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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : [redacted] Report

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[redacted]
John H. Stein
Deputy Director for Operations



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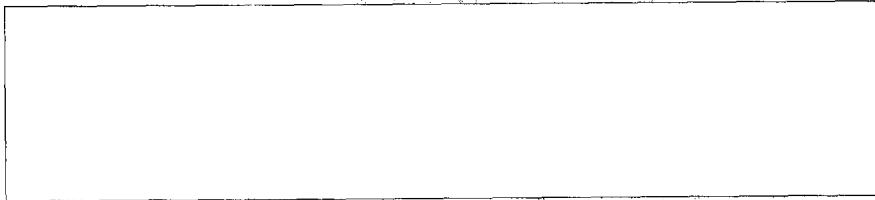
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY HUNGARY



DATE OF INFO. 1977-78

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SUBJECT

Party and Political Work in the Hungarian People's Army

SOURCE



Summary:

As of 1978 the system of party and political organs existing within the Hungarian People's Army was instrumental in ensuring party control over the military. The party organs worked under the direction of the People's Army Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) and had the primary task of seeing that party policy was put into practice by the armed forces. The political organs were subordinate to the military command (the Main Political Directorate of the Ministry of Defense) but were also an integral part of the party apparatus. They were responsible for organizing, directing, and monitoring educational as well as political and cultural indoctrination work among armed forces personnel. In the period 1977-78, both party and political organs engaged in a wide variety of activities and achieved some notable successes. At the same time, a number of shortcomings in their work came to light, e.g., excessive coordination between the HSWP People's Army Committee and the Main Political Directorate delayed the adoption of some important political measures.

End of Summary

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1. As of 1978 party and political work in the Hungarian People's Army was based and being developed on a party foundation, that is, in conformity with the policy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) in regard to strengthening the country's defense capability and building the armed forces. The party and political organs were guided in their activities by the HSWP Program Declaration and Rules, the decisions of its congresses, and the resolutions of its Central Committee.

2. The main directions and tasks as well as the content and methods of party and political work in the Hungarian People's Army had specific features of their own due to the fact that the party organs worked under the supervision of the HSWP Central Committee and performed the function of the leading party organs in the Army, whereas the political organs were subordinate to the military command, had certain administrative functions, and were part of the party apparatus at the same time.

3. In conformity with the 7 March 1967 decision of the Politburo of the HSWP Central Committee "On Party Control of the Armed Forces and the Rights and Tasks of the Party Organizations and Political Organs of the Armed Forces," all party work in the Hungarian People's Army was directed and monitored by the HSWP Central Committee. The direct control and monitoring were carried out, on the one hand, by the Politburo, the Secretariat, and the Department of Public Administration and Administration of the HSWP Central Committee, and, on the other, through the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic and the National Defense Committee of the National Assembly, which put party decisions into practice.

4. The HSWP Central Committee periodically checked up on combat readiness, progress in combat training, the work of the party and political organs, the morale and political consciousness of personnel, and the work of cadres who were included on its nomenclature list. It determined direct and indirect defense expenditures, the amount of capital investments, and the tasks for improving the organization and mobilization readiness of the Hungarian People's Army and for providing it with combat equipment and other types of military gear. It also directly supervised the work of the HSWP People's Army Committee and political indoctrination work.

5. The primary task of the party organs of the Hungarian People's Army working under the direction of the HSWP People's Army Committee was to carry out party policy. In so doing, they had to see that cadre personnel knew party policy and put it into practice without hesitation; to foster class consciousness and love for the socialist homeland among the rank and file, strengthen their spirit of internationalism, and strive to increase political

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vigilance and the observance of military secrecy; to constantly improve combat readiness; to mobilize the communists and, through them, exert influence on all personnel, the execution of orders and combat training tasks, and the mastering and preservation of combat equipment; to assist in strengthening military discipline and have communists set an example in the performance of military service; to strengthen the concept of one-man command, improve the level of command work, and ensure the fulfilment of the party's personnel policy; to participate in the supervision of the communist youth organizations and provide them with assistance; to safeguard friendship-in-arms among the armies of the Warsaw Pact member states and strengthen it in every possible way; as well as to strengthen and develop ties between the Army and the population and take part in military patriotic indoctrination.

6. As was noted, the political organs of the Hungarian People's Army were part of the system of military organs, and were also an integral part of the party organs. This also determined the specific features of the tasks facing them during peacetime. In wartime their functions were to be broadened: in particular, the political organs of the large units, formations, and also the Main Political Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army would receive the authority of elective organs and perform the latter's tasks.

7. Like a military organization, the political organs shaped their work in keeping with the requirements of military regulations and with commanders' orders. Depending on their level and the authority granted them, the political organs organized, directed, and monitored educational as well as political and cultural indoctrination work among personnel in conformity with commanders' orders. They had the right to issue orders to lower commanders within the framework of these tasks.

8. By virtue of his position, the Chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army was the chief of all Army personnel with the exception of the deputy ministers of defense, and was subordinate to the Minister of Defense. The chiefs of the political departments of the formations, large units, and higher military schools and the deputy commanders for political affairs were the immediate chiefs of the personnel and were subordinate to the corresponding commanders.

9. As part of the party organs, the political organs were obliged to carry out the decisions of the party organs; to participate in the work of the party organs at their own level in the preparation and execution of decisions, as well as in the monitoring of decision implementation; and, in compliance with the instructions of the party organs and the Central Committee of the Hungarian Communist Youth League, to assist the communist youth organizations and monitor their work (in so doing, they enjoyed the same authority as a party organ).

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10. Specific tasks for the Army's party organs stemming from the decisions of the leading party organs were set forth in the decisions of the plenum or Executive Committee of the HSWP People's Army Committee. These decisions were also binding on the Main Political Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army, which, on their basis, issued corresponding instructions and arranged to check up on them. Commanders and chiefs had to take the decisions of higher party organs into consideration in their orders. In this way, party control over the Hungarian People's Army was ensured.

11. It ought to be noted that the principle of one-man command was one of the most important principles of building the Hungarian military establishment. It was embedded in the above-mentioned decision of the Politburo of the HSWP Central Committee which said that the armed forces were being built on the basis of the principle of one-man command and that a commander was responsible for political work, for the morale and political consciousness of personnel, and also for the fulfilment of all tasks falling within his jurisdiction. Thus, party control in the Hungarian People's Army was exercised with a view to securing the principle of one-man command on a party foundation.

12. In this connection, the practice of overseeing political work in the Hungarian People's Army was somewhat unusual. The Chief of the Main Political Directorate, for example, did not issue directives on political work for the training period (eight months in the Hungarian People's Army) or for a longer period. General tasks, in which references were made to the decisions of the HSWP Congress, were formulated in the orders of the Minister of Defense for a five-year period. They were subsequently rendered somewhat more concrete in the reports of the Minister of Defense at the annual conferences of the senior command personnel and leaders of the political organs. These directions formed the basis of the plans of the Main Political Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army, from which the lower political organs in their turn proceeded when drawing up their own work plans. The Chief of the Main Political Directorate or his deputies issued instructions concerning the specific tasks and forms of political work, and the conduct of political campaigns. It is rather interesting that the instructions or "recommendations" (this latter term was used when the document was signed by a deputy chief of the Main Political Directorate) concerning major political measures in the Army always contained references to a decision by the HSWP People's Army Committee.

13. During 1977-1978 (from 1 January 1977 through 1 May 1978), the work of the party organs of the Hungarian People's Army was directed mainly toward explaining, analyzing, and putting into practice the decisions of the leading party organs. Among other things, in all party organizations meetings were held to distribute information on the decisions of the HSWP Central Committee plenums; the meetings were supplemented by secret briefings for the most active party members. The briefings dealt with the following: the decision of the April 1977 HSWP Central Committee plenum on the celebration in Hungary of the

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60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution; the directives of the October 1977 HSWP Central Committee plenum in the area of developing the production structure and a long-term foreign economic policy; urgent questions of the international situation and Hungarian-American relations in light of the decisions of the March 1978 HSWP Central Committee plenum; the party's work after its 11th Congress and personnel changes in its leading organs on the basis of the materials of the April 1978 HSWP Central Committee plenum.

14. The following topics were discussed everywhere: in September 1977, the implementation of the decisions of the October 1976 HSWP Central Committee plenum on Marxist-Leninist training for party members, on experience, and also on certain fundamental questions of party propaganda; and in December 1977, the implementation of the decision of the November 1973 HSWP Central Committee plenum on principles of personnel policy -- the decision set the task of strengthening work in selecting and indoctrinating cadres for the purpose of increasing the leading role of the party.

15. Such measures as the briefings given on the state of affairs in shaping socialist relations in Hungarian society, the analysis undertaken by communists of the materials of the leading party and state organs on personnel matters, the meetings held in connection with the increased retail prices for consumer goods (this form of work was said to have justified itself and to have had a positive effect on political stability within the country), and the "party days" devoted to studying the party's economic policy effectively contributed to explaining party policy in a comprehensive and thorough manner. It is of some interest that in connection with the last-mentioned measure, Politburo member and Central Committee Secretary K. NEMETH (until April 1978 he was responsible for economic policy) addressed the senior personnel of the Hungarian People's Army and the most active party members in February 1978.

16. Much importance was attached to the work of indoctrinating servicemen in an internationalist spirit. In 1977 this work consisted mainly of a wide range of measures aimed at celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution and the 60th anniversary of the USSR armed forces. In the opinion of some Army political officers, the distinctive feature of these measures was the fact that the celebration of those Soviet anniversaries in the Hungarian People's Army turned into a mass movement and acquired not only an international but also a patriotic character.

17. The party organs at all levels constantly monitored the progress of the socialist competition launched in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution. In October 1977 they summed up the results of the socialist competition and two months later, on the basis of the results, prepared plans for 1978 which had as their main objective the strengthening and greatest possible development of patriotic enthusiasm among personnel during socialist competition in 1978. In December 1977, the HSWP People's Army

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Committee appealed to all party and public organizations to raise the level of organizational and political work even further toward that objective, taking as their basis the work experience connected with the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution.

18. The measures dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the USSR armed forces were filled with considerable political content. They were planned in advance by the party organs and discussed in detail in the HSWP People's Army Committee in December 1977. It is noteworthy that the decisions of the party organs invariably emphasized the need to carry out the adopted plans jointly with the Soviet Southern Group of Forces.

19. On the whole, it can be said without exaggeration that during the period under consideration, the party organs of the Hungarian People's Army accumulated a great deal of beneficial experience in indoctrinating servicemen in an internationalist spirit so as to further strengthen friendship-in-arms, that conspicuous successes were achieved in working toward that objective, and that a good basis for improving such work was established.

20. Matters concerning official communist activities and the improvement of troop combat readiness also occupied one of the central places in the work of party organs in the Hungarian People's Army. The provincial party organizations assisted the command in accomplishing combat training tasks and repeatedly discussed these matters at party meetings. Thus, in September 1977 the training results for the summer period were summed up in order to further improve the level of troop training proficiency. In April 1978, meetings devoted to planned tactical and firing exercises were held in party organizations.

21. In the estimation of the HSWP People's Army Committee, in mobilizing personnel to perform official tasks, commanders and chiefs were greatly assisted by the party meetings which discussed the following: progress in the work of introducing the Service Regulations into the Hungarian People's Army; the activity of officers in indoctrinating the rank and file; measures connected with conscription; an analysis of the way servicemen were meeting the most important norms of the regulations; and the performance of national economic tasks by the personnel of units.

22. The HSWP People's Army Committee heard and discussed reports by the chiefs of the Main Personnel Directorate, the armored and technical service, the Mate ZALKA Technical Military Academy, the Investments and Maintenance Directorate, the medical service, and the main legal department. The discussion was businesslike and concrete in nature. In particular, on the basis of the report from the Chief of the Main Personnel Directorate, proposals were submitted to the Minister of Defense that were taken into account in a Ministry of Defense directive on personnel work (the proposals envisaged a more rational distribution of specialists from among the conscripts). As a result of the

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discussion of the report from the head of the military academy, proposals were made to the chief of the officer and NCO personnel directorate of the Main Personnel Directorate on improving the selection of candidates for entrance into higher military schools. The HSWP People's Army Committee also petitioned the Minister of Defense to discuss matters connected with the work of the organs of the Military Procurator's /Judge Advocate's/ Office and Court in the campaign against crime in the Army.

23. The HSWP People's Army Committee focused a great deal of attention on implementing the decision of the 11th HSWP Congress concerning the participation of the Hungarian People's Army in national economic work. At a number of its sessions, the committee discussed questions dealing with further utilization of the Army in the economy and specified ways of improving the quality and effectiveness of its economic work.

24. Intraparty work was centered on resolving matters connected with strengthening party ranks, with indoctrinating party members in the spirit of devotion to the cause of the party and of compliance with moral principles, and with further developing contacts with the masses.

25. In 1977, 1686 servicemen were accepted as members into the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (in preceding years, 1300-1400 people per year had been admitted into the party). The total number of communists in the Army as of 1 January 1978 was more than 26.1 thousand. According to the data of a party commission attached to the HSWP People's Army Committee, 0.9 percent of the party members on the rolls of Army organizations committed offenses in 1977. The abuse of alcohol, an immoral way of life, and a careless attitude toward official duties were the most prevalent offenses. There were no political offenses in 1977.

26. The HSWP People's Army Committee heard reports on the work of party organizations pertaining to the acceptance of new members into the party's ranks, the community work performed by commanders and chiefs, the effectiveness of work done by communists in communist youth organizations, and other items. Its adopted decisions emphasized, among other things, that in recent years the acceptance into the party of progressive, conscientious servicemen -- especially working-class representatives -- who were group activists was conducted in a more goal-oriented manner in the Army, but that community assignments were still being distributed unevenly and that not enough attention was being paid to drawing young people into the youth movement.

27. On the whole, one can say that in the period 1977-78 the party organs of the Hungarian People's Army performed their work energetically and purposefully and fulfilled the tasks assigned them by the party.

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28. In 1977 the political organs of the Hungarian People's Army focused their main attention on improving the content and forms and enhancing the effectiveness of ideological work as well as on intensifying indoctrination work among Army personnel. They also provided comprehensive aid in regard to conducting socialist competition in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution.

29. As was noted in the concluding report of the Minister of Defense, during 1977 political activity and work discipline increased in the Army, and the good political atmosphere and spirit of collectivism within it grew stronger. The work of the political organs largely contributed to this.

30. The following data were indicative of the favorable results achieved in combat and political training in the Hungarian People's Army in 1977: 77.4 percent of the officers received various commendations (in 1976 the figure was 75 percent); and the number of serious accidents which occurred through the fault of officers was reduced by 19 percent, and by 11 percent in the Hungarian People's Army as a whole. Altogether 2653 officers, 809 NCOs, and 722 privates were awarded state decorations.

31. The ideological work of the political organs was based on the study of the materials of the 11th HSWP Congress and the decisions of the HSWP Central Committee plenums. Ideological work was stimulated by preparing and holding a People's Army Ideological Conference in July 1977; the materials comprising the reports and speeches at this conference were utilized during the political studies undertaken by personnel. The following topics were submitted for discussion at the conference: the building of an advanced socialist society in Hungary and the tasks stemming from this for Army personnel; what it means to live in a socialist manner, and the content of socialist morality; the combat training tasks of the Hungarian People's Army in light of the contemporary international situation; and the new content and methods requirements for political work in the Hungarian People's Army.

32. The preparations for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution exerted a great influence on the content of ideological work. In large units and formations as well as in the Main Political Directorate of the Hungarian People's Army, there took place ideological conferences which discussed topical questions relating to the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and analyzed the tasks set by the 25th CPSU Congress in regard to Soviet foreign and domestic policies.

33. Political studies in the Hungarian People's Army took the following forms: the training and retraining of cadres (conducted in the higher military educational institutions and evening universities of Marxism-Leninism); primary political training (in NCO schools and instruction courses, and also in secondary schools of Marxism-Leninism in the troops); advanced primary political

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training (in instruction courses for propagandists in the troops); and mass political studies (political training sessions with personnel). As of 1978, 73.3 percent of all personnel in the Hungarian People's Army were students of political study groups at various levels, 14.3 percent were propagandists, and 12.4 percent were studying independently or had been excused from political training sessions on account of correspondence studies. Approximately 3 percent of the cadre, NCO, and civilian personnel were studying in the system of evening universities of Marxism-Leninism. Altogether 64.4 percent of Army cadre personnel were studying in the cadre training and retraining system, and 65.5 percent of the NCOs and 99.7 percent of the rank and file were participating in the mass political studies system. Each group of this latter system consisted of 24 people.

34. It ought to be noted that in 1977 the political organs of the Hungarian People's Army took a significant step to promote the ideas of proletarian internationalism as well as the indoctrination of servicemen in an internationalist spirit. In speaking of the tasks for 1978, the Minister of Defense had emphasized that indoctrinating personnel in the spirit of proletarian internationalism must form the basis of all political indoctrination work among the troops. In this connection, the Main Political Directorate issued a special instruction which determined not only basic directions and forms, but also the concrete measures stemming from the Minister's remarks. Some Army officers considered this an important aspect of political work, believing that the West was intensifying its ideological subversive activities for the purpose of undermining the unity of the socialist commonwealth countries, and was making material preparations for war. According to them, the measures conducted in honor of the Soviet Union's anniversaries created favorable and stable conditions for increasing efforts directed at indoctrinating servicemen in an internationalist spirit. These conditions included above all an increased level of political consciousness.

35. In the indoctrination work done by the political organs of the Hungarian People's Army, the endeavor to identify the specific reasons for violations of the procedures laid down by regulations -- the facts behind the troubles -- and to outline effective ways of eliminating them attracted attention. In this connection, the investigations conducted by the organizational training directorate of the Main Political Directorate into the work with young officers, the disciplinary practices in the Army, the causes of road accidents, the violations of norms of the socialist way of life, and other matters were highly effective. These investigations aided the command in determining steps to improve indoctrination work, and disclosed that behind the relatively satisfactory statistics there were phenomena that bore careful watching.

36. The constant monitoring of the progress of socialist competition and the steps taken to support it contributed to achieving unprecedented results in

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the Hungarian People's Army. Eighty-two percent of the personnel of units participated in the socialist competition in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution (in the previous 10 years an average of 60-62 percent had taken part in the competition). In comparison with preceding years, the number of excellent soldiers in the Army increased by 8 percent, that of excellent squads by 11 percent, that of platoons by 10 percent, and that of excellent companies by 14 percent.

37. In accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Defense that were given at the meeting on the results of the socialist competition, the main tasks of the political organs in 1978 were as follows: to instill ideological conviction and a complete understanding of the party's defense policy in all personnel; to have the political training system engage in analyzing the party's economic policy, the role of socialist economic integration, and the interrelationship of the country's economy and defense capability; to strengthen the concept of one-man command and the authority of commanders; to improve group teamwork; to step up indoctrination work among young soldiers; to shape and strengthen the distinctive features of the socialist way of life among servicemen; to improve military discipline in every way possible and prevent violations of it; to indoctrinate young servicemen in a socialist manner and prepare them to participate actively in the building of socialism after service in the Army; and to promote the active participation of the Hungarian People's Army in the performance of national economic tasks and in the campaign to economize on materiel.

38. In discussing the successes and positive features in the work of the party and political organs of the Hungarian People's Army, one should also point out that they did not always play a proper role in performing the tasks entrusted to them: serious political measures were often preceded by a prolonged period of vacillation due to the numerous conferences and the frequent coordination of matters between the HSWP People's Army Committee and the Main Political Directorate, the monitoring of the implementation of adopted decisions was not effective enough, and there existed a fear to impose an initiative upon Army personnel "from above". In the opinion of some political workers, this was largely due to the structure and form of interaction between the party and political organs as well as to a certain duplication of tasks set by decision of the Politburo of the HSWP Central Committee.

39. The shortcomings listed above manifested themselves clearly enough in early 1977, when, instead of providing operational support to a number of units that had come forward in January-February with an initiative to organize a socialist competition in the Army in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Russian socialist revolution, the HSWP People's Army Committee and the Main Political Directorate took until May to settle the matter of procedure and the form of the decision on the initiative and the means of publicizing it.

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