

X RUSS - SOVIET STATEMENTS ON DEMOBILIZATION

F-99

MUNICH, 26 July 1961, Research and Evaluation (r.r.g.).

The first public sign of a run-down in the Soviet armed forces came in August 1955, when it was officially announced by the Kremlin that 640,000 men would be demobilized. At that time Khrushchev himself made no statement on the subject, perhaps because of the opposition of what later became the "anti-party group" and of Marshal Zhukov to his policy.

But in April 1956 during his visit to London with Bulganin, the Soviet leaders told the British:

"in confidence and in advance of the action they proposed to take later in the reduction of conventional weapons" (A. Eden's Memoirs, Full Circle, Cassell, London, p. 359).

In May 1956 the second demobilization <sup>was</sup> announced by the Soviet Government -- but again not by Khrushchev himself. This time 1,200,000 men were affected. (For full text of the statement see New York Times, 15 May 1956, p. 8.)

The third demobilization followed in January 1958, when it was stated that 300,000 men would be released (see Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. X, No. 1, p. 31, February 12, 1958). The announcement was publicized by Tass and Pravda.

The fourth demobilization began on January 14, 1960 at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet when Khrushchev personally announced another cut of 1,200,000 men. His statement covers about five pages of print, and is therefore too long to reproduce in full here, but some of the more significant passages follow:

"As is known, in the past four years the Soviet Union has unilaterally reduced its armed forces by a total of 2,140,000 men. Soviet troops have been withdrawn from the Rumanian People's Republic, and the numerical strength of our troops stationed under existing agreements in the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic has been considerably reduced.  
...

"Hitlerite Germany's treacherous attack on the Soviet Union and the bloody four-year war that followed forced us to increase our armed forces to 11,365,000 men by May, 1945.

"As a result of the demobilization carried out immediately after the war, by 1948 the numerical strength of the USSR Armed Forces had been reduced to 2,874,000 men. The Soviet Union took the course of considerably reducing its armed forces in the hope that the Western powers too would be guided by the ideas of safeguarding peace and friendship and would strengthen the relations established among the countries of the anti-Hitlerite coalition. But our hopes were not justified. As a result of the formation of the aggressive NATO bloc in the West and of blackmail with the atomic bomb at a time when we did not yet have it, the

Soviet Union was forced, in the interests of strengthening its defense against possible provocations, to increase its troops, which totaled 5,763,000 men in 1955.

"Subsequently, in the period 1955-1958, as I have already reported, the armed forces were reduced by 2,140,000 men, and they now total 3,623,000 men....

"The USSR Council of Ministers is submitting for your examination and approval a proposal to reduce our armed forces by another 1,200,000 men. (Stormy, prolonged applause.) If this proposal is adopted by the Supreme Soviet, our army and navy will number 2,423,000 men.

"Thus the numerical strength of our armed forces will be below the level indicated in the proposals advanced by USA, Britain and France during the discussion of the disarmament problem in 1956. These proposals set the level of the armed forces of the USSR and the USA at 2,500,000 men. We agreed to this proposal and many times advanced it ourselves, proceeding, of course, from the fact that this would be only the first step in a reduction of armed forces. Specifically, we cited these figures in proposals submitted by the Soviet government for the consideration of the UN General Assembly in the autumn of 1956. More than three years have passed since then, and no agreement has been reached on this question. Now we are submitting a proposal to reduce the armed forces to a still lower level, and we are doing this ourselves, without procrastination, without a waste of time and effort, without the nervous strain involved in endless arguments with our partners over the disarmament question...."

It is this fourth demobilization which has now been suspended by Khrushchev in an effort to "reheat" the atmosphere before the negotiations on Berlin and the German problem begin.