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DOSA AF DEVELOPMENTS 1959

During 1959 the ranks of the USSR's paramilitary organization, DOSAAF, were swollen by the recruitment of "several million" new members (Voyennye Znaniya, No. 1, 1960). Since DOSAAF had begun the year with a strength of more than 20,000,000, according to an estimate made by Mr. Paul C. McGrath, the Deputy Director of Intelligence and National Security of the Office of Defense Mobilization on May 12th, 1959,¹ the nominal membership is now probably in the neighborhood of 25 million.

The 4th Congress of the organization (February 1958) laid down as its primary target the recruitment of more than half the adult population, mainly for the purpose of providing adequate civil defence training to minimize the effects of air attack. Only isolated reports are available on progress since then, but Kostroma Oblast is said to have 95% of its adult population enrolled (Kostroma Radio, 14th March 1959), while in Kherson, Kharkov and Zaporozhye oblasts the society has recruited 40-50% of the adult residents (Sovietsky Patriot, 13 February 1960). Even in rural Moldavia, which would seem an unlikely area for large-scale air attack, several raions had reached the 40% mark in the spring of last year (Kishinev Radio, 18 April 1959).

Needless to say there are also some backward regions, where recruiting is going slowly. Chelyabinsk Oblast has been rapped over the knuckles because "only" 20% of the adult population are members,² but the oblast has about 3,000,000 inhabitants, so even here the DOSAAF instructors are being kept extremely busy. Moreover they have been told by the organization's Central Committee that before the end of 1960 the 50% level is to be reached.

Ever since 1955, DOSAAF has been teaching civil defense, and by the end of 1956 85% of the population had already been given ten hours of instruction.³ In the meanwhile the training programme has grown more ambitious, due to the introduction of first a fourteen-hour and then a 22-hour curriculum, dealing with nuclear, chemical and bacteriological attack. Critics who argue that the effort expended is disproportionate to the programme's probable value in the conditions of a thermonuclear war need only be reminded that there is no proof that atomic and hydrogen weapons will ever be used. A

¹ Washington Post, May 13th, 1959.

² Voyennye Znaniya, No. 1, 1960.

³ Sovietsky Patriot, February 12th, 1958.

population well-trained in air-raid precautions is a considerable asset in conventional as well as thermonuclear war.

During the next two years, one of DOSAAF's biggest problems, the provision of adequate instructors, will be greatly eased by the abnormally high proportion of officers (250,000 out of a total of 1,200,000) to be demobilized in the fourth stage of the Red Army's current stream-lining operation. The skills of many of these men will not be wasted, because there is ample evidence that, like their predecessors of the 1955, 1956 and 1958 demobilizations, they will be expected to apply their professional knowledge to the leadership and training of the DOSAAF rank and file.

In view of this it is interesting that the 3rd Plenum of the DOSAAF Central Committee (November 1958) decided to place more emphasis in the 1960 training program than in recent years on the "technical sports", a euphemistic term which covers the training of motor-cycle dispatch riders, drivers, parachutists, glider pilots, radio operators, and snipers. (*Voyenniye Znaniya*, No. 12, 1959). A new addition to the trades which DOSAAF teaches is helicopter flying. It is claimed by the DOSAAF house organ that in the past two years the number of those engaged in these paramilitary activities has increased by more than 50% and that in the 1960-61 period 1,500,000 men and women will complete training courses in them. It may be significant that the latter figure is rather greater than the total number of men who will be affected by the fourth demobilization. Perhaps this was the *quid pro quo* offered to Marshal Malinovsky by Khrushchev during the talks between them which must have preceded the Supreme Soviet session in January.⁴ There is no reason to think that Khrushchev would have been unwilling to grant it, since it is militarily rational to train men on a part-time basis if the burden of training them full-time has become undesirably great, and the decision can be represented as a step towards Khrushchev's Utopian scheme for a territorial army when and if standing armies eventually become redundant.

In the meantime, however, and probably for many years to come, the pace of DOSAAF's current activities shows that with the exception of Communist China, the USSR remains the most extensively militarized society which a world at peace has ever known.

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⁴At which the fourth demobilization was announced.