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SECURITY INFORMATION

REPORT NO.

50X1

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

DATE DISTR. 16 Oct. 53

SUBJECT Use of Armed Forces in Political Crises

NO. OF PAGES 3

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PLACE ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS. (LISTED BELOW)

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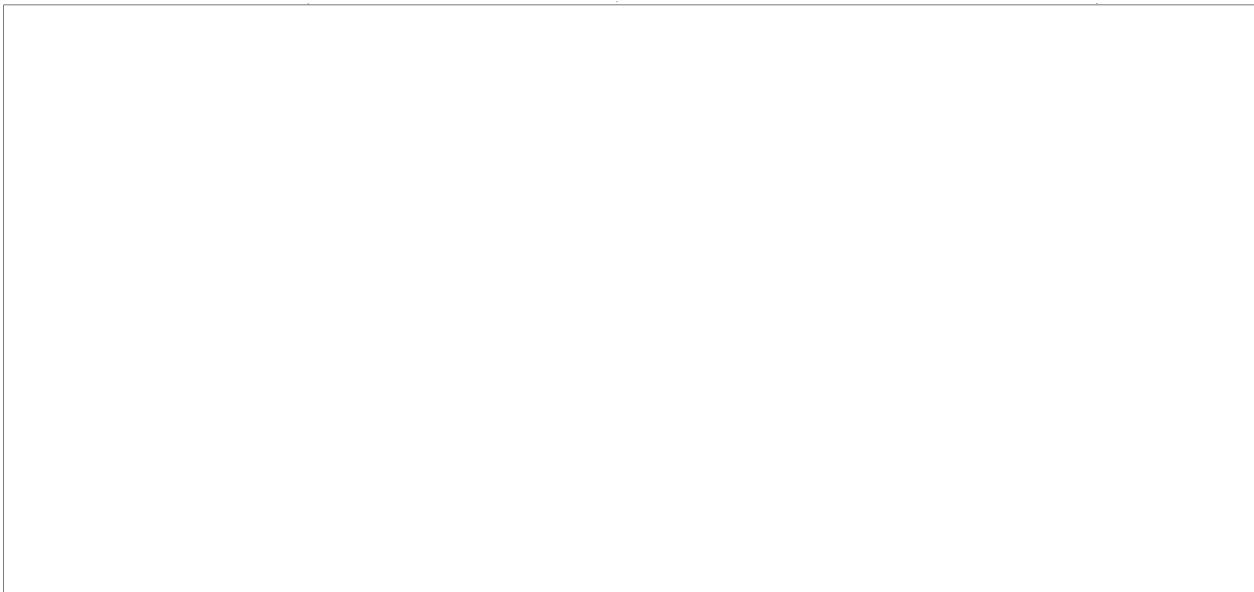
DATE ACQUIRED BY SOURCE

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

DATE OF INFORMATION

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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1. When STALIN and GOTTWALD died, all the units in [redacted] the 3rd Tank Division, were ordered to cancel all passes and leaves. When STALIN died, six men out of my group of 36 communications technicians were on leave. [redacted] The order forbidding absences from the unit was in force until four days after STALIN's funeral. On neither occasion were any other special security precautions enforced by the division, as far as I could judge.
2. Enlisted men and officers living in the barracks could not have their own radios unless they obtained special permission from the division commander. The reason given for this rule was the need to save electricity. I never knew anyone who had asked for or who had been given permission to have his own radio. In effect, the only military personnel who had access to radios they could tune themselves were communications personnel using official radios with earphones, and married and other officers billeted outside the barracks.

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3. At 0700 hours on the morning of 31 May 1953 I received a telephone [redacted] telling me that effective at once all leaves and passes of soldiers were canceled. No reason was given for the order. At the time, only two soldiers out of 60 in the company were absent on passes. I was supposed to send them telegrams to return at once, but as I knew that they were not far away and would return anyway that evening, I did not think it necessary to send the telegrams. I did not make any announcement of the order to the men, but planned instead only to tell individuals who asked for passes that the battalion had issued orders saying no one could leave for the time being.
4. At 1100 hours I heard the news of the currency reform on the radio. Within five minutes of this broadcast, I received another telephone call from the battalion giving the contents of an Army order of the day about the currency reform. In the same call, the political officer of the battalion also gave detailed instructions to the political officer in my unit, a non-commissioned officer, as to what he was to tell the soldiers about why the change was necessary. In addition, the officer stated that for the next few days, until further orders were given, SNB and militiamen would be making checks at night on the roads near the frontier. My unit had to be informed of this because border guard units usually have instructions to arrest anyone from outside the area found near the frontier, including members of the SNB and the militia. The order restricting passes remained in force for one week.
5. The issuance of orders forbidding absence from the units was a fairly common occurrence. Such an order was received a few hours after the news of STALIN's death was broadcast and was kept in effect until four days after STALIN had been buried. The order issued after GOTTWALD died was in force until only one day after the funeral. The orders issued when STALIN and GOTTWALD died were applied as soon as received. Orders canceling passes before big holidays were always issued to PS units. They were issued about five days before the Christmas, New Year's, Easter and May Day holidays, to be put into force three days before the holiday and to stay in effect until a few days after the holiday.
6. As far as I know, these orders restricting the liberty of the soldiers were the only ones received [redacted] during the time of the currency reform. Some weeks later, I was told by an acquaintance in a nearby village [redacted] sometime during the week of the currency reform the students from his school or class (60 in all) were sent to Ostrava to overawe the local population. The acquaintance did not say how long he was in Ostrava or how many other soldiers were there, but he did say he had heard that other officer training school classes elsewhere had been called from their studies in the same way at this time. He said that he did not see any disorder in Ostrava and that while it was there, his unit did nothing except march about under arms.
7. Apart from the restriction on absence from the camp area, I do not know of any special security arrangements in my unit at the time of the currency reform. I was told by a civilian friend, however, that on Monday, 1 June 1953, there was a police check point between the airfield and Pilsen and that no one without special papers could pass this point. My friend was a driver for the state coal mines. His car was turned back.

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8. About two weeks after the currency reform, [redacted] One of the men in the ward, a member of a Technical Labor Battalion (Pomocony technicky prapor), had heard from a friend of his that at the beginning of the rioting in Pilsen the soldiers in one of the barracks in the city had been called into formation with their arms, had been marched to the scene of the riot and then, without any explanation being given, had immediately been marched back to the barracks and confined to their quarters for the next few days. The man in the hospital conjectured that the officer in charge of the troops must either have been given a last minute order not to use the soldiers against the rioters, have refused to use the soldiers in this way, or have decided that it was not safe to try to use the soldiers against the rioters.

9. After all the excitement had passed, I talked with a friend whose judgement I respect about what might have been done against the Communists during the riots. We decided that three or four armed Czechs dressed in US uniforms and driving a jeep painted with US Army markings could have driven up to any military post in the area and, with no fighting at all, have brought practically every soldier they met over to their side. [redacted] the jeep could have been driven directly up to the gate, where almost certainly the guards would have immediately gone over to the crew of the jeep as soon as they were identified as wearing US uniforms. The crew could then have driven on into the camp area and persuaded the rest of the soldiers to join them.

10. I did not hear anything about the Interior Guard (VS) doing anything during the rioting in Pilsen. I know that there was an Interior Guard unit at Pilsen, because sometime during July 1953 I went to the Skoda Works at Pilsen to pick up some bottles of oxygen for the [redacted] There were four or five members of the VS at the gate of the Skoda Works and there were a few more inside the courtyard. This was nothing new, however, as I also remember having seen members of the VS there early in the spring.

11. I do not recall just when I heard of the currency reform. I heard that orders had been issued canceling all passes and leaves while I was on guard duty Sunday evening, 31 May 1953. The only other special precaution taken in my unit that I remember was the arrangement to double the guard [redacted] during the hours of darkness. There were usually about 30 soldiers on guard duty around the field. For two or three days, the guard was increased to 60. The restriction on passes or leaves lasted for 14 days.

12. I do not remember when I heard that there were riots in Pilsen. The news of what was happening in Pilsen reached the soldiers from chauffeurs and others who had occasion during the day to drive officers to and from the city. Soon after I learned about the riots (I do not remember how soon) I heard that the riots had been put down by the factory militia and by members of the border guard. There was a fair amount of excitement among the soldiers at what was happening in the city, but apparently the soldiers did not give any thought to what they might do themselves. The soldiers doing guard duty were issued their arms and ammunition in the usual way, and there did not seem to be any out-of-the-ordinary control of access to the weapons rooms in the barracks.

13. The soldiers were not particularly disturbed by the money reform. Most of the soldiers did not have any money before, and they did not have any after. The soldiers did not think the money reform affected them much one way or another. The most money any one soldier changed in my unit was 8,000 crowns. Soldiers with little or no money of their own changed money for their better-off comrades.

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