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Capabilities of the Warsaw Pact Against NATO

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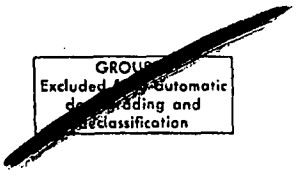

CAPABILITIES OF THE WARSAW PACT AGAINST NATO

SCOPE NOTE

This paper addresses the effects of the intervention in Czechoslovakia on the disposition and capabilities of Warsaw Pact forces opposing NATO in the Central Region. Longer range developments will be examined in the forthcoming NIE 11-14-68, "Soviet and East European General Purpose Forces."

CONCLUSIONS

A. Warsaw Pact capabilities vis-a-vis the Central Region of NATO have been altered by the deployment of 11 Soviet divisions from the western USSR and 2 from Hungary into Czechoslovakia, and by bringing about 10 additional divisions in the western USSR up to full readiness to move out.

B. The effect of the indicated redeployment of Soviet forces, in conjunction with the current loss of confidence in the Czech Army, is a net increase of five combat-ready Warsaw Pact divisions in the forward area opposite the Central Region of NATO. There is a qualitative difference in the substitution of Soviet divisions for Czech divisions. In the event of a military confrontation with NATO without further reinforcement, some of this net increase in strength would be required to control the situation within Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the current disposition of Warsaw Pact forces in the forward area is skewed in relation to preintervention contingency plans for operations against NATO. Almost certainly the Soviets have by this time developed plans for the employment of Warsaw Pact forces as they are now disposed to meet any emergency, but no doubt they would prefer to rectify their present deployment before becoming involved in a confrontation with NATO. They could do so quickly.

C. The Soviets now have in the forward area 11 divisions that were not there before, they have brought additional divisions in the western USSR to a higher state of readiness to move out, and their mobilization and deployment system has recently had a realistic exercise and test. We estimate that in these circumstances the USSR could deploy an additional 30 divisions to the forward area in about two weeks or so.[1] The forward Warsaw Pact force thus created would amount to some 80 divisions, not counting the Czechs.

D. Recent events may have made the Soviet leaders less disposed than in the past to rely on East European armies, and this could result in broad changes in the future posture and disposition of Warsaw Pact forces.

DISCUSSION

Warsaw Pact Actions in the Intervention

1. The intervention in Czechoslovakia has occasioned a redisposition of Warsaw Pact forces opposite the Central Region of NATO, strong reinforcement from western USSR, and selective mobilization of combat and support units still in the western USSR.

2. We estimate that the Soviets moved 11 divisions from the western USSR for the intervention in Czechoslovakia, including 4 divisions from the Carpathian MD, 6 from the Baltic MD (1 airborne), and 1 division from Belorussia. The Soviets also moved about 200 fighters from the western USSR, most of them into Czechoslovakia, but some into Poland.

3. We estimate that, at its peak during September, the Warsaw Pact intervention force located inside Czechoslovakia or in the immediate East German-Czech border area included 5 armies with about 27 divisions. Of these 27 divisions, 22 were Soviet: 11 deployed from the USSR, 8 from East Germany, and 3 from Hungary.[2] We estimate that the Poles contributed 4 divisions, and that the Hungarian and Bulgarian units together amounted to the equivalent of 1 division. If any East German elements entered Czechoslovakia, all but token representation was quickly withdrawn.

4. We estimate that about 400 Soviet aircraft were deployed to Czechoslovakia, including about 150 from the USSR and about 250 drawn from Soviet tactical air forces in East Germany, Poland, and Hungary.

[1] This would include at least eight divisions from the Kiev Military District (MD) not previously estimated as reinforcements for the Central Region.

[2] One of these Soviet divisions has now returned to Hungary.

5. These forces probably comprised about 300,000 men. The Soviets apparently did not deploy into Czechoslovakia the *front*-level service support units which would be required by such large forces in sustained combat; this was not required in the circumstances. The intervention forces are apparently receiving much of their logistic support from the preexisting logistic establishments in East Germany, Poland, the Carpathian MD, and Hungary.

6. The overwhelming size of the intervention force was probably based on a Soviet desire to discourage any idea of resistance, to crush the Czech Army very quickly should armed resistance nonetheless occur, and to substitute Soviet for Czech forces facing NATO on the Czech-West German border.

7. Soviet deployments were accompanied by a substantial mobilization of ground forces in the western USSR. Available evidence indicates that 3 of the deployed divisions had been understrength (Category II) and were fleshed out through mobilization, and that up to 10 more Category II divisions were brought up to full strength prior to the intervention in Czechoslovakia. Adding 5 divisions already in Category I status makes a ready reserve of up to 15 divisions in the western USSR. We do not believe that any substantial mobilization took place beyond these numbers; there is evidence that some divisions in western USSR were not mobilized. However, the possibility that a few more are now at full strength cannot be ruled out. The mobilization of these additional forces probably resulted from the Soviet realization that their intervention would precipitate a period of high tension in Central Europe. The Soviets probably desired at least to replenish their depleted reserves with a like number of divisions in a high state of readiness for any NATO vs. Warsaw Pact contingency.

The New Military Situation

8. In the present military situation there has been a shift in the weight and composition of the Warsaw Pact forces in Central Europe. Previously the combat-ready Warsaw Pact forces in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia had totaled 47 divisions (39 in East Germany and Poland and 8 in Czechoslovakia). Of these, 22 were Soviet and 25 were East European. The present estimated number of combat-ready divisions in the same area is 52, not counting the Czechs, but there has been a major shift southward in orientation. Of these 52 divisions, 27 are in East Germany and Poland, while 25 are in Czechoslovakia; 35 are Soviet and 17 are East European.

9. The current status of the Czechoslovak forces is a key factor in Warsaw Pact capabilities for both immediate and reinforced military action against NATO. At present the Soviets almost certainly would not count on these forces in any serious contingency. Further, should armed conflict with NATO occur in present circumstances, the Soviets would probably feel it necessary to use some of their own forces for occupation duty in Czechoslovakia. The unreliability of the

Czechs is probably highly disruptive to Warsaw Pact military planning. The Czechoslovak Army and Air Forces were among the best of the East European theater forces, and were assigned a key role in Warsaw Pact military plans. Twelve Czechoslovak divisions with support from 600 fighter aircraft were to form the southern of three *fronts* opposing NATO in the Central Region. They were expected at a minimum to contain NATO forces in that area until Soviet armies from the Carpathian MD could reinforce.

Capabilities for Military Action Against NATO Without Further Reinforcement

10. The effect of the indicated redeployment of Soviet forces, in conjunction with the current loss of confidence in the Czech Army, is a net increase of five combat-ready Warsaw Pact divisions in the forward area opposite the Central Region of NATO. There is also a qualitative difference in the substitution of Soviet divisions for Czech divisions. In the event of a military confrontation with NATO without further reinforcement, some of this net increase in strength would be required to control the situation within Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the current disposition of Warsaw Pact forces in the forward area is skewed in relation to preintervention contingency plans for operations against NATO. Almost certainly the Soviets have by this time developed plans for the employment of Warsaw Pact forces as they are now disposed to meet any emergency, but no doubt they would prefer to rectify their present deployment before becoming involved in a confrontation with NATO. They could do so quickly.

Reinforcement Capabilities

11. In NIE 11-14-66, "Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces," dated 3 November 1966, SECRET, we estimated that in the event of a military showdown with NATO the Soviets would wish to create a 60-division striking force in the forward area with an additional 20 divisions in theater reserve in Poland. We estimated that this 60-division force would include 9 Czechoslovak divisions and over 30 divisions from the USSR, and that 3 to 4 weeks would be required for deployment.

12. The Soviets now have in the forward area 11 divisions that were not there before, they have already brought additional divisions in the western USSR to a higher state of readiness to move out, and their mobilization and deployment system has recently had a realistic exercise and test. We estimate that in these circumstances the USSR could deploy an additional 30 divisions to the forward area in 2 weeks or so.[3] The forward Warsaw Pact force thus created would amount to some 80 divisions, not counting the Czechs.

[3] This would include at least eight divisions from the Kiev MD not previously estimated as reinforcements for the Central Region.

Near-Term Developments

13. There is no firm basis on which to judge the future size and posture of Warsaw Pact forces in the Central Region. The Soviets probably hope eventually to restore the reliability of the Czechoslovak forces, but will probably leave at least 2 armies (6 to 8 divisions) in the country for both military and political purposes. They will restore the preinvasion posture of their forces in East Germany as quickly as the situation in Czechoslovakia permits. The Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian intervention forces will probably return to their home stations within a few weeks. There are indications that elements of the Soviet airborne division have already returned to the USSR, and that one of the Soviet divisions and some tactical aircraft have returned to their home bases in Hungary.

General Implications

14. The Soviet leaders themselves have probably not yet reached firm decisions as to the future Warsaw Pact military posture. We believe that they must now reexamine their decision of the late 1950's to place much heavier reliance on East European armies in operations against the Central Region of NATO. The Czechoslovak situation is but the latest in a series of developments putting in question the reliability of East European forces—Romanian insubordination, the abortive Bulgarian military coup, and Polish military disgruntlement at involvement in the Middle East crisis of 1967. The contribution of each East European country would have to be weighed separately by the Soviets since there are wide variations in reliability. Soviet concern on this account may result in broad changes in Warsaw Pact organization and troop dispositions, but it is still too early to predict them.