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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

4 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Reorganization of Soviet Forces in East Germany\*

SUMMARY

The Soviets appear to be reducing their military forces in East Germany. In our view, the cut is likely to involve the withdrawal of at least one army headquarters and two divisions, and it may be larger. Khrushchev will probably announce any reduction in such a way as to turn it to political use against the West.

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1. Prior to 10 June 1964, the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG), was known to be made up of 20 divisions organized into six armies. Since that date we have acquired evidence that a reorganization of GSFG and a probable reduction of Soviet troop strength in East Germany have occurred.

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[Redacted]

\* Coordinated with OCI.

GROUP 1

Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification

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[Redacted]

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2. [Redacted] one of the six armies lost

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its former status in GSFG, and [Redacted] elements of that army are probably already back in the USSR.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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c. There has been a resubordination of divisions among armies of GSFG.\*

[Redacted]

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3. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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a. The East European press reported suspension of all railway express shipments to the USSR via Poland for an indefinite

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See attached diagram for graphic presentation of this evidence.

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25X1 [redacted] [redacted] period beginning 9 June; [redacted] authorities stated the reason to be overloading of the Brest-Litovsk transloading facilities.

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25X1 b. [redacted] have reported unusual eastward movements of military trains through Warsaw and Poznan during June.

25X1 c. [redacted] reported a troop train carrying troops from the 18th Guards Army area moving eastward near Cottbus, East Germany, on 17 June.

4. The eastward movement of Soviet troops during June is highly unusual; troop rotation normally occurs in the fall, and GSFG is now entering the period of increased field exercises and maneuvers. Considering the size of the sample of train movements obtainable by our observers and the reported overloading of transloading facilities, we believe that the exodus of men and equipment could have already involved a division or more. The sightings of eastward movement through Cottbus and Poznan, on two distinct rail lines out of East Germany, indicates withdrawal of elements from both the 18th and the 20th Guards Armies.

- 3 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

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5. We believe that these movements are more likely to involve divisions than support units. As noted in NIE 11-14-63, "Capabilities of the Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1963-1969," dated 8 January 1964, the support structure of GSFG is extremely austere, and the removal of nondivisional units alone would make it even more so. According to USAREUR estimates, removal of only the headquarters and service elements of an army would involve only about 3,500 men and relatively little equipment. A withdrawal of this size might escape observation, and would probably not account for the reported disruption of civil rail traffic. At the moment there is one division whose continued presence in East Germany cannot be confirmed. We conclude that the reduction of force in East Germany will include, as a minimum, two line divisions.

25X1

6.  It appears almost certain that the 18th Guards Army Headquarters is being withdrawn from East Germany. The 20th Guards Army, after the resubordination of divisions mentioned above, has only two divisions, 

25X1

25X1

 Thus these two armies are possible candidates for withdrawal from East Germany, and the reorganization of GSFG could involve the withdrawal of as many as three army headquarters and a total of five divisions.

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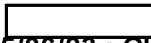
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7. Whatever the scale of reduction and reorganization of GSEFG proves to be, we believe that the reasons for it are primarily strategic and economic. For several years, the six Soviet armies and their 20 divisions have constituted a ground force more than adequate to cope with any NATO attack that the Soviets could reasonably have expected and to support the East German regime. At the same time, they remained insufficient to pose a credible threat of successful surprise attack against opposing NATO forces. Whatever the contribution East Germany makes to the maintenance of GSEFG, it is likely that the cost to the Soviets of keeping such forces in Germany significantly exceeds the cost of maintaining similar forces inside the USSR. We believe that any force totalling between 15-18 divisions organized in 3-5 armies would not be inconsistent with Soviet doctrines for defense, and would be sufficient for control of the East Germans. A reduction to some point within this range would represent a rationalization of GSEFG on the basis of a primarily defensive posture.

8. We conclude that a Soviet force reduction in East Germany is likely to fall within the range of (a) one army headquarters with a total of two divisions and (b) three army headquarters and five

- 5 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

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divisions. In terms of manpower, the reduction would be from about 20,000\* to 60,000 troops.

9. If we are correct in believing that a reduction on this scale is under way, Khrushchev is likely to announce this fact in a way which maximizes its impact upon the West. He would assuredly cite the move as a Soviet contribution to the process of "disarmament by mutual example" and press for a Western response.

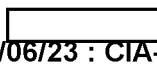
10. The most serious impact of such an announcement may be in the area of NATO military structure and posture. Many of NATO military requirements are now based on the threat of Soviet surprise attack, using forces in East Germany with minimum secret reinforcement. This concept is already viewed skeptically in some NATO military staffs. The USSR is aware that a reduction of GSFG by even as little as two divisions would upset NATO planning and strengthen the arguments of those who are reluctant to meet current NATO planning levels. More generally, an announcement of GSFG

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On 5 June, a Soviet embassy official [redacted] in the course of a conversation with [redacted] stated that Soviet troop strength in East Germany would shortly be reduced by about 20,000. While [redacted] statement supports the probable reduction of forces in East Germany, his quotation of the figure 20,000 may not reflect his opinion of the scale of reduction since it evolved during a conversation about "mutual example" in disarmament. He stated that the Soviets would withdraw twice the number that the US has recently withdrawn from Europe (about 10,000).

- 6 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



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[Redacted]

reductions, by diminishing the apparent Soviet threat, would help to encourage NATO governments to a more independent line in their overall attitude to the NATO alliance and the US.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

[Redacted]

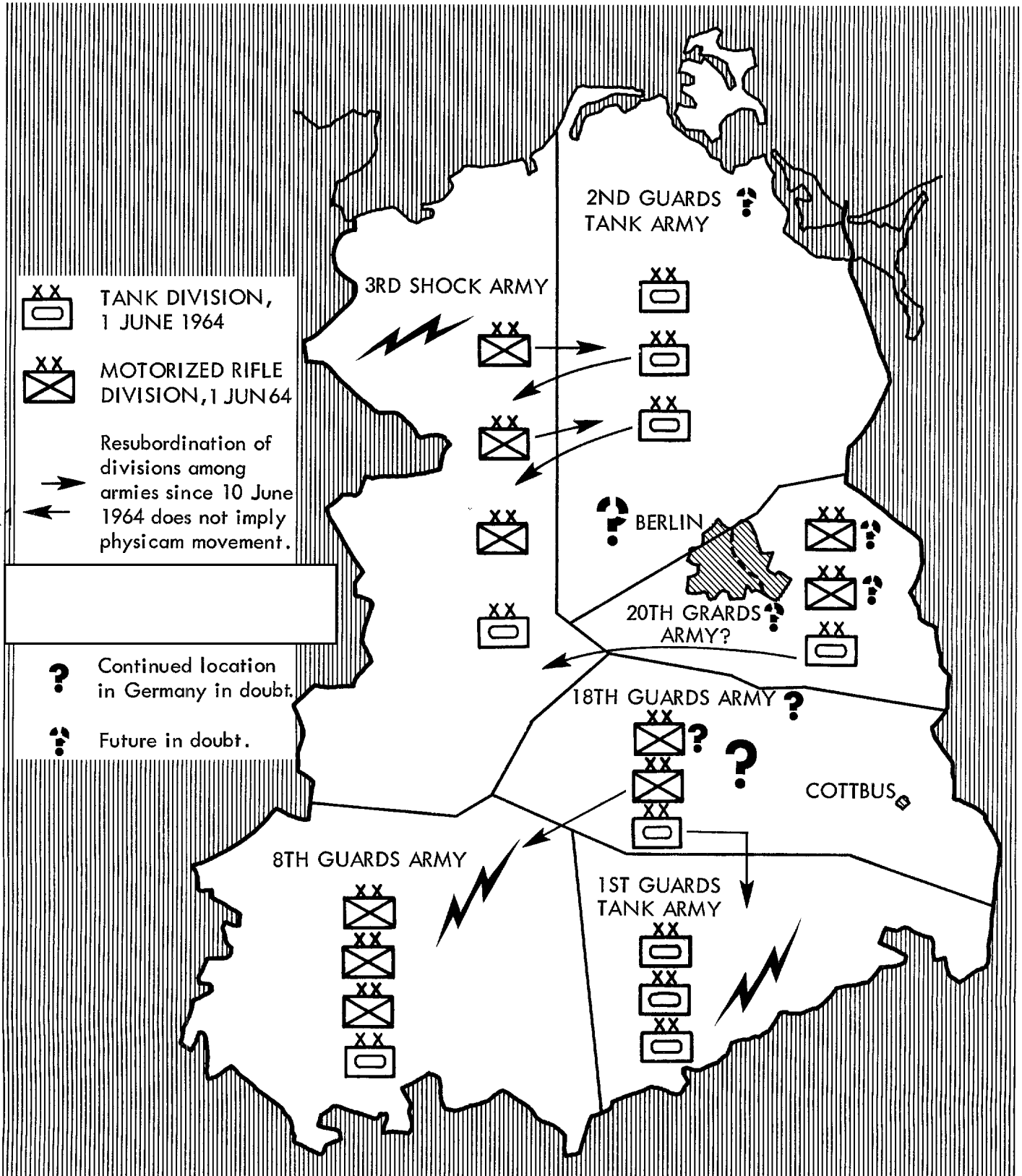
SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

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# GROUP OF SOVIET FORCES, GERMANY

(Schematic, armies in relative geographical positions)





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10 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR:

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SUBJECT : Attached Memorandum for the Director,  
"Reorganization of Soviet Forces  
in East Germany"

The attached Memorandum was prepared by us a week or ten days ago, and the Director has now asked that it be sent to you. I enclose also the covering memorandum with which we sent it to the Director.

The paper has had no distribution outside this Agency, except for this copy to you.

[Redacted]

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Acting Assistant Director  
National Estimates

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