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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Original Delivered  
to the President  
JCS  
21 AUGUST 1950*

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Increased Capabilities of Paramilitary Forces in Soviet Zone Germany

Reassessment of Soviet capabilities in Berlin and Eastern Germany, made in the light of the invasion of Korea and subsequent developments, reveals that those capabilities have substantially increased. As a result of important changes in the political and economic status of Eastern Germany within recent months, combined with a strengthening of the Soviet Zone Alert Police (Bereitschaften), East German forces are probably capable of undertaking a surprise movement against West Berlin.

Because such a development would involve grave risk of general war, which it is believed the USSR does not desire, the Soviet Union is not likely in 1950 or 1951 to employ East German forces in a move against either Berlin or West Germany.

The political consolidation of East Germany has been rapidly accomplished, and only two steps remain to make the Communist regime a unitary, "sovereign" state. These are: (1) the holding of elections (now scheduled for 15 October 1950) which will legalize the government; and (2) the subsequent signing of a peace treaty or mutual friendship pact between the USSR and the East German government. With the accomplishment of these actions the USSR will be able to claim that East Germany is an independent state with full responsibility for all its actions. The maintenance of Soviet troops on East German territory will be legalized by an East German "invitation" to remain so long as the menace of "Western aggressive imperialism" exists. With such assurances of support, East Germany will be able to adopt a more belligerent tone and to take, if directed by the USSR, an aggressive line of action against West Germany and the Western Powers. Any such action would, of course, be carried out in the name of the entire German people as a move to unify Germany and to liberate West Germans and West Berliners from foreign exploitation.

The Soviet Zone Alert Police, originally established as an internal security force and ultimately intended to be the cadre for an East German army, has been expanded over the past year to an approximate total of 52,000 men. There

NOTE: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.



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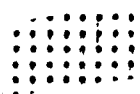
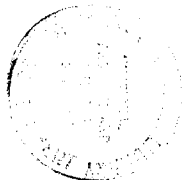
are 40 alert police units, including 3 armored and 7 artillery units, stationed throughout the Soviet Zone, and 13 schools in the various military arms and services for training commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Small arms are probably sufficient in number to equip every man as an infantryman; there are also enough machine guns of modern design to equip every unit with six to eight weapons. Some units have heavier equipment, such as field artillery; a few units are reportedly equipped with token assignments of tanks, including 17 Soviet T-34 tanks, self-propelled guns, tracked ammunition carriers and reconnaissance vehicles, and armored scout cars. Until recently, all Bereitschaften equipment, with the exception of tanks, was issued from captured German stocks. In March 1950, however, Soviet equipment, including tanks, was issued amid great secrecy. There were news reports during the first week of July that Bereitschaften tank units were maneuvering with Soviet forces in the area south of Templin, within 50 miles of Berlin.

To date, the Alert Police have not been believed capable of more than ordinary guard duties and internal security operations within the Soviet Zone. This judgment has been based to some degree, however, on the view that numerous defections among the units indicate low morale. Not only is it dangerous to judge Bereitschaften morale primarily on the basis of defectors' reports, but morale may be considerably raised by the successes of North Korean forces against the US. There is reason to believe that the Alert Police is now capable of undertaking a surprise movement against West Berlin

The three Bereitschaften tank units, two of which are within 50 miles of Berlin, are strategically located for quick concentration on the city.

Bereitschaften capabilities are considerably more limited in relation to West Germany. Unless actively supported by the Soviet Army and Air Force, a Bereitschaften attack on West Germany could readily be repelled by the Western Allied ground and air forces now in the areas. Moreover, at the present rate of training and expansion, it does not appear likely that the Bereitschaften will be militarily capable of effective and unassisted action against West Germany and the Western occupation forces before the end of 1951.

Whatever the military capabilities of the Bereitschaften, their open commitment against West Berlin or West Germany will be determined primarily within the framework of Soviet world policy and the Soviet estimate as to



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the reaction of the US and its allies to such a commitment. In view of repeated official statements that the US and its allies will firmly defend their positions in Germany, and the strong reaction of the US to the Korean crisis, the Kremlin probably believes that any action by "independent" East German forces would meet with Western military resistance. This grave risk of general war is probably not one the USSR is ready to take in 1950 or 1951. In any event, the course of events in East Germany, particularly the progress of the Bereitschaften, have caused increasing uneasiness in West Germany and have aroused fears that the Soviet Zone police forces are intended ultimately for aggressive use against West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Such fears cannot be lightly dismissed because West German willingness to contribute to the defense of Western Europe will be conditioned by US steps to meet the Communist threat, not only in Korea but in Germany as well.