

Document No. 50: Memorandum of the Academic Staff  
of the Czechoslovak Military Academies on Czechoslovakia's  
Defense Doctrine, June 4, 1968

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*Sometimes referred to in Western literature as the Gottwald memorandum, this document was prepared by the staffs of the Klement Gottwald Military Political Academy in Prague and the Antonín Zápotocký Military Technical Academy in Brno. Its authors were official theoreticians who by this time had become reformers, and as such had moved in their thinking much farther than the Dubček leadership. Although the memorandum was originally intended for party leaders, it also was published in the newspapers on July 2, which must certainly have alarmed the Soviets because its ideas were quite unorthodox. Despite the use of Marxist jargon it contained some very common-sense judgments, many of which were ahead of their time. Among its noteworthy points are the argument that nuclear deterrence was irrelevant to small countries like Czechoslovakia that were not in a position to implement it; the statement that future security policy should be European-based and aimed at reducing tensions; and the view that crises such as in Berlin and Cuba must be avoided because of their adverse economic effects quite apart from the terrible military threats they engender.*

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Formulation and Constitution of Czechoslovak  
State Interests in the Military Area

The draft of the action program of the Czechoslovak People's Army poses with particular urgency the question of elaborating the state military doctrine of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. In our opinion, the point of departure ought to be the state interests of Czechoslovakia in the military area which, however, have not yet been formulated and constituted.

The signatories of this memorandum, who are scholarly associates working for the Czechoslovak armed forces, wish to contribute to the scientific examination and formulation of those state interests. In sections 1 and 2, they express their position concerning the present state of our military doctrine and military policy. In sections 3 and 4, they outline the procedure for a theoretical examination of the data aimed at the formulation of doctrinal conclusions. In section 5, they justify the necessity of using scientific methods to solve these problems.

They are sending this memorandum to provide the basis for an exchange of opinion. They consider a dialogue necessary for the development of scientific research.

Prague, May 1968

### 1. Political and Military Doctrine

1.1. The political doctrine of a socialist state is primarily influenced by the choice of wider goals within the international community and its relationship with the diverse forces representative of social progress.

The principle of socialist internationalism is organically linked with the national responsibility of a sovereign state. This is normally more important as well as more difficult the smaller the physical power of the state. The choice cannot solely depend on "national interest," which cannot be defined in a pure form—neither as an interest of one's own state, nor as an interest of the leading state of a coalition. The interest of the societal movement, of which sovereign states are a part, is decisive, specifically the interest of European socialism and its dynamic development. Mere defense of what has been accomplished fosters stagnation and degeneration; the wrong choice of an offensive strategy has a destructive effect on the progress of the whole societal movement.

1.2. Military policy as an aggregate of actions in military matters implements military interests and needs through a chosen strategy. In regard to national interest, the military doctrine of the state can be described as a comprehensive formulation of its military interests and needs.

The doctrine is a binding theoretical and ideological base for the formulation of military policy and the resulting measures as well as for negotiations with the alliance partners. It amounts to a compromise between the maximum requirements and actual resources, between the dynamics of the evolving military knowledge and the findings of the social sciences, between the development of technology and the requirement of an effective defense system corresponding to the military circumstances at any given time.

1.3. The formulation of the state's military doctrine influences retroactively its political doctrine and strategy. It substantially affects its capability to project itself internationally by nonmilitary means. Giving up one's own military doctrine means giving up responsibility for one's own national and international action. A surrender to spontaneity, this entails the de-politicization of military thought, which in turn leads to a paralysis of the army. It is the fundamental source of crisis of the army organism by tearing it out of society. It disrupts the metabolism between the army and the society. It deprives the army of its *raison d'être* for the national community by limiting the interaction between national goals and the goals of the socialist community.

### 2. The Past, Present, and Future of Czechoslovakia's Military Policy

2.1. The foundations of Czechoslovakia's present defense systems were laid at the beginning of the 1950s, at which time the responsible political actors of the socialist countries assumed that a military conflict in Europe was imminent. It was a strategy based on the slogan of defense against imperialist aggression, but at the same time assuming the possibility of transition to the strategic offensive with the goal of achieving complete Soviet hegemony in Europe. No explicit reassessment of this coalition strategy, by taking into account the potential of nuclear missiles, has ever taken place.

2.2. The Czechoslovak army, created with great urgency and extraordinary exertion, became a substantial strategic force by the time Europe's political and military situation had fundamentally changed. Although in 1953 we noted a relaxation of international tension and in 1956 introduced the new strategy of peaceful coexistence, no formulation of Czechoslovakia's own military doctrine or reform of its army took place. Invoking the threat of German aggression, the alliance continued to be tightened up. Increasingly, the threat of German aggression has taken on the role of an extraneous factor employed with the intent to strengthen the cohesion of the socialist community. Once the original notions about the applicability of a universal economic and political model had to be revised, military cooperation was supposed to compensate for insufficient economic cooperation and the inadequacy of other relationships among the socialist countries.

2.3. In politics, there is a lack of clarity about the probable trends of development in the progressive movement to which we belong. There is a prevailing tendency to cling to the obsolete notions that have become part of the ideological legacy of the socialist countries. There is a prevailing tendency to try to influence all the segments of the movement, regardless of the sharply growing differences in their respective needs resulting from social and economic development.

In 1956 and 1961, we proved by our deeds that we were ready to bear any global risks without claiming a share of responsibility for the political decisions and their implementation. By doing so, we proved that we did not understand even the European situation and were guided not by sober analysis but by political and ideological stereotypes. (Hence also the surprise with regard to Hungary in 1956 and the inadequate response in 1961.)

2.4. Our military policy did not rest on an analysis of our own national needs and interests. It did not rest on our own military doctrine. Instead it was a reflection of the former sectarian party leadership, which prevented the party from conducting a realistic policy of harmonizing the interests of different groups with national and international interests for the benefit of socialism. The development of the army was deprived of both rational criteria and an institutionalized opposition. Military policy was reduced to the quest to optimally match our resources with the demands of the alliance. Devoid of principles, it was bound to create contradictions and crises within the army.

Inevitably the twenty years of deformed development affected the ability, or rather inability, of the cadres to overcome the deformations. Theoretical backwardness in military theory and the formulation of a military doctrine has been a great obstacle to the overcoming of past errors.

2.5. Czechoslovakia's military policy will continue being built upon the alliance with other Warsaw Treaty partners, above all the USSR. At the same time, however, it will be a policy based on state sovereignty, and designed to provide our input into developing the alliance's common positions. A modern conception of the Warsaw Treaty can only have one meaning: the increased external security of its member-states to foster the development of both the socialist states and the states of Western Europe. Our military policy will not shun global risks, but only in the role of a partner rather than of a victim of a development that it cannot influence.

It will essentially be a European security policy, supportive of international détente in Europe, all-European cooperation, and Europe's progressive forces. It will serve as an instrument of a broader, but not self-serving policy. A military policy that needs to construe and exaggerate an enemy threat fosters conservative tendencies in both socialism and capitalism. While in the short run it may seem to "strengthen" socialism, in the long run it weakens it.

2.6. Czechoslovakia's military policy must rest on a scientific analysis of a whole range of possible war situations in Europe, formulate its own sovereign interests and needs accordingly, estimate its military capabilities in particular situations within the framework of the coalition, and act on its own scientifically elaborated strategic doctrine.

### 3. The Contemporary War–Peace Situation

3.1. The naively pragmatic realist approach considers relations among sovereign states from the point of view of either war or peace. In actuality there is a whole range of situations whose common denominator is the availability of instruments of armed violence but which differ in the manner of their use. As a result of substantive social and political changes and the scientific–technological revolution in military affairs, such a range of situations is considerably more complex and diverse not only in comparison with the situation before World War II but also with the situation in the early fifties.

Yet, at this very time of incipient gigantic transformations of a social and political as well as scientific and technological nature, our military policy and doctrine applied the Soviet model as universally valid.

3.2. The above-mentioned range of possible situations may be summarized as follows:

- absolute war (in different variations),
- limited wars (of several types),
- a situation between war and peace resulting from the long-term legalization of an originally temporary armistice as a result of which the adversaries are no longer fighting but peace treaties have not been concluded either,
- potential war, i.e. indirect use of instruments of armed violence as a means of foreign policy,
- peace among potential adversaries,
- peace among allied sovereign states,
- peace among neutrals,
- absolute peace through general and complete disarmament.

This description is a distillation of specific situations, which are in turn combinations of an indefinite number of possible situations that make sovereign states and military coalitions implement their foreign and military policies.

3.3. The stereotype of class struggle, with its dichotomy of friends and foes, has reduced substantive political distinctions among sovereign states to basic class antagonism, with pernicious consequences for our political strategy and tactics. Yet the Leninist postulate of specific analysis of a concrete situation differentiates according to actual distinctions.

At the very least, the typology should consider:

- actual and potential allies,
- neutrals,
- potential adversaries,
- actual adversaries,
- war enemies.

Czechoslovakia's state interests and needs require doing justice to different situational variants while rejecting illusions and dangerous simplifications.

#### 4. Possible Formulation of Czechoslovakia's Military Interests and Needs Related to the War–Peace Situation in Contemporary Europe

The doctrinal formulation and constitution of Czechoslovak military interests and needs first requires a substantive analysis of particular war–peace situations, especially in Europe. Our own military interests and needs should then be formulated accordingly. This should be the point of departure for practical measures in accordance with the doctrine. Following is a brief outline of how one might proceed in some of the basic situations.

##### 4.1. Absolute war in Europe

Given the accumulation of nuclear missiles by both major military coalitions, the possible outbreak of such a war in Europe is fraught with catastrophic consequences for most of its European participants. At the same time, the permanent lead time in the offensive rather than the defensive deployment of nuclear missiles, as well as our unfavorable geographical position, make it impossible to substantially limit the destructiveness of enemy first strikes against our territory to an extent compatible with the preservation of our national and state existence. It must be said openly that the outbreak and conduct of a global nuclear war in the European theater would be tantamount to national extinction and the demise of state sovereignty, especially of the frontline states, including Czechoslovakia. The futility of such a war as a means of settling European disputes, as demonstrated by the development of the so-called Berlin crisis of 1961, of course does not exclude its possibility.

In such a situation, we consider it appropriate to formulate Czechoslovakia's military interests and needs as a matter of primary existential importance:

- preventing the conduct of a nuclear war on our territory is a fundamental existential need of our society;
- Czechoslovakia has a strategic interest in actively contributing to the reduction of the real possibility of absolute war in Europe.

Our fundamental needs and interests in the event of such a war should determine a foreign policy aimed at limiting the possibility of a nuclear attack against Czechoslovakia. The appropriate measures are, for example, the conclusion of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, and supplementary guarantees of the status quo in Europe.

##### 4.2. Limited war in Europe

Analysis of the possible scenarios in Europe obviously starts with recognition of the growing danger of such a war and its growing strategic and political significance.

In recognizing the futility of limited war as a means of Czechoslovak foreign pol-

icy and in emphasizing our interest in eliminating it as a means of settlement of European disputes, we assume the necessity of purposefully waging war against an attack in a fashion conducive to limiting its destructive effects on our territory and population.

The formulation and constitution of Czechoslovakia's particular interests and needs will determine the practical measures to be taken:

- Preparation of Czechoslovakia's armed forces and its entire defense system within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty for the different variants of enemy attack with the goal of repelling it, defeating the adversary, and compelling him to settle peacefully.
- Reduction of the real possibility of war by reciprocal military and political acts of peaceful coexistence aimed at eliminating the use of force as a means of the settlement of disputes.

#### 4.3. Situation between war and peace in Europe

This is the situation resulting from the failure to conclude a peace treaty with Germany and from the great-power status of Berlin inside the territory of the GDR. Herein is the possibility of a sudden deterioration leading to severe military and political crisis. At the present time, such a crisis would have catastrophic consequences for our economy, as happened during the 1961 Berlin and 1962 Cuban crises. This would substantially worsen our strained economic situation, with overly negative consequences for our development in a progressive direction.

These characteristics determine our approach to the formulation of Czechoslovakia's interests and needs, namely:

- our primary strategic and political need to prevent such a military and political crisis at the present time,
- our interest in reducing the possibility of a transition from the absence of war to a limited war while searching for a solution to the German question as the key question of contemporary Europe.

This further postulates measures to be taken in both military and foreign policy, above all through the Warsaw Pact, with the goal of normalizing relations between Czechoslovakia and the Federal Republic of Germany.

#### 4.4. Potential war in Europe

At issue is the indirect use of the potential for armed violence as an instrument of foreign policy, as implied in the policy of deterrence, practiced especially by the nuclear powers. Czechoslovakia cannot use deterrence against the Western powers. Its deterrence posture is declaratory and politically ineffective if it is not supported by strategic measures against potential adversaries geographically distant from us. At the same time, the use of deterrence against Czechoslovakia by some of its potential adversaries forces us to respond in kind.

These characteristics determine the formulation of Czechoslovakia's needs and interests, namely:

- our temporary need to use the potential for armed violence against the adversary that uses it against us,
- our lack of interest in using it as a matter of equivalent reciprocity, i.e. our interest in its exclusion as an instrument of foreign policy.

In this situation, we aim at the conclusion of legally binding agreements with potential adversaries that would ban the use of the threat of force in mutual relations. This can be realized in relations between Czechoslovakia and Austria, Czechoslovakia and France, and Czechoslovakia and the Federal Republic of Germany.

#### 4.5. Peace among potential adversaries in Europe

This is the situation obtaining in Europe among potential adversaries who have no mutually exclusive interests and do not apply the policy of deterrence against one another.

Here Czechoslovakia's interests and needs lie in the legal codification of the state of peace with a growing number of potential adversaries.

Our practical goals should be the conclusion of non-aggression treaties and arms limitation agreements with such partners. In this way, we can contribute to the reduction of tensions between potential adversaries, the growth of peace in Europe, and the reciprocal gradual neutralization of instruments of armed violence.

4.6. In other possible peace situations in Europe, as enumerated earlier, military interests and needs represent a share in Czechoslovakia's overall interests and needs. The closer the peace, of course, the lower the share. Absolute peace entails the abolition of the material and technological base for war, and thus also of the base for military interests and needs.

In view of Czechoslovakia's current foreign and military policy predicament, our main task is the formulation and constitution of its military interests and needs pertinent to the situations referred to in points 4.2 through 4.5.

If the formulation of Czechoslovak military doctrine is to be more scientific, the main question is that of choosing the right approach and avoiding the wrong ones.

### 5. Systems Analysis and the Use of Modern Research Methods

5.1. In constituting a Czechoslovak military doctrine, the most dangerous and precarious approach is the one-sided use of simple logic and old-fashioned working habits.

If Czechoslovakia is to be preserved as an entity, giving absolute priority to the possibility of a general war in Europe that involves the massive use of nuclear weapons makes no sense, for this entails a high probability of our country's physical liquidation regardless of how much money and resources are spent on its armed forces and regardless even of the final outcome of the war.

5.2. For each of the variants under 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, systems analysis and other modern methods of research allow us to determine the correlation between, on the one hand, the material, financial, and personnel expenditures on the armed forces (assuming perfect rationality of their development) and, on the other hand, the degree of risk of the state's physical destruction and the loss of its sovereignty, while taking into account the chances of a further advance of socialism, or even the elimination of the threat of war.

At issue is the attainment of pragmatic stability in national defense and army development, corresponding to political needs and related to foreign policy by striving to avert war through increasing the risks for the potential adversary while pre-

serving the sovereign existence of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, thus giving substance to its contribution to the coalition in fulfillment of its internationalist duty.

Managing the development of our armed forces solely on the basis of simple logic, empiricism, and historical analogy, perhaps solely in the interests of the coalition without regard to one's own sovereign interests, is in its final effect inappropriate and contradicts the coalition's interests.

Besides the reconciliation of our own and the coalition's interests in our military doctrine, we consider it necessary to utilize systems analysis and all other available methods of scientific prognosis, including model-building. Thus the preparedness of our armed forces in different variants can be assessed and related to the evolving political needs and economic possibilities. This concerns not so much tactical, operational, and organizational issues as the confrontation of political and doctrinal problems with reality.

We regard systems analysis as the new quality that can raise the effectiveness of our armed forces above the current level.

5.3. At the most general level, we can see two possible ways of managing our army's development:

- The first way is proceeding from the recognition of the personnel, technological, and financial limitations imposed by society upon the armed forces toward the evaluation of the risks resulting from the failure to achieve desirable political goals under the different variants of European development described in the preceding section. The decision about the extent of acceptable risk must be made by the supreme political organ of the state.
- The second way is proceeding from the recognition of the acceptable risk as set by the political leadership toward the provision of the necessary personnel, technological, and financial means corresponding to the different variants of European development.

Either of these ways presupposes elaboration of less than optimal models of army development for each of the variants, applying the requirements of national defense regardless of the existing structure of the system. Confrontation of the model with the available resources should then determine the specific measures to be taken in managing the development of the armed forces and their components.

The proposed procedure would not make sense if we were to keep the non-systemic, compartmentalized approach to building our armed forces without being able to prove to the political leadership that the available personnel, financial, and technological means are being used with maximum effectiveness to prepare our armed forces for any of the different variants of European development rather than merely show their apparent preparedness at parades and exercises organized according to a prepared scenario.

5.4. Increasingly, strategic thought has been shifting away from seeking the overall destruction of all enemy assets to the disruption of the enemy defense system by destroying selected elements, thus leading to its collapse. In some cases, such as in the Israeli–Arab war, the theory proved its superiority in practice as well. Its application in developing our army, elaborating our strategy, and designing our opera-



tional plans can result not only in substantial military savings but also increased effectiveness for our defense system. In case of a relative (but scientifically arrived at and justified) decrease of those expenditures, it may help limit the consequences of the exponential growth in costs of the new combat and management technology. Most importantly, it may help impress on the armed forces command and the political leadership the best way of discharging their responsibilities toward both the state and the coalition.

5.5. The proposed procedures and methods toward the constitution of Czechoslovak military doctrine can of course be implemented only through a qualitatively new utilization of our state's scientific potential. We regard science as being critically conducive to the implementation of working methods that practitioners are inhibited from using because of their particular way of thinking, their time limitations, and reasons of expediency. We regard science as a counterweight that could block and balance arbitrary tendencies in the conduct of the armed forces command and the political leadership. In this we see the fundamental prerequisite for a qualitatively new Czechoslovak military doctrine and the corresponding management of our armed forces.

[Source: *Sb. KV ČSFR, D II/73, Institute for Contemporary History, Prague. Translated by Vojtech Mastny.*]