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HR70-14

APPROVED FOR RELEASE - HISTORICAL COLLECTION DIVISION DATE:
06-18-2012

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

21 SEP 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : Theodore G. Shackley
Acting Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : [REDACTED] Report

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Theodore G. Shackley

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY Poland/USSR

DATE OF
INFO. June 1977

DATE 21 SEP 1977

SUBJECT

Warsaw Pact Command Staff Exercise WEST-77

SOURCE

SUMMARY

This report describes the participants and initial scenario of the strategic command staff exercise WEST-77, comparing the scenario with war plans for the movement of troops from the Belorussian and Carpathian Military Districts into Poland. Several reasons are given why the Poles were displeased with the conduct of the exercise.

END OF SUMMARY

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(X) 1. The Warsaw Pact strategic command staff exercise WEST-77, held during 21 May - 7 June, involved an estimated total of more than 50,000 people. Several earth satellites were launched to assist in the exercise. Apart from the Soviet wish to exert pressure before the Belgrade CSCE follow-up conference, the main purpose of the exercise was apparently to test selected elements of the war plans for combat with NATO forces in the Western Theater. No attention was given to economic or political aspects of the war scenario, such as the problems of switching to a wartime economy or the question of political procedures involved in Poland's decision to enter a war.

2. The following components participated in the exercise, represented only by reduced staffs and some security units:

a. Leading officials of the Soviet Ministry of Defense, selected segments of the Soviet General Staff and elements of the Northern Group of Forces functioned as the Supreme Command for the Western Theater, with headquarters in Legnica.

b. Polish army units were detached to form the First Front, with an operational group of the 12th Air Army.

c. Elements of the Soviet Group of Forces Germany constituted the Second Front.

d. Czechoslovak army units were detached to form the Third Front.

e. Elements from the Belorussian Military District constituted the Fourth Front, with the operational group of one combined-arms army.

f. Elements from the Carpathian Military District constituted the Fifth Front, with the operational group of one army.

g. Elements of the Baltic Military District constituted the Sixth Front, with an operational group of the 17th Army.

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h. Elements of the Soviet Baltic Fleet and operational groups of the Polish and East German Fleets were combined to form the United Baltic Fleet.

i. Officers participated from the Polish Army General Staff, the Czechoslovak Army General Staff and the Main Staff of the East German Army.

j. Significant forces of the Polish territorial defense troops, civil defense, citizens' militia and rescue units were detached to support the deployment and regrouping of exercise forces.

3. The first strategic echelon was composed of the Second and Third Fronts and the East German Army 7th Corps. First echelon reserves consisted of the First Front, deployed in battle on the third day of the war, the 22nd Army detached from the Reserve of the High Command, and the 23rd Army detached from the Reserve of the Western Theater Commander-in-Chief. The second strategic echelon was composed of the Third (sic, probably Fourth), the Fifth and Sixth Fronts.

(*) 4. It was assumed for this exercise that the aggression was begun by NATO countries, which had been preparing for it since 1976. According to the opening hypothesis, the Fourth and Fifth Fronts (from the Belorussian and Carpathian Military Districts) had already entered Polish territory as a demonstration of readiness and determination in order to avoid a war. In reality, war plans call for the entry of these forces into Poland at the moment war breaks out. ✓

(*) 5. The Fourth Front was regrouping in an area almost identical to the area envisaged in the true war plans. These forces entered the battle along the Berlin/Rudow - Bonn axis. The Fifth Front, after crossing Poland's southwestern border into Czechoslovakia, was deployed along the Pilsen - Stuttgart axis.

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6. The First Front (composed of Polish army units) operated along the axis of the northern seacoast, its main task being to conquer Jutland and the Danish islands. These forces were planning a combined landing operation on Sjaelland, in the bays of Koge and Fakse. The East German 7th Army Corps was subordinate to the First Front. During the final phase of action the 17th Army, which had been part of the Sixth Front, was also subordinated to the First Front.

7. The Sixth Front (from the Baltic Military District) was regrouped on the sixth or seventh day of the war in the region west of Poznan. These forces entered the battle only during the nuclear stage of the war.

8. The exercise ended at 1630 hours Moscow time on 7 June. The Soviet staffs returned to the USSR on 11 June.

9. Despite a high evaluation accorded the Polish team at the exercise critique, held on 8-9 June at GSFG Headquarters in Wuensdorf, the Polish leaders felt that they were being tacitly ridiculed, and their competence discredited. Defense Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski, Chief of the General Staff Florian Siwicki and the Polish commander of the First Front regarded the exercise as a chain of affronts inflicted by the Soviets. Specific grievances included the following:

a. When Party First Secretary Gierek flew to Torun to visit the exercise staff on 7 June, his plane was kept circling the Bydgoszcz airfield for some minutes, waiting for Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov to cease questioning the exercise commanders so that they and he could go to meet their distinguished visitor.

b. Acting on orders from Moscow, the Soviets failed to provide data about the composition and position of Soviet fronts involved in the exercise. They demanded information from Polish leaders which the latter could not have had, since conditions were not conducive even to full knowledge about the

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Polish front. Without any warning, a group of Soviet general staff officers was sent to oversee the work of the Polish command, whereupon Defense Minister Jaruzelski ostentatiously departed the headquarters villa from which he no longer exercised true control.

c. There was a serious incident when reconnaissance by a Soviet earth satellite disclosed that two P-40 radar stations near Ustka and Poznan were operating on unauthorized frequencies.

→ d. During the exercise, the Soviets carefully staged a situation in which an army of Polish forces, drawn from the Silesian Military District and deployed according to plan, delayed the regrouping of the entire Fourth (Soviet) Front for 24 hours. Polish leaders regarded the incident as a possible prelude to Soviet attempts to eliminate this army from the Polish front in wartime, so as to enforce the Soviet concept of mixed nationalities in the composition of a front.

e. A continuing problem, beyond the scope of the WEST-77 exercise, has been the use of Polish services to support the regrouping of Soviet fronts. During the current Five-Year Plan Poland is spending eight billion zlotys to prepare Polish territory as part of the war theater, adapting the Polish transport system to the needs of the Soviet army. In addition, the Poles must detach a considerable number of their territorial defense engineering troops and transportation components for the construction of reserve bridges over the main rivers of Poland. Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov has decided that all reserve bridges for the Soviet army in Poland should be constructed by the Poles.

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