

September 07, 1968
Report from the Political Department of Polish Second Army on the emotional-political condition of the soldiers taking part in Operation 'Danube'

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Summary:

Report states the morale of soldiers taking part in Operation Danube is still good. But there is still no change in the unfriendly relations between Czech people and Warsaw Pact soldiers. The report describes how the Czech people are under the influence of revisionist and reactionary propaganda. It also details the conflict between Czech soldiers and Polish soldiers. It also gives an update of propaganda being broadcast through Czech radio stations.

Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

- English Translation

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POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH ARMY [?] cc: file [handwritten] [text below is crossed out]

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REPORT

From the Political Department of Polish Second Army on the emotional-political condition of the soldiers taking part in Operation 'Danube', as well as on the situation amongst the people and soldiers of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

(07.09.1968 17:30 hours)

1. There are no reservations concerning Second Army's emotional-political condition and discipline. Political attitudes among the men and their leaders are good. Only over the last two days and as a result of the worsening weather conditions have the soldiers of those sub-units stationed on grass or on waterlogged ground been expressing a request for rubber waterproof footwear. Second Army's quartermaster service is handling this.

Second Army continues to receive numerous letters from work squads and social and political organizations in Poland. The men are holding meetings with delegations arriving from Poland. Conscripts are asking whether they will be able to go on leave while in Czechoslovakia. Food in Second Army's major formations, units and sub-units is good and rich in protein and vitamins.

2. Political opinions amongst the local population continue to show no signs of a major change. They depend on the attitude of the local authorities. In smaller places, such as Miarek, Tyska, Rybna, Tychenburg, Havlíčkův Brod, Tratyn the people willingly contact us. In conversation the locals emphasize ever more frequently that the people have been deceived by the press and radio and have been unaware of what has been happening throughout the country.

Our observations in earlier reports that the civilian population has not been informed of the outcome and decisions of the talks in Čierna and Bratislava have been completely vindicated. The people continue to be unaware of the existence and actions of revisionist and counter-revolutionary forces. They also fail to perceive the external threat from imperialism, it is felt that the most pressing current problem is not the struggle for socialist renewal [?]..... [rest of the line is concealed by page break] in Czechoslovakia, but efforts to ensure

the speedy withdrawal of allied forces from Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak people's disorientation confirms the suggestion emphasized by us on more than one occasion that the population continues to be under the political influence of revisionist and reactionary circles. A revealing example of this are the stubborn efforts of the civil and party administration and the commanders of Czechoslovak People's Army [CPA] units to prevent extensive contact between the forces of Second Army and the population, especially the workforce. Over the course of the last twenty-four hours in the area of Second Army's deployment 18 meetings have been held by officers' delegates with representatives of party and administrative authorities. All the authorities' representatives refused to set up meetings between the troops and the civilian population. Despite solemn promises and pledges, the administrative and party authorities have not completely removed hostile graffiti and signs from the towns and housing estates. Therefore, the Army's Political Department has decided to institute a thorough inspection of the towns and villages to check whether all the hostile graffiti and signs have been removed. The first inspection in Hradec Králové revealed that some streets still have signs saying the following: 'Occupiers go home', 'Death to the Occupiers and Traitors', 'The town has been checked – there are no counter-revolutionaries', 'Occupiers and Traitors release Dubček, Svoboda, Smrkowsky, Cizacz [?] and others', 'European culture starts here'. By the entrance to the barracks there is a sign on the street in Russian saying 'Scum, go home.' Attempts at provocation against our soldiers are also being made: for instance on 5.9.1968 a Czechoslovak lady of about forty arrived at the garrison HQ in Jaroměř and stated that at 9.00 am she had been stopped by an individual wearing a Polish uniform and speaking Czech who had taken from her 115 korunas and two packets of cigarettes. It is worth pointing out that the nearest Polish unit is 3 km. from Jaroměř.

3. Second Army's Political Department is developing a series of contacts with CPA unit commanders. Thirteen meetings have been held with unit commanders. CPA commanders, despite orders from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Defense, continue to take the position that contacts and co-operation should be restricted to purely military matters. They are opposed to developing contacts at the political level. Some of them, such as Colonel Machaczyk, Deputy Corps Commander, a delegate to the 'XIVth [?] Congress, claims

that only within 10 days will specific instructions arrive covering co-operation between CPA units and Polish forces. Others, such as Lieutenant Colonel Hravko, Head of 13th Armored Division's signals detachment, repeat well-worn slogans on the absence of counter-revolutionary forces in the CSSR and claim that for the time being our friendship comes from the barrel of a gun. Almost all the officers of the CPA demand that our forces unblock their units and military facilities. Officers and men of the CPA whom we encounter by chance on the roads and in built-up areas treat us with mistrust, they often do not want to talk with us. There continue to be provocations on the part of soldiers from the CPA. On 5.9.68 at the barracks at Milowice, CPA soldiers bombarded sentries from the 11th Mechanized Regiment with empty wine bottles calling our men vulgar names. One of the CPA privates told our men that he and his comrades were in possession of illegal ammunition. Men of the 30th Air Regiment in Hradec Králové called our soldiers occupiers who were worse than the Nazis, while the regimental CO declared that as long as he was in command of the regiment not a Polish officer would stand on regimental territory. In the town of Hrudin men from a technical battalion waved their fists at passing Polish vehicles.

4. For several days we have been observing a decided change in the content and methods of hostile propaganda. The previously open and officially hostile content, in the form of slogans, signs, leaflets, virulent articles in tendentious propaganda on the radio, is now smuggled into the mass media in an oblique manner as double entendres, allusions and phrases. The greatest number of double entendres on the radio are to be found in the dramatization of plays, poetry and so on. They are conveyed in a dramatic tone, with the emphasis on phrases cursing foreign oppressors, longing for freedom and with images of the bloody land which has been trampled underfoot. Symptomatic too are appeals contained in statements made by people with official standing, which end usually with a call to citizens not to exacerbate the present situation, since this could lead to allied forces being stationed on the territory of the CSSR for longer. Clear and tendentious too are the frequent public announcements of damage, calling on citizens to record and estimate it, which creates a sense

of grievance in the popular consciousness. Yesterday a radio program repeated continually a scene suggesting that Czechoslovak mothers did not allow their children to listen to Soviet tunes. The commentator was clearly supporting this attitude. The local press too is using a similar tactic; for instance there was an article in yesterday's edition of the newspaper 'Pochoden' called 'The truth about counter-revolution in Havlíčkův Brod County': the article was devoted to a report on medical assistance provided by the local hospital to three Polish soldiers at the end of which the writer emphasizes that the Polish authorities speedily removed the soldiers from the hospital where they were receiving excellent care, since they were concerned for the 'soldiers' ideological health.' The article's content also aimed to downplay our statements on the existence and activities of counter-revolutionary forces. Overall, the mass media are operating under the assumption of a second phase where reaction's main aim is to ensure a speedy withdrawal of allied forces from Czechoslovakia. Revisionist forces wish to create the impression in the minds of the population that the Czechoslovak side has fulfilled all the points of the Moscow resolutions, while the socialist countries, whose forces are on the territory of the CSSR, have no intention of following these resolutions.

5. A general program of political activities has been established in Second Army's forces. Political information meetings have also been held in units and training establishments. A general cultural and educational program has been conducted. Second Army's Political Department's radio station continues to broadcast programs for the civilian population in Czech and a local program for its own troops.

6. In 4th Mechanized Division, a widely-covered court-martial was held for two deserters from 17th Mechanized Regiment: Private Czarniecki was sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment and Private Nowak to 5 years.

7. On 6.9.1968 at 19:00 hours, while preparing to go on sentry duty Bombardier Zbigniew Woran, who was cleaning his weapon, unintentionally shot Private Stefan Gašiorowski from 11th Mechanized Regiment, who received a gunshot wound to his right elbow joint and an injury to the lining of his abdominal cavity. The injured man received treatment. In the doctor's opinion, neither of his wounds is serious.

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