

X/15 CURT - ARE THE EAST EUROPEAN ARMIES THINNING OUT?

Munich, 19 July 1966 (Communist Area Analysis Department:  
Bloc - r.r.g.)

In his speech to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 13th July, Under Secretary of State George Ball made a notable statement concerning the armed forces of E. Europe. Arguing that Nato still needs an integrated common defense he referred to the arithmetic of Soviet power, and then added:

The USSR today has some 3,000,000 men under arms, most of whom are stationed in Western areas of the country. 300,000 Soviet soldiers are stationed in E. Europe. In addition, the European countries have armed forces totalling a half million, making a total of 800,000 men facing Nato in Europe.....

Washington evidently has information to show that the Western estimates of E. European army strengths made last year are in urgent need of downward revision. The Institute for Strategic Studies, in its annual review of "The Military Balance" for 1965-66, was far more bullish. It listed the Polish army as 215,000, the Czechoslovak as 200,000, the E. German as 80,000, the Hungarian as 100,000, the Rumanian as 175,000, the Bulgarian as 125,000 and the Albanian as 30,000.

The discrepancy is so great that some explanation seems to be required. If Mr. Ball was referring to the Northern Tier alone, his figure of 500,000 would accord neatly with the Institute's estimates. But he did not limit his statement to the Northern Tier countries, and he referred to the armed forces of E. Europe, not to their armies alone. The Institute's estimates of the total regular forces' strength in each of the countries is as follows:

Poland	277,000
Czechoslovakia	235,000
East Germany	112,000
Hungary	109,000
Rumania	198,000
Bulgaria	152,000
Albania	38,000

In this light, the armed forces' strength of the Northern Tier countries works out at 624,000, so that even if Mr. Ball was speaking of these countries only, his figure is still about 20 percent lower than of the Institute.

It seems therefore either that there has been a substantial reduction in the E. European armed forces' numerical strength during the past year or that the Institute's figures were considerably too high when they were published last November, the latter explanation being the more probable. A combination of some recent cuts and too high estimates by the Institute is also possible.

As recently as April 1965 Col. T.W. Wolfe, the American expert in communist military questions, wrote in Ost-Europa that the strength of the E. European armed forces was in the region of 900,000-1,000,000.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ball's figure of 500,000 is little more than half as much, but it relies on official U.S. sources which may not have been available to Col. Wolfe. Its implications deserve careful consideration. They seem to point to an interest on the part of the E. European regimes to pursue a policy of detente by significant practical measures, and to a shift of emphasis from quantity to quality.

The extremely high cost of the new tanks, aircraft and missiles which the E. European countries are receiving from the USSR seems to be imposing its own form of rationalization.

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2) "Developments in the System of the Warsaw Pact," page 213.