~~TOP SECRET~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

23 July 1968

Walt:

Here are Bill Lemnitzer's answers to the two questions you raised with me yesterday.

The four major conclusions which emerge are:

- Czech defection would weaken the Warsaw Pact threat to Western Europe -- but probably not enough to justify reduction of current NATO forces.

- Czech neutralization would justify some reduction in NATO force levels -- dependent on our confidence that the Czechs would remain neutral in the event of war.

- Forces for possible intervention in Czechoslovakia could involve 1 U.S. brigade, 2 French divisions, and 2 FRG divisions.

- Employment of anything more than 1 brigade ought to be accompanied by NATO mobilization, which would require six months to reach planned force levels.

ROBERT N. GINSBURGH

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

56a

22 July 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

1. It may be useful to consider some of the military implications of Czechoslovakia becoming a semi-independent communist country a'la Yugoslavia. To do this, it is first necessary to appreciate the Czech military role in the Warsaw Pact. Situated just south of the probable main axis of attack toward the west, forces in Czechoslovakia have the mission of advancing through Southern Germany, in concert with other Pact forces, to seize the Rhine River from Mannheim south to Switzerland. By such an advance, they would draw off resistance against the main Soviet attack and screen the southern flank of the main forces. Because Soviet troops are not normally stationed in Czechoslovakia, the advance of the Czech front organization would be followed up by elements of the Soviet Carpatho-Ukranian Front, thus, ensuring the dependability of the Czech forces through virtual occupation of their country by Soviet troops. In the event of a surprise NATO attack, the Czechs have a secondary mission of defense until reinforced by the Soviets.

2. If Czechoslovakia remained neutral, at least initially, during conflict between the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, the Soviets would not only lose the use of some 14 divisions but would also suffer from a number of other disadvantages. The Czech wedge of neutral territory would split the Pact forces back to the Soviet Union, itself, thereby severely restricting any north-south reinforcing capability; in addition, north-south communications would be hampered, although not to the extent that France's neutrality would have on NATO. Perhaps the greatest effect would be the more than four-fold increase in the requirement for border security forces, because a country of fourteen divisions, even though neutral, just 150 miles from the main line of communications, simply could not be ignored. In addition, the Soviets would certainly have to consider the possibility of a NATO counterattack through Czechoslovakia to sever the Pact axis of supply Warsaw-Berlin. The result would be a significant increase in Pact force levels required in order to initiate an attack against NATO.

3. In the event that Czechoslovakia were actively involved as a NATO ally, both the Czechs and the Pact forces would find themselves

dangerously exposed. The shift in the current balance of forces likely would preclude deliberate Pact attack against NATO, and any initial hostilities would almost certainly require diversion of major Soviet forces to destroy or neutralize Czech forces before mounting a major attack westward. While obvious military advantages would accrue to NATO, the added responsibility of reasonably securing Czechoslovakia against attack might actually raise the force levels required for NATO. It is unlikely that either the Czechs or the current NATO countries would undertake such an arrangement hastily.

4. On balance, any degree of splitting away of Czechoslovakia would weaken the Warsaw Pact threat to Western Europe. However, the actual degree of threat reduction would have to be assessed before comparable adjustments should be proposed for NATO force levels.

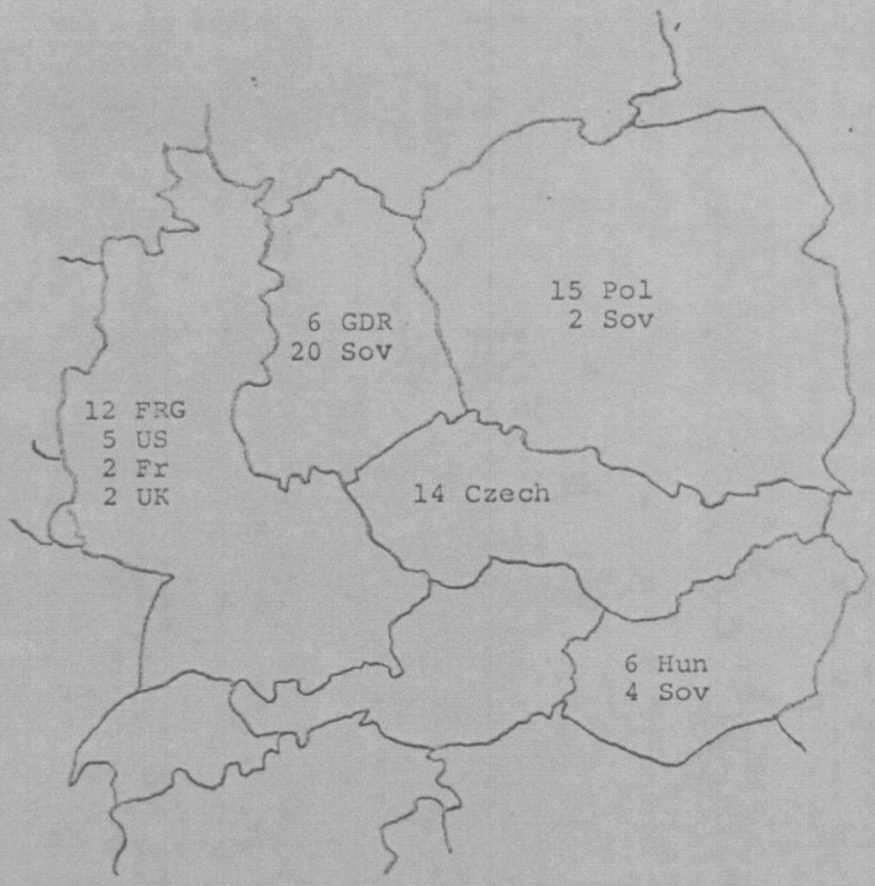
L.

WILLIAM L. LEMNITZER

~~SECRET~~

56-b

NATO AND WARSAW PACT DIVISIONS NEAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA



~~SECRET~~