

25X1

SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION**REPORT**

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

DATE DISTR. 30 Oct. 53

SUBJECT Army Morale

NO. OF PAGES 3

PLACE ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

25X1

DATE OF INFO

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

25X1

1. [redacted] the morale of officers and enlisted personnel was not particularly good, but that it was not worse than the morale of the civilian population. The morale of the armed forces was pretty much the same as that of the rest of the nation. The ordinary soldier was paid only enough to buy his cigarettes, and he did not have much free time to himself. The main complaint of the soldier, in fact, was that he had to spend so much time in the evenings and on holidays listening to political lectures. In this respect, however, the soldier was probably not much worse off than the average workman in a factory. The soldier always received enough to eat [redacted]

25X1

2. [redacted] the men in [redacted] specialty of communications probably had better morale than the rest of the army, as they worked their own schedules in their own restricted communications areas, and were less troubled by ordinary army routine than others. Men doing work in communications usually served one twelve-hour shift followed by a 24-hour free period. Since there was often little to do during the duty shift except check the communications channels every half hour, signals personnel thought that they were not so badly off.

3. There was favoritism in the granting of time off and leaves were difficult to get and of short duration. Nevertheless, leave and pass policy was not especially strict. At Christmas time half of the division was given one week's leave. The other half was given a week's leave at New Year's. Anyone who missed his leave for some reason or other could get a week's leave at Easter. Soldiers who had distinguished themselves in one way or another in political or military instruction might get a week off at Easter even though they had already had a week off at the end of the year.

---SECRET---

SECURITY INFORMATION

25X1

Page Denied

SECRET

25X1

-2-

4. On the week ends, up to 25% of the men in the unit were usually given a pass (dovolenska) allowing them to be away from the unit from six o'clock Friday evening until midnight Sunday evening. In addition, another 25% could be given a pass (propustka) to be absent from the unit from Saturday night at six o'clock until midnight Sunday. The other soldiers were required to be back in the barracks by midnight each night, but when they were off duty in the evening they were usually allowed to wander freely anywhere within three kilometers of the camp. There was no limitation on the distance a soldier might travel in the country if he had one of the two types of week-end passes. A soldier with the long week-end pass could buy half-fare railway tickets.
5. Soldiers preferred to get away from the camps on the week ends because Sundays in the camp were fairly dull. On Sunday morning between ten o'clock and noon the men would be obliged to gather in groups of about 50 where, in very informal fashion, there would be discussions, question-and-answer sessions, conducted by one or several officers. The men were encouraged to make known any grievances they had, and the officers were supposed to try to answer the questions of the men. Sunday afternoon there would be sports competitions, or mass physical exercise. Groups of soldiers would also be collected to go by truck to visit historical monuments in the vicinity. On such trips, one officer would always go along to give explanations of what was being visited. 25X1
6. The men who did not have passes were not free to leave the camp area on Sunday until after two o'clock in the afternoon. [redacted] sometimes a new recruit might ask for permission to go to church in the village on these Sundays. [redacted] soldiers on pass could and did go to church when they wished. Many of the men [redacted] were Roman Catholics from Slovakia who resented this limitation on their freedom, but it was apparently taken for granted that attendance at church was out of the question while under direct military supervision. 25X1
7. Behavior critical of or hostile to the government was out of the question, as the army authorities on occasion demonstrated by allowing selected soldiers from each company to attend courts martial of soldiers caught attempting to escape to the West. [redacted] in February, 1953 an order of the day signed by the divisional commander announced the trial for treason of four soldiers who had been caught while attempting to cross the frontier in July of the previous year. Six soldiers, the most active Communists, in each company were selected to attend the trial. One of the defectors received the death sentence, and the others were given very heavy prison sentences. [redacted] The Communists who attended the trial described it at one of the political indoctrination meetings later. [redacted] that practically all of the soldiers felt sorry for the ones who had been caught, but that naturally there wasn't much discussion of the subject. 25X1 25X1
8. [redacted] everybody [redacted] but the ZVP's (deputy commanders for political affairs -- zastupce velitele pro veci politicke) would go over to the West in the event of war. There was one such ZVP, usually a lieutenant, assigned to each company. [redacted] it would be more accurate to say that a majority of the soldiers and officers would take such action. [redacted] practically all of the soldiers and officers who were not members of the Communist Party, which 25X1 25X1

SECRET

25X1

Page Denied

SECRET



25X1

meant three quarters of the total, would desert, and many of the CP members would also probably desert.

- 9. [redacted] only about 15% of the officers were hold-overs from the old pre-Communist regular army, but that this did not mean that the lower and middle ranks of the officer corps were any more dependable for the Communists than were the enlisted men. [redacted] in these ranks the proportion of CP members was about the same as for enlisted personnel, that is, 25%. [redacted] some officers who were CP members would also desert or bring their units to the West in the event of a war. [redacted] some high officers might also want to do the same thing. This [redacted] deduced from [redacted] the mistrust the Communists have shown for General SVOBODA in relieving him of his important military responsibilities and putting him in charge of such an unimportant function as direction of physical culture activities. 25X1
- 10. As regards the behavior of the military during an internal uprising, [redacted] the same proportions of military personnel would support the uprising as would desert to the West in a war, but [redacted] the attitude of the soldiers would be determined in large part by circumstances of the moment--whether the uprising was a large-scale affair or only appeared to be an outbreak of isolated strikes and street demonstrations with little chance of successfully upsetting established authority. There was no gulf between the soldier and the civilian. Any open movement strong enough to involve any very large numbers of civilians would automatically be able to count on a proportionate degree of support from members of the army. The government tried to win the loyalty of the soldiers, but it had not done anything to make the army into a privileged caste which could feel that its interests were more those of the government than of the mass of the common people. 25X1
- 11. [redacted] little of interest [redacted] on the effects of monetary reform on army morale or on the background of the overt defiance of the regime by workers in Pilsen and elsewhere. [redacted] 25X1



SECRET

25X1

Page Denied