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Assistant Director, Collection & Dissemination 7 December 1949

Assistant Director, Reports & Estimates

Collection Request No. 7855.1

The attached paper, entitled "Paramilitary Forces in the Eastern Zone of Germany," is in reply to your Collection Request No. 7855.1, dated 6 December 1949, to be delivered to Mr. Ross Ingersoll, IAD, Department of State, Attention: Mr. Henry Cox.

THEODORE BABBITT

Attachment

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Paramilitary Forces in the Eastern Zone of Germany

The Problem The Potsdam Agreement requires "the complete disarmament and demilitarization of Germany" and the abolition of "the S.S., S.A., S.D., and Gestapo, with all their organizations, staffs and institutions." The organization of a German police force was left to the Occupation authorities. The 6 November 1945 Allied Control Council Directive provided for the arming of the German police but specifically excluded automatic weapons or "any weapons other than pistols, revolvers, and truncheons," except in the cases of the rural police and the frontier police, who were to be equipped, if necessary, with carbines. Since 1945 there have been widespread rumors and repeated reports that the USSR not only was rearming the German police of the Soviet Zone with weapons specifically prohibited in ACC Directive 16 (such as, machine guns, light artillery, howitzers, bazookas, and tanks) but also intended, after establishing an East German Government, to use the rearmed Soviet Zone police as the cadre for an East German army.

Organization Reports on the establishment of paramilitary forces in the Soviet Zone have been fragmentary and often contradictory. The following, however, is believed to be a fairly accurate account of the growth and present status of these forces.

The Border Police (Grenzpolizei) was established in 1946 on a Land basis to guard Zonal boundaries and, by its very nature, was organized along military lines. Originally this force consisted of about 4,000 men; the number was doubled after the dissolution of the Allied Control Council in March 1948.

Following the imposition of the blockade of Berlin, the Alert Police (Bereitschaften) was organized, probably in August or September 1948, for the ostensible purpose of gradually taking over various security functions throughout the Soviet Zone.

In November 1948 the Border Police was removed from Laender jurisdiction and placed directly under the control of the Border and Alert Branch (Hauptabteilung GP/B) of the German Administration of the Interior. This represented the first stage in the development of a centrally directed paramilitary force.

In July 1949, following the reported adoption of a program to militarize the Alert Police, the Border Police were placed under separate administration and were relegated to a position of secondary importance.

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Also in July 1949, the Alert Police were organized into companies of approximately 250 men each (reports differ concerning the exact number in each company). The companies are housed in barracks throughout the Soviet Zone, with each of the five Laender having an average of ten Alert units.

Following the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in October 1949, the former Border and Alert Police Branch was dissolved and the Alert Police placed under a separate Department for Training, which, although nominally a part of the German Administration of the Interior, is under the direct authority of certain members of the Soviet Control Commission, and, to a lesser extent, of the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

Size and Equipment — As of 1 September 1949, the reported strength of Soviet Zone paramilitary units was 18,850, of which 8,100 were Border Police and 10,750 were Alert Police. Since then, recruiting is believed to have raised the total of both units appreciably, but to no more than 30,000. Plans have reportedly been made to militarize the Alert Police and to establish about 20 military training schools, of which a limited number are now in operation. The units were to be equipped and trained with material including automatic weapons, light artillery and, according to some unverified reports, light tanks.

To date no proof has been received verifying the issuance on a permanent basis of equipment which would violate the police agreements of the occupation powers. The weight of available evidence, however, would appear to confirm that weapon issuance has exceeded the non-automatic hand-weapons agreed upon. Training is under the direction of Soviet army officers, and is primarily military in character and in accord with the Soviet concept of military education. No pattern of tactical collaboration between German paramilitary and Soviet Army units can as yet be discerned. Personnel for the Alert Police are partially recruited from Soviet PW Camps, and the term of service is three years. The Alert Police at present is estimated to be without combat effectives and to consist chiefly of training cadres and a student body.

Role of Police — In assessing the role of the Alert Police and the degree to which it is a military organization, it must be noted that German police forces have been quasi-military under previous regimes. Police regiments, qualified to serve with the German armed forces, existed prior to 1945. Officers and men of the German police have, in general, held reserve rank in the German Army.

Under the Weimar Republic ex-servicemen were placed in the police forces of the Laender, an arrangement that enabled the Reich to create a military instrument for combatting Communist and rightist enemies of the Republic, and at the same time made possible the creation of a large cadre which eventually was available for the organization and expansion of a powerful German army. After 1933 the Nazis speededup this development. Much time was spent on familiarizing the police with the use of automatic weapons; heavy weapons and armored vehicles were soon added to the training program.

Although police organization in the Soviet Zone since 1945 has paralleled prewar developments in certain respects, it cannot yet be proved that the USSR has created a German force which has reached the degree of militarization attained by the prewar German police, or can serve as an army cadre. Its organizational structure and its control by the SED suggests that the Alert Police is designed to assume a more important role than that of normal police work. Further confirmation of this belief is found in the facts that the Alert Police is no longer under the control of the Chief of Police and that no reports on the training of the Alert Police mention any time spent on purely police duties.

Because the Alert Police, in organization and equipment, is far from being an army cadre, it is unlikely that the USSR has any immediate plans for using it as a basis for the creation of an East German army. Moreover, the USSR has not violated any important agreement on Germany without a facade of legality for its action— a facade that even Soviet capacity for rationalization would find difficult to erect in order to conceal the establishment of such an army. It is believed therefore that the Alert Police is being groomed as a paramilitary apparatus (similar to those in the Satellites) designed to insure the continuity of power of the totalitarian Communist regime in the Soviet Zone. Cloaked under the Ministry of the Interior as a police component for purposes of giving it a "legal" status, the Alert Police would serve as a flying squadron for political repression and as a continuing threat to discourage possible violent uprisings against Communist leadership. In this capacity the Alert Police would constitute a party army, rather than a national or official one, similar to the Nazi S.S., the Fascist Militia, and the Soviet MVD troops. As was the case with the S.S., the creators of the Alert Police would brush aside any objections to the military potentialities of the organization on the ground that it was a police force and, therefore, did not contravene the prohibitions against a German army. They would hope by this means to evade the Potsdam Agreement as the Nazi regime evaded the Treaty of Versailles.