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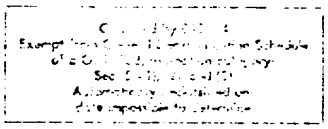

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WARSAW PACT CONCEPTS AND CAPABILITIES FOR GOING TO WAR IN EUROPE: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO WARNING OF WAR

THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

Abstaining:

The Special Assistant to the Secretary for National Security, Department of the Treasury

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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Likelihood of a NATO–Warsaw Pact War

1. Under present circumstances, it is highly unlikely that the Warsaw Pact nations, or the Soviets alone, would deliberately decide to attack member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The weight of evidence indicates that the Soviets view the risks involved in a war with NATO as extremely high. The Soviets regard the possibility that such a war could become nuclear with unpredictable consequences, perhaps including escalation to massive nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union, as a major threat to the existence of the USSR. The Soviets are known to take a conservative view of NATO capabilities and understand that a stiff NATO defense might prevent a quick Pact victory, allowing time to bring into play the greater manpower and industrial reserves of the West. Concern that its East European allies might not fight loyally and effectively probably further constrains Moscow's planning for aggressive war. Moreover, the Soviets appear to rate more highly than we do the danger of China's taking advantage of a conflict in Europe to strike the USSR.

2. For these reasons, we believe that war in Europe would become likely only as a result of a profound change in the present political, military, or economic situation and would be preceded by a period of extreme tension in a crisis of unprecedented severity.

3. If, over a period of many months or several years, relations between the Western and Warsaw Pact nations deteriorated badly, the political, economic, and military posture of both alliances could be expected to change. If this were to occur, the judgments in this Estimate—drawn against the present political, economic, and military environment—might no longer be valid.

Military Objectives in a War With NATO

4. If the Soviets decided to go to war with NATO, for whatever reason, it is highly likely that their principal military objective would be the rapid defeat of all NATO forces in Central Europe. On the basis of our analysis of Warsaw Pact doctrine and the design of Pact forces, the Soviet view probably holds that only through a broad, rapid offensive campaign could the USSR hope to interrupt or prevent NATO from developing equal or, possibly in the longer run, greater combat potential in Europe. Soviet doctrine and training focus heavily on operations designed to achieve such a rapid, total victory over NATO Forces.

5. We judge it to be extremely unlikely that the Soviets might deliberately attack with limited force to achieve limited objectives, either as a first step in going to war with NATO or to obtain the upper hand in a crisis while attempting to avoid war. As a first step in a larger campaign, the limited-objective attack would have little or no military value in destroying or interrupting NATO force development. It would, in fact, completely sacrifice strategic surprise and ensure that NATO mobilization would not lag far behind that of the Pact.

6. As a device to secure an important political objective (for example, control of West Berlin or Hamburg) a limited-objective attack probably would have serious flaws in the Soviet view. First, Soviet leaders could not be confident that a limited-objective attack could succeed quickly enough to avoid an undesired broadening of the conflict. Secondly, the grave consequences of NATO response with nuclear weapons, however slight the chances, would seem to outweigh by far any potential gains. Even in the absence of war, such an action would signal the end of the era of "peaceful coexistence" and would inevitably throw NATO into serious preparations for war in Europe. Given their own conservative view of NATO's rapid mobilization capabilities in the short run and the prospect of activating NATO's much greater industrial, manpower, and economic potential in the longer run, the Soviets could perceive an increasingly adverse balance of forces in Europe as NATO rose to the task of confronting what would be considered an extremely serious Soviet threat. Accordingly, we judge there is virtually no chance that the Soviets would initiate an attack to obtain limited objectives in the present military, political, and economic situation.

7. The Soviets evidently plan for military operations against NATO in three separate theaters: in the northwestern USSR and Scandinavia, in central and western Europe, and in southern Europe. Although a crisis leading to war could develop as easily on one of NATO's flanks as in the center, the Soviets would expect central Europe to be the decisive theater of a large-scale NATO–Warsaw Pact conflict.

what about the fourth critical NATO area: the Persian Gulf? (surprise is more easily attained; an involvement of nuclear E. S. unlikely; confrontation with NATO's main strength; close USSR but far from NATO; easily overrunning; contains vital supply of petrol for NATO)

Doctrine and Readiness

8. Soviet doctrine emphasizes a need for heavy superiority in the main battle areas, with strong reserves to ensure the momentum of the attack. Doctrine also stresses achieving surprise and, in general, the Soviets will strive to achieve both surprise and superiority. If forced to choose between them, the Soviets are likely to opt for force superiority: superiority in forces is real and affords advantages that are certain; surprise is a less tangible advantage and always runs some risk of compromise. In any event, Soviet strategy for war in Europe centers on seizing and holding the strategic initiative through prompt offensive action by all forces.

9. Another tenet of Soviet doctrine is joint action by all components of the military forces, each of which is considered to have a role—if only a contingent one—in any major operation. Related to this is the longstanding Soviet insistence on the importance of the economy, morale, and political stability of the nation in time of war. Because of these factors—especially in view of the risk of nuclear war—preparations throughout the Pact countries and armed forces can be expected as a prelude to any military venture.

10. The Soviets apparently believe that a period of increased tension will precede any major use of military forces. The Soviets' heavy reliance on the warning that they believe such a period would provide is reflected in the peacetime readiness status of Pact forces, many of which require augmentation through mobilization before commitment to combat. They also evidently recognize the chance that an enemy might drastically shorten this period of tension. Each Pact nation has an alert and callup system which provides both for the mobilization of the national administration and economy and for the readiness, alerting, and mobilization of the armed forces. Under this system, which is standardized throughout the Pact, there are two levels of readiness above the normal, peacetime condition: increased readiness and full readiness.

How the Pact Would Go to War

11. We have the ability to monitor, on a timely basis, the pattern of Soviet and East European civilian and military activity in peacetime. For this reason we are confident that we could sense Pact preparations for war because significant early changes would almost certainly be initiated in a wide range of civilian and military activities.

12. The earliest indicators that the Soviet Union was taking steps which would enable it to initiate war in Europe would be potentially available as the Soviets and their Pact allies were making the decision to undertake them. Given the present structure of Soviet political and military leadership, the decision to prepare for or initiate war with NATO would necessarily be made by the full Politburo and almost certainly with the recommendation of the Defense Council. Unless the reason for going to war were obvious to the principal Politburo members, making the decision would be a contentious and probably protracted process. Security surrounding such deliberations would be extraordinary, but the process would almost certainly involve scores of high-level political and military officers. We cannot judge to what extent the counsel of East European leaders would be sought in the initial decisionmaking process, but sooner or later the commitment of principal East European political and military leaders would almost

certainly be required because their support would be critical in the execution of a war with NATO.

13. Unusual activities on the part of the Pact leadership would raise US and NATO awareness of possible imminent Pact activity of some kind and increase the likelihood that indications of actual preparations would be interpreted quickly. Strong signals could be reported to one of the NATO intelligence services directly from one of the Pact principals or staff members involved in the decision process. Nonetheless, such reporting probably would be difficult to evaluate if there were no corroborating evidence and would not, in itself, support a firm judgment that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future.

14. A major concern of the Soviet leadership would be to guarantee the support and stability of the population and public institutions in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Representations to the regional leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) would probably be made, and a large-scale propaganda program to motivate the Soviet populace to support the decision to go to war would be planned or initiated. The more critical problem, in the Soviet view, would be the elicitation of support and maintenance of firm political control of the populace and public institutions of the principal East European allies. Eliciting and enforcing the support of the Soviet and East European population for a major attack on NATO could not be accomplished in a low-key manner. There would likely be clear indications of steps by the Pact leadership to ensure the political stability of the Warsaw Pact nations.

15. In preparing to initiate hostilities with NATO, the Soviets could not be certain whether the prospective war would be short or long, nuclear or nonnuclear, and as a matter of prudence would have to consider full civil and economic preparations from the start. The process of putting industrial, agricultural, and civil defense systems on a full war footing, whether begun before or after a war started, would be both disruptive and visible and would take weeks or months to work out, even with wholly adequate planning.

16. Soviet doctrine anticipates that a critical step in preparing the populace and national economy for war is the declaration of a state of increased readiness. The declaration, even if not published, would be widely disseminated throughout the Soviet Union and would, in itself, be a firm indication that the Soviets were preparing for the contingency of war. Similarly, declaration of a state of full readiness, even if not published, would be widely disseminated and would, in itself, clearly signal the serious Soviet (or Pact) intent to prepare for war. The declaration and associated measures would be impossible to mask.

17. The way in which the Pact would modify its military posture during a crisis would depend largely on the speed, urgency, and intensity with which the crisis developed:

— In a slowly developing crisis, the Pact countries might move to a state of increased readiness, placing units on alert. In such a condition, a wide variety of preparatory measures might be undertaken, but these would fall far short of placing the Pact on a full war footing. The process need not be continuous; rather, there probably would be periods of holding at interim levels.

— Once the Soviets had determined that the likelihood of war was high, the Pact's final preparations would be initiated by a decision to go to full readiness, ordering complete mobilization and moving to a full war footing.

18. Declaration of a state of increased readiness would be a key step in beginning the process of preparing military forces for the contingency of war. Indicators of preparatory measures necessary to achieve this level of readiness include:

— For selected or most military units, increased combat readiness.

— Readying of mobilization machinery and selected callup.

— Unusual high-level command activities or movements.

— Activation of high-level military command posts and operational commands.

— Alerting of railroad troops.

— Increased activity in military posts, railroad yards, motor transport units, and depots.

— Evidence of increased weather reconnaissance and forecasting.

— Activation of additional military organizations.

— Increased reconnaissance activity of all types.

— Abnormal deployments of submarines, surface ships, or merchant ships.

19. As the Pact moved from a posture of increased to full readiness, a much more visible set of activities would occur, including:

— Declaration, either publicly or secretly, of a state of full combat readiness.

— Initiation of large-scale or general mobilization.

— Establishment of active wartime command posts at *front*, theater, and national levels.

— Extensive and abnormal efforts to restrict, deceive, or interfere with US and Allied intelligence collection.

— Extraordinary levels of intelligence collection against the United States and the Allies.

— Activation of, or preparations to activate, sabotage and/or special warfare/unconventional warfare teams outside the Warsaw Pact countries.

— Deployment of some aircraft to alternate airfields.

— Extraordinary levels of air defense preparedness of all types, both active and passive.

— Rapid and widespread deployment or dispersal of large numbers of submarines, naval ships, and merchant ships.

— Movement of tactical nuclear weapons to forward storage facilities and operational forces.

— Deployments of ground combat units and support forces in Eastern Europe from garrisons to field positions and the appearance of troop concentrations opposite NATO frontiers.

— Assembly of transport for the movement of Soviet military units (particularly those in the western border districts), their movement to positions near the borders, or movement of such units into Eastern Europe.

— Unusual patterns of radar activity indicative of deployments or preparations to deploy tactical units on a wide scale.

— Marked preparation and expansion of military medical facilities.

— Employment of or preparations to employ electronic countermeasures (ECM) against US and NATO forces.

Warning of War

20. For the purposes of this Estimate we *define warning as an intelligence judgment clearly conveyed to national decisionmakers that the Warsaw Pact is taking steps to enable it to go to war in the near future and that the course of events has increased the likelihood of war in Europe.* This degree of warning, although it does not incorporate all of the elements of ideal warning, could be provided to national decisionmakers relatively rapidly and would provide an adequate basis for decisions concerning appropriate counterpreparations and other courses of action. We are unlikely to be able to be more definitive than this in our initial warning and foretell when the enemy will attack, where he will attack, or whether he will attack at all. The perceived pattern of activity on which the initial warning would be

Elements of Ideal Warning

Ideally, intelligence warning of imminent hostilities would have all of the following characteristics:

— Describe preparations that a potential enemy was taking and state that these steps, if continued, would enable it to go to war after a specific time in the near future (hours, days, weeks, months).

— Relate these preparations to the course of crisis-related events and conclude that the likelihood of war in the near future had increased.

— Give specific details concerning the potential enemy's plan for the time, place, manner, and strength of the initial attack.

— Convey the information convincingly to national decision-makers in a clear, timely, and well-documented form.

based is likely to be consistent with Soviet intentions, other than a planned attack on NATO, such as preparations to defend, take a stiffer stand, or achieve a better bargaining position in the crisis; or to take action in a different theater. (See inset above.)

21. The Warsaw Pact nations, and particularly the Soviets, have the capability and the experience to employ many techniques of security, concealment, and deception that could affect our ability to detect or correctly interpret some indicators of their preparations for war. We would expect the Pact to employ such measures as restricting planning to a minimum number of people, total media control, rigid counterintelligence and population control, denial of travel in areas of military activity, camouflage, communications security, and conduct of troop movements and other observable preparations at night. They would attempt to mislead NATO by deception, propaganda, and misinformation; by mobilizing some forces covertly, delaying final deployments, and using feints to divert attention from main attack routes; and probably by masking their operations under cover of an exercise. However, we judge that Pact security, concealment, and deception would not significantly degrade our ability to interpret quickly the sum of identified activities as preparations for war.

22. Once the Pact had made a decision that war is inevitable, it would sanction at least selective interference with our intelligence collection. While such interference would degrade Western intelligence, it would, in itself, constitute a strong warning indicator.

23. We are, in any case, confident of the ability of Western intelligence to detect and interpret correctly a great number of indicators which would be given were the Pact to prepare for a large-scale war with NATO. In general this confidence is based on our continuing ability, through technical means, to provide timely intelligence on a broad array of Pact military, political, and economic targets; extensive access to Pact countries in peacetime by attaches, military liaison missions, and travelers; our ability to monitor Soviet naval movements; and our ability during a crisis to augment intelligence capabilities and improve handling time. We are confident that we could inform decisionmakers that the Soviet Union—with or without its Pact allies—was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future within one day of the beginning of activity associated with the move to full readiness.

Pact Options for Initiating War in Europe—Warning Implications

24. As Soviet leaders were considering the preparation of Warsaw Pact forces for war with NATO, they would be faced with deciding the location, timing, and size of the initial attack. A major dilemma facing the Soviet leaders would be the degree to which they would care to trade off Pact preparedness and full combat potential called for in their doctrine for a [illegible] of strategic [illegible] which might be granted by a smaller, but more quickly generated attack designed to preempt the establishment of an organized defense by NATO. In the evaluation of the risks, benefits, and warning implications of alternative Soviet and Warsaw Pact options for the initial attack, we have defined four Warsaw Pact options. The first, the standing-start attack, is not reflected in Pact doctrine but is included to present a more complete range of Pact capabilities. The other three of these options are selected on the basis of intelligence evidence on Pact concepts for conducting an offensive in Central Europe.

25. In describing certain of the options, we refer to Warsaw Pact wartime organizations called *fronts*. (See inset on opposite page.) In discussing the number of *fronts* for war in Europe, we refer only to those that would be available in Central Europe. Warsaw Pact contingency plans for war in Europe envision the establishment of a first echelon of three *fronts* in the Central Region, with additional *fronts* moved forward from the western USSR to form a second echelon. (See foldout map, appended.) If the USSR should decide on war in Europe it probably also would begin to activate the wartime structure of *fronts* throughout the USSR. The following analysis is confined to military factors and does not attempt to anticipate the political considerations that would likely influence a Soviet decision on whether or when to attack NATO.

A *Front* in the Warsaw Pact

In the Pact concept, a *front* would be a combined-arms force usually consisting of three to five field armies—each numbering three to five tank or motorized rifle divisions; an air army of some 600 tactical aircraft; and those naval elements necessary to accomplish the mission of the *front*. The ground forces of the *front* also include numerous separate combat and combat-support elements such as tank, artillery, missile, and air defense units. A large service-support element numbering about 100,000 men would provide the *front* with transport, maintenance, engineering, supply, and medical support, as well as resupply of items ranging from ammunition to fuel and missiles. The *front* itself would total about 400,000 men after full mobilization. Although not directly comparable to any Western organization, the *front* would be similar to the NATO army group in size, level of command, and function.

Option 1—The Standing-Start Attack

26. There is no evidence that the Soviets contemplate an unannounced, standing-start attack on NATO from a peacetime force posture. The Soviets, however, do have the capability to attack NATO units using ground and air combat forces garrisoned near the Inter-German border. As many as 10 to 15 Soviet divisions and perhaps several East German divisions could reach initial combat points and lead or support such an attack in the Central Region in somewhat less than 24 hours. By dint of surprise and local force superiority, Soviet planners would expect—and might get—some early ground and air victories.

27. These initial successes would likely be the only advantage which would accrue to such an attack, however. The considerations which weigh against initiating a war from a standing start are persuasive, and we judge that there is virtually no chance that the Soviets would initiate a war against NATO with an attack from a standing start. The Soviets would have to expect that the standing-start attack would cause NATO to initiate massive and rapid mobilization, almost simultaneously with the Pact, and the local force superiority which would accrue in such an attack probably could not be maintained if NATO forces reacted effectively. The Soviets, considering their conservative view of NATO's rapid mobilization capabilities, might well conclude that the attacking force could face an *adverse* situation before reinforcements could be committed. The attack would initially have to rely on incomplete lines of communication. The Soviets would

not have time to establish a *front*-level command and control structure or to prepare the Soviet or East European populace or national economies for war—both basic requirements posed in Soviet military literature. Finally, the standing-start attack would leave other Pact strategic and general purpose forces—as well as the national economy—unprepared for expanded hostilities. In particular, the Soviets would be concerned about the threat of NATO escalation to nuclear war.

28. A standing-start attack from a peacetime posture would be designed to provide as little warning as possible, and the Soviets would probably forgo political preparations and the move to increased readiness to avoid alerting NATO. Nonetheless, the Soviets would have to prepare the initial assault force by calling most of the groups of Soviet forces in Europe to a state of full combat readiness. In addition, they would not risk initiating a war without first bringing their strategic nuclear forces to a status of full combat readiness. The increase in activity associated with the movement to full combat readiness would be massive, and might be the first indicator leading to warning. The forward movement of an attack force of 10 to 15 divisions would provide many additional indicators to Western intelligence, which routinely monitors military activity in East Germany.

29. Accordingly, in the extremely unlikely case of an unprovoked attack on NATO [illegible] peacetime posture, we judge that United Allied intelligence could sense and would report the massive movement and unusual activity within hours of the beginning of preparation. Such activity would provide sufficient intelligence for Allied commanders and decisionmakers to take precautionary steps. Given the extremely unlikely nature of such an event, however, interpretation of this activity would be ambiguous, and a final judgment that an attack was imminent might not be reached before hostilities occurred.

Option II—Attack With Two *Fronts*

30. Extensive analysis of Pact doctrine leads us to conclude that the smallest force the Pact would use to start theater offensive operations would consist of two *fronts*. This force would be composed essentially of all Soviet ground and tactical air force units in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia together with most of the East German and Czechoslovak units which are active in peacetime—a total of some 40 ground divisions, plus support and tactical air units.

31. Extensive study of evidence on Pact concepts for war with NATO, along with analysis of the Pact's theoretical capability to organize, deploy, and prepare forces for war in Europe indicates that in the most urgent circumstances, the Pact would need about four days to prepare a two-*front* force. While initiation of an attack with slightly less than four full days of preparation is possible, the complexity and

magnitude of the operation and the risks attending insufficient preparation would be likely to cause the Soviets to take more than four days to prepare this two-*front* force. These preparations would be made using a compressed buildup procedure which would exacerbate the confusion and disruptions inherent in a transition to a war footing and, at least initially, would yield combat units—and especially combat support units—with less than full capabilities to undertake or sustain combat operations. Preparations which, in a less demanding operation, would be undertaken in a phased or sequential pattern would have to occur simultaneously.

32. By waiting to establish a two-*front* attacking force, the Pact would diminish many of the critical deficiencies of the standing-start attack. It would gain some mobilization advantage, set up at least minimal logistic systems for reinforcement and resupply of attacking forces, undertake minimal political and economic preparations, and hedge against rapid NATO escalation to a massive nuclear exchange by bringing Pact land-based strategic forces to full readiness and deploying them to support the initial offensive. Naval capabilities would be substantially improved, and the minimal essentials of the command and control system could be functioning.

33. Still, initiating hostilities after only these minimum preparations would [illegible] serious risks for the Pact and would be extremely unlikely except in the most urgent circumstances. The attacking force itself would lack some *front*-level elements and would have to cover the broad sector from the Baltic to Austria. Command and control capabilities, particularly at the theater level, would remain incomplete. Pact mobilization would not have proceeded far enough to ensure immediate followup forces and supplies for the attack in Central Europe and effective participation in the war by major forces in other areas.

34. We believe that it is extremely unlikely that the Pact would initiate war from this two-*front* posture in other than an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance. On this point there are two views. One holds that the only circumstance which would cause the Pact to initiate theaterwide offensive operations against NATO from this posture with only four days of preparation would be the Soviet perception of the threat of imminent NATO attack. Although NATO mobilization would be viewed as a serious threat and would almost certainly cause the Pact to make counterpreparations, the Soviets would be particularly averse to initiating an attack with a force not fully prepared against NATO forces which enjoyed some advantages of prior preparation or mobilization—*unless* threat of imminent NATO attack was clear.

35. The other view holds that the Soviets might choose to attack with the two-*front* force in a variety of urgent contingencies. For

example, during a serious East-West political dispute, the NATO countries (particularly the United States and West Germany) might undertake a degree of mobilization and other military preparations to improve their defensive postures and to demonstrate will in support of the diplomatic bargaining. The Soviets, of course, might see this as weakening their own bargaining position, in particular by threatening to upset the political advantage afforded them by superiority in forces-in-being in Central Europe. In such a contingency, and if they perceived truly vital interests at risk, the Soviets might set in motion the rapid buildup and early attack option. Their efforts would be intended to preempt NATO defensive and diplomatic preparations, not an immediate threat of NATO attack.

36. Preparation of a two-*front* attack from the normal Pact peacetime posture would almost certainly require declaration of full readiness. Even if the alert were accomplished covertly, a host of indicators that a full readiness posture was being taken would be available and would almost certainly be correctly interpreted and conveyed to decisionmakers within one day. Accordingly, US and NATO decisionmakers would almost certainly have three days or more of warning in the case of a rapid Pact attack with two *fronts*.

Option III—Attack With Three *Fronts*

37. The third and fourth options are ones in which Soviet planners, under a less urgent need to defend or attack, would elect to bring the Pact to full readiness via a more efficient, phased buildup procedure and to attack when the force available for initial operations totaled three *fronts* (Option III) or five *fronts* (Option IV). We estimate that, in these circumstances, the Pact would require, at a minimum, about eight days to achieve a three-*front* force.

38. The Pact preference for a larger-than-two-*front* attack is well supported by evidence. The phased buildup to three *fronts*—a total of some 50 to 60 divisions plus support and tactical air units—would offer a reasonable expectation of an orderly and efficient transition to an attack posture affording force superiority, sustainability, and precautions against the risks of a wider war. In addition, this option would provide opportunity for significantly more naval forces to deploy. Accordingly, we judge that except in extraordinarily urgent circumstances (as described above) the Pact would prefer to prepare at least a three-*front* force before initiating hostilities. Although these preparations could proceed in a phased, organized manner, they would be massive and would almost certainly be initiated by an alert to full readiness. US and NATO decisionmakers would almost certainly have seven days or more of warning in the event of a Pact attack with three *fronts*.

Option IV—Attack With Five *Fronts*

39. The Pact might elect to build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe prior to initiating hostilities against NATO, depending on its assessment of the political and military situation at the time. A five-*front* posture—about 90 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units and with additional naval units at sea—would fulfill Soviet conservative doctrinal preferences to the extent possible in practical terms and would take about two weeks to achieve.

40. The pattern of activity involved in developing a full five-*front* attack force in Europe would be similar to that of the three-*front* force, although the pace might be reduced somewhat. We judge that about two weeks would be required to prepare for combat and move from the USSR the two additional *fronts*. Western intelligence would almost certainly be able to sense the change in overall posture even if the first alert to increased readiness were not directly and immediately detected. Therefore, we judge that in the case of a five-*front* attack option, intelligence could provide warning that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future, possibly within hours, but certainly within a day or two of the initial order to go to increased readiness. Accordingly, in the case of a full five-*front* attack, US and NATO decisionmakers would have 12 days or so of warning time.

Summary Judgments and Relative Likelihood

41. The following judgments are unanimous within the US Intelligence Community.

— The Pact would begin to organize at least five *fronts* for use in Central Europe from the time of the decision to go to full readiness.

— There is virtually no chance that the Soviets would attack from a standing start.

— The smallest force the Pact would use to begin a theater offensive would consist of two *fronts*, requiring about four days of preparation; except in an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance, it is extremely unlikely the Pact would initiate war from this posture.

— The Pact would prefer, before attacking, to prepare at least a three-*front* force, which would require, at a minimum, about eight days of preparation.

— Circumstances permitting, the Pact would build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe before initiating hostilities against NATO.

42. For each of the four options previously discussed, we have estimated approximate minimum preparation times which would be required before the Pact could launch a coherent attack with a force of a given size. Of course, any Soviet decision on when to attack would be influenced by a set of sometimes contradictory military factors, including the USSR's own level of preparations and its perception of the status of NATO preparations and deployments, the desire to achieve surprise, and the urge to develop fully, in advance, as large a force as possible. We are agreed that the ultimate decision to attack almost certainly would not rest on purely military factors, but rather on a combination of those and political imperatives, the state of diplomatic negotiations, or other considerations.

43. Even though the various analysts within the Community have used the same basic data, different conclusions have been reached concerning the most likely timing of a Pact attack. This is due to differing interpretations of data and judgments about the weighting of the various military and political factors and considerations. One view interprets the data and draws conclusions as follows:

— According to what we know of Pact training, the Pact normally practices two to three *fronts*—which are the forces that the Pact would have available in the forward area in the four-to-eight-day period.

— The Pact has the most favorable force ratio in this same period after beginning preparations for war.

— These factors emphasize the importance of surprise.

— Therefore, the four-to-eight-day period is the most likely time for the Pact to attack.

44. All others believe that it is more likely the Pact would take at least eight days of preparation (assembling three to five *fronts*) before initiating hostilities. In their view:

— The Pact preference for an attack involving more than two *fronts* is well supported by the evidence and by analysis.

— There is no agreed system of calculating force ratios, and several methods other than that used to form the preceding view show that greater force ratios occur after eight days of preparation. In any case, force ratios would be only one of the considerations in timing the attack.

— Soviet doctrine calls for force superiority, availability of resupply and reinforcements, full preparation for joint action by all components of the military forces, stability of the rear, and fully effective command and control, and each of these is enhanced with eight days or more of preparation.

— Although the Pact would attempt to achieve both surprise and force superiority, if forced to choose between them the Pact would likely opt for force superiority.

— Soviet military planning is conservative, and the risks the Soviets would associate with potentially inadequate preparation would be high.

Gradual Buildup

45. As a modification to any of the options previously discussed, the Soviets and possibly their Pact allies could make gradual preparations for war over a longer period. Steps which increase the combat readiness of any elements of their military forces could be taken selectively over an interval of weeks or months. For example, such steps as the mobilization of rear service support elements in the forward area or the establishment of *front* and army command and control networks, which would normally be accomplished during a period of full readiness, could be accomplished incrementally during a period of no alert. Such steps, however, would probably be noted by Western intelligence within days after their implementation and would be interpreted as modifying the Pact peacetime military posture. Such actions might result in reactions of a similar nature by NATO members and would certainly increase Western intelligence efforts. Though these Pact steps might somewhat reduce the time necessary to achieve the full combat readiness of the forces discussed in Options II, III, and IV, they would be taken at the expense of likely greater NATO preparedness and vigilance.

46. Other measures which the USSR alone or in concert with its Pact allies might undertake to carry out gradually could include more time-consuming, but relatively unprovocative, civil and military preparedness steps. These measures would not involve any steps normally associated with the alert to full readiness and would improve the efficiency of the nation to support a war and the sustainability of the forces but not necessarily the initial combat capability of the engaging forces. They would not greatly improve the Soviet and Pact capability to move quickly to a posture of full readiness because the large-scale and most time-sensitive actions that are required in each of the previous options, and which would still be very visible, would remain to be done.

47. Gradual Pact preparations for hostilities, either as a deliberate policy in preparation for some "surprise" action including attack or in a period of political crisis, would present more analytic problems for Western intelligence than would the sudden and widespread implementation of war preparations. Although a gradual implementation would provide us more opportunities to detect some of the preparations and

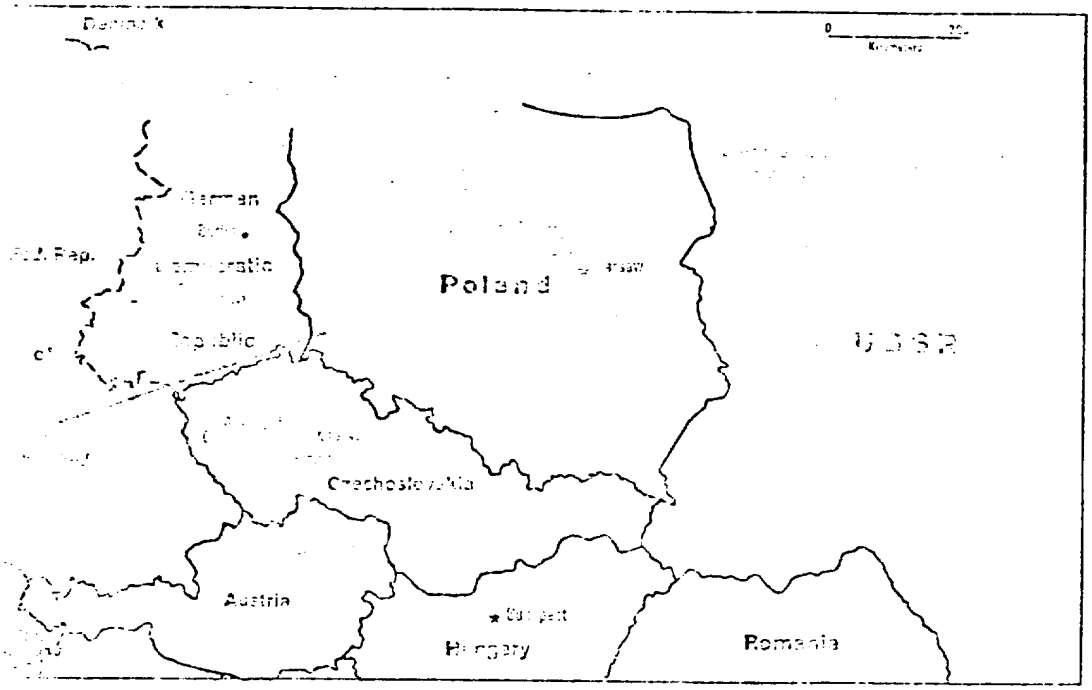
more time to validate our information, the early preparations would probably be ambiguous and might be difficult to distinguish from "routine" force improvements or exercises.

48. Because of the high risks and costs involved, the Pact would defer general mobilization, major deployments of combat forces, and other highly visible and provocative measures until the final move to full readiness. We therefore believe that even after some months of preparation, when a final or contingent decision to attack was made, there would still be a discernible difference in the nature, scope, and pace of preparedness measures. This would alert us and enable us to provide warning that the Pact was initiating the final steps that would enable it to go to war in the near future. Accordingly, even after a gradual buildup, we believe we would detect within a day the final moves to full readiness to attack.

49. A period of gradual preparations would improve Pact combat effectiveness and civil preparedness under any of the postulated buildup options. Depending on the number and nature of the measures already taken and the political circumstances, the time required to prepare the attack could also be reduced, perhaps by as much as a day or more. We would, however, already have issued warnings, probably repeatedly, of a growing danger of hostilities.

[illegible] in the [illegible]

[illegible] Two Fronts



The smallest force the Pact might use to start theater offensive operations probably would consist of two fronts—a total of some 40 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units. In the most urgent circumstances, the Pact would need about four days to prepare this force. Attack with slightly less than four days is possible, but the complexity of the operation and the risks attending insufficient preparation would likely cause the Soviets to take more than four days to prepare this force.

Establishment of a five-*front* posture—some 80 to 90 ground divisions—before initiating an offensive against NATO would fulfill Soviet conservative doctrinal preferences to the extent possible in practical terms and would take about two weeks to achieve.

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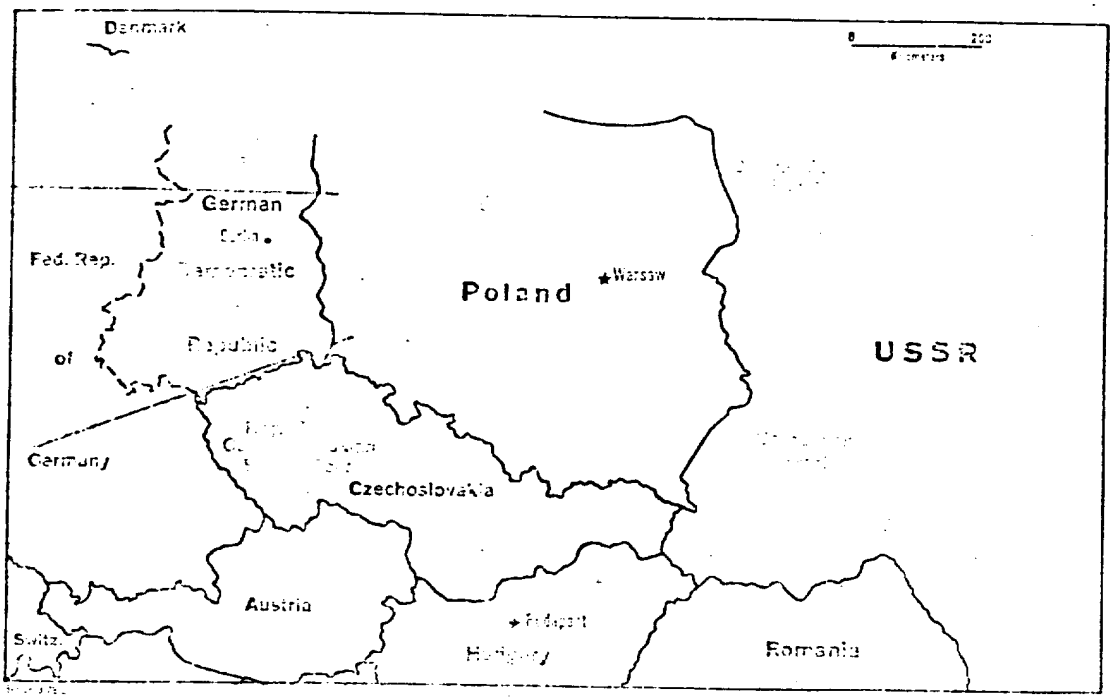
Option III: Three Fronts



The Warsaw Pact envisions a basic force of three fronts as the first echelon of an attack on NATO. As depicted in Pact doctrine and exercises, this three front force includes 50 to 60 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units. About eight days would be needed to prepare this force.

Option IV: Five Fronts