defense forces will remain an important adjunct to Soviet strategic air defense capabilities.

East European Responsiveness to Soviet Direction

8. In spite of the increasing tendency of the East European governments to assert their national interests, their national policies still generally coincide with those of the USSR. They have benefited from membership in the Warsaw Pact. Its collective security arrangements give them a greater measure of defense than they could ever obtain with their own resources. They view the Pact as a Soviet guarantee of the continuance of Communist regimes and existing boundaries of Germany.

9. It seems clear that cooperation and coordination within the Warsaw Pact can no longer simply be dictated in Moscow. Many decisions must now be reached on the basis of a consensus among countries no longer willing to subordinate their national interests to the demands of Moscow. In general, we believe that any of the East European governments would support the USSR

more willingly and their forces would fight with far more determination and reliability in defense of their own territory than as part of a Soviet offensive operation against NATO. Concern that Soviet protection carries with it the risk of involvement in a nuclear war has become increasingly apparent since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, and Pact members are beginning to demand more of a voice in decisions which might involve their national survival. We believe that the East European regimes would attempt to exert a restraining influence on Soviet policy in any crisis threatening general war.

10. Over the past several years Rumania especially has been displaying a greater degree of independence. It has accelerated trade with the West, balked Soviet plans for the further economic integration of the Bloc states through the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance, maintained a pose of neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute, privately expressed strong criticism of aspects of Soviet policy, and over the past year or so, expressed its disenchantment with the concept of "military blocs" and diminished its participation in Pact activities. Most recently, it has opposed apparent Soviet plans to strengthen the Pact organization and has advanced suggestions for changes in the Pact structure (e.g., East European participation in nuclear planning, withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe). It almost certainly did not anticipate Soviet acceptance of such suggestions, but probably did expect, partly through such means, to impede plans for any increase in Soviet authority within the Pact organization. In this, we believe, the Rumanians have been for the most part successful. All in all, Moscow has little reason to be pleased with the current Rumanian attitude and considerable reason to question Rumania's reliability as an ally in the future, except where national interests coincide.

11. However, the Soviets probably do not believe that the Warsaw Pact is disintegrating and that they must consider the reliability of all their Pact allies as doubtful. On the contrary, we believe that the new Soviet leadership is succeeding in the delicate task of giving the East Europeans more stature within the Pact while tightening the actual alliance by a more thorough integration of East European forces into Soviet operational plans and deployments.

12. Within this general pattern, however, there are important variations. The chief distinction is between East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria on the other. East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia consider a rearmed West Germany a threat to their national security. Their common apprehension has led to a special relationship among these three countries and the USSR which has conferred privileged status on this "first strategic echelon" of the Pact, as Moscow has termed it. As regards Central Europe, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria must balance the general security offered by the Pact against possible involvement in German issues which they do not regard as directly affecting their national interests.

13. The responsiveness of East European governments to Soviet direction and the reliability of their forces in wartime would vary according to the cause

and nature of the conflict and the role assigned to each. For example, Poles and Czechs would likely have parallel interests with the Soviets in certain situations by virtue of their concern over the "German threat." The East German Government, whose very existence depends on Soviet support, would probably respond promptly. In the event of war, we therefore estimate that the northern tier forces (East German, Polish, Czech) would take part, at least initially, in military operations with the Soviets because they could not avoid involvement. The Rumanian Government—and perhaps the Hungarian and Bulgarian as well—would probably seek to avoid involvement as long as possible, unless their borders were threatened.

Reliability of Military Personnel

14. Strict discipline, party indoctrination, careful screening of officers and career NCOs, and the very nature of military organization are factors which make for initial reliability in the East European divisions that would be called upon to fight along with Soviet forces. The degree of reliability, of course, would vary from country to country, and its durability would be affected by the extent to which national interests were involved, the degree of Soviet support, and the course of the battle. The reliability of East European forces would almost certainly deteriorate rapidly in the face of serious reverses or drastic curtailment of Soviet logistic support, and in opportune circumstances some troops might even seek to change sides.

15. Although there is no doubt of the subservience of the East German regime to Soviet direction, there is a special problem with respect to the reliability of the East German armed forces in combat with West German forces. We believe, however, that the Soviet command would expect their political indoctrination and military discipline to prevail over any compunction they might feel as Germans. We too believe that this would be the case, at least initially. However, if West German troops were intervening in an East German uprising, the reliability of East German troops would be much less certain.

Means of Soviet Leverage

16. The substance of Soviet command and staff control of Warsaw Pact forces is still jealously maintained. Some effort has been made in recent years to erect a facade of coequal command authority by such devices as placing East European military leaders in charge of some combined exercises, but the Pact's supreme commander and chief-of-staff are Soviet officers, and control of at least one major operational element (air defense) remains in Soviet hands. Moreover, a special branch of the Soviet General Staff serves as the planning and coordinating center for the Pact forces. Soviet reservations about any dual wartime control of forces were reflected in Marshal Sokolovskiy's "Military Strategy," which indicated that combined command in major theaters of conflict would rest with Soviet officers, although allied units in less important areas might remain under national command.

17. The very high degree of standardization in equipment, organization, and tactical doctrine facilitates Soviet control. East European forces are heavily dependent upon the USSR for spare parts, replacement items, and other forms of logistic support in both peace and wartime conditions. Lacking such support, they would quickly lose their military effectiveness. We have seen such loss of effectiveness, even in peacetime, in both Yugoslavia and Albania, at the time when Soviet support was cut off.

18. In peacetime there is close coordination between the East European and Soviet defense ministries. There is a unified command headquarters in Moscow for general military planning and overall direction. In the event of war, most East European combat forces would come directly under high level Soviet commands. Thus, Soviet control would be virtually complete at the national and higher tactical levels. The Soviets would even control the extent of East European mobilization in large measure because of the logistic support that would be required if an extensive effort were to be made. It would be difficult for any sizable East European military unit to operate except in accordance with overall Soviet plans and under orders of Soviet higher commanders.

II. PROBABLE RELIABILITY IN THREE CONTINGENCIES

19. As requested, we assess below East European forces' reliability in the following three possible instances of non-nuclear conflict, but in so doing we wish to emphasize that the latest pertinent national estimate (NIE 11-4-66, "Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy," dated 16 June 1966) states our view that the Soviets will continue to pursue their aims by means short of open warfare with the West.

Berlin Crisis

20. In the case of a limited confrontation or conflict related to Berlin deliberately planned and precipitated by the USSR, Soviet planning and Pact response would probably be confined to the commitment of the Soviet and East German forces in the area. We think this would be true even if the Berlin crisis arose as a Soviet response to US actions outside Europe. Nevertheless, all Pact nations would take measures to increase readiness of their forces.

21. Soviet confidence in the reliability of the East German forces to perform in such contingencies is evidenced by the greater responsibilities that have apparently been assigned to German forces in East Germany. We believe that the East German forces would probably operate reliably as long as the situation remained confined in scale and nature and there were no escalation or setback so severe as to undermine their confidence in the outcome. The Soviets would not plan for active military support from other East European Warsaw Pact members, although expressions of political support would likely be expected in the second case cited above.

Deliberate Non-Nuclear Attack on Western Europe

22. The East European reaction to a Soviet proposal to deliver a deliberate non-nuclear attack in Central Europe would depend on what Western action had provoked such an unlikely Soviet decision. In any case, the East European governments would almost certainly seek to dissuade the USSR, fearing the consequences, but if they really believed their own vital interests to be threatened by the West their resistance to Soviet pressure would be less. If the Soviets persisted in their intention, despite East European dissuasion, the governments of East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would probably feel compelled to go along, perceiving no alternative and, in this instance, their troops would prove reliable, at least initially. The behavior of Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria would be more uncertain, but Soviet planning would probably require no more of them than increased readiness to defend their own territories.

Accidental Conflict

23. A conflict arising by accident is defined as one not deliberately planned by either side. Such a conflict might arise, for example, from an autobahn incident, a border clash, or an East German uprising. In such a conflict, if Pact members saw their national interests threatened, they would almost certainly support Soviet objectives in limited actions.

24. In the unlikely circumstances of an uprising in East Germany, quick suppression by East German forces, or by Soviet forces if necessary, is almost certain. But in considering this contingency, the Soviets might foresee the possibility of unilateral West German intervention. In this case, East German reliability would be much less certain. In addition, the Soviets would be apprehensive about the possibility of NATO intervention, and the Pact states would probably take steps to prepare for large-scale conflict.

25. Accidental conflict arising from an autobahn incident or a border clash would, in our view, have the same results as in the case of a Berlin crisis, namely East German support for Soviet actions at the outset, confinement of the action to Germany, and no Soviet demand for other East European military participation more than measures to increase readiness of their forces.

III. FUTURE TRENDS

Effects of Possible Changes in NATO

26. The disruption of NATO has long been a prime Soviet political objective. The disruptive effect of the French withdrawal from military participation in NATO must be gratifying to the USSR, but as yet it has had no apparent effect on Soviet military policy. The Soviets are apparently concerned lest the weakening of NATO loosen constraints on the revival of independent German power, and are thereby disposed toward caution. A substantial increase in the role of West Germany in NATO or a substantial increase in German

nationalism would strengthen the special relationship among East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR. The Soviets have implied that any form of nuclear sharing with West Germany would impel them to respond, perhaps with a Warsaw Pact nuclear command. In this event, however, the Soviets would almost certainly reserve to themselves alone the final decision on use of nuclear weapons.

Prospects for the Warsaw Pact

27. Soviet interest in the alliance and Soviet power in Eastern Europe will probably of themselves be sufficient to secure the continuance of the Warsaw Pact. Except for Rumania, the areas of agreement still overshadow the areas of disagreement by a large margin. Despite the growing independence within the Pact which will make it difficult to obtain agreement on specific courses of action, we believe that the ruling regimes in Eastern Europe will remain persuaded that their ultimate security rests on the protection provided by Soviet military power and influence. Nevertheless, if present trends toward autonomy continue, the Pact will evolve toward a conventional military alliance and the range of contingencies in which the USSR can rely on effective support from its East European allies will narrow.

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