

NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL DEPUTIES

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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MILITARY POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN POLAND AND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Revised Draft Summary Report.

There is attached a revised draft summary which will be considered by the Political Working Group on Tuesday, 8th May, 1951, at 3.00 p.m.

(Signed) I.M. PEART.

13, Belgrave Square,
LONDON, S.W.1.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MILITARY, POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN
POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On 23rd and 25th April, 1951, the Council Deputies exchanged views on military, political and economic conditions in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The following is a summary of the views expressed:

I. Military Conditions

1. Poland. Under Marshal Rokossovsky the Polish Army is being organized as an efficient fighting force and increasing quantities of Soviet-type equipment are being made available, especially tanks. The Polish Air Force has also been supplied with Soviet-type jet fighters. In their present state of training and equipment the Polish armed forces compare favourably with the armed forces of the other satellite countries. Whether they would fight well except against German troops is open to question.

According to the latest available estimates the present strength of the Polish forces is approximately as follows:

Army	180,000
Navy	7,000
Air Force	7,000
Frontier and Security Guards	50,000
Police	175,000

In addition there are thought to be between two and three thousand Russian officers serving as instructors, and approximately 55,000 Soviet troops stationed in Poland.

2. Czechoslovakia. The morale, training and equipment of the Czech armed forces is at a low level.

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However, with the ascendency of the present Defence Ministers Mr. Cepicka, there has been a general tightening of control over the armed forces. The Army is undergoing reorganization and it has recently been provided with some Soviet-type equipment. The operational efficiency of the Czech Air Force is very low. Soviet-type jet fighters were to have been constructed under licence in Czechoslovakia but the decision was suddenly cancelled. Air fields are, however, being rapidly enlarged and improved for the use of the Soviet Air force. In their present state of preparedness the armed forces are inferior to those of the other satellite countries, and are likely to remain so for another 18 months at least.

Present strength of the Czech forces is estimated to be of the order of:

Army	130,000
Air Force	10,000
Frontier and Security Guards	45,000
Police	55,000

Foreign instructors probably number about 1,000.

II. POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Polish and Czech relations with the West have always been closer than those of the other satellite countries with the possible exception of Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in particular was until 1948 traditionally democratic. However, through terrorization and continuing pressure subservience to Russia is, to an increasing extent, being achieved. Except for some sporadic and ineffective incidents, there is no longer any active resistance, and Nationalist deviation within the Communist Party has been ruthlessly suppressed.

The recent purges in Czechoslovakia, and consequent changes

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in party leadership, can be attributed in part to Soviet dissatisfaction with conditions in that country. Latent antagonism both within and outside the Party exists in both countries.

Fear of Germany is still very real in both Poland and Czechoslovakia, for which reason the policy of the Western Powers towards Western Germany is being successfully represented as a revival of German militarism. Any steps taken towards the re-arming of Western Germany is bound to be deeply resented unless the methods behind this policy, and the way in which it will be carried out, are carefully explained. It is suggested that this should be borne in mind in any consideration of information policy towards the satellites.

The relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and state is a matter of great importance, the Church being the only organised body in a position to offer effective resistance to the respective regimes. In both countries Church and state have been reluctant to let this situation develop into an open conflict. The Governments have pursued tactics of alternate persecution and conciliation in an effort to diminish the influence of the Church.

III. Economic Conditions

Poland and Czechoslovakia have made considerable progress in the industrial field, although serious difficulties are at present being encountered as a result of shortages of raw materials. On the other hand, in the collectivization of agriculture which is very unpopular, comparatively little progress has so far been made. Trade relations with the West have deteriorated.

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1. Poland. Compared with the other satellite countries Poland enjoys a reasonable standard of living. Food and clothing are adequate, but housing conditions are bad. Since the war Poland has been transformed from a mainly agricultural country into a semi-industrialized country without any major dislocation.

2. Czechoslovakia. A determined effort is being made to turn Czechoslovakia into an arsenal for the Eastern block, and exports to the Soviet and her satellites have increased annually each year since 1949. Introduced in 1949, the Five-Year Plan was revised early this year to place even greater emphasis on heavy industry at the expense of light industry producing for the home market. The aim appears to be to reduce the Czech standard of living to the Russian level.

Due to shortages of raw materials and machine tools, and to lower per capita output, production has recently deteriorated. Efforts to step up production are bitterly resented by the workers, and the results so far achieved are considered by the Soviet to be far from satisfactory.

IV. Statements of Policy

THE ITALIAN DEPUTY expressed the view that it is of the greatest importance to find ways and means to assure the peoples of Poland and Czechoslovakia, as distinct from their masters, that their rightful interests are being borne in mind by the Western Powers.

THE UNITED STATES DEPUTY said it was the policy of his Government to encourage the political and economic integration of the Sudeten Germans into the West German Republic.