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THE FOURTH DEMOBILIZATION - TOWARDS THE PAX ATOMICA?

One of the reasons for Khrushchev's success as an orator is that he often has something new to say. By comparison with Stalin he is so full of ideas and so free with what used to be considered state secrets that many of his speeches achieve a maximum propagandist effect. That, however, does not mean that they can be dismissed as the operations of a brilliant publicity agent. For decades past the Soviet people and the West have had a legitimate cause for suspicion of the Kremlin because they have never been told officially the magnitude of the Soviet armed forces. Khrushchev has now closed this gap in the world's knowledge, and thereby has made it considerably easier for serious disarmament talks to take place, with some prospect of eventual success.

According to his figures,<sup>1</sup> the fluctuations in the level of the armed forces have been as follows:

	1937	1,433,000
	1941	4,207,000
May	1945	11,365,000
	1948	2,874,000
	1955	5,763,000
Jan.	1960	3,623,000
	1962 (plan)	2,423,000

These figures contain some surprises. The May 1945 figure will scarcely be disputed, since the US Armed Forces had also reached about 12,000,000 by the end of the war. The 1948 figure indicates a more sweeping demobilization than most Western experts had found credible, but it presumably refers to the period before the Berlin blockade. The 1955 figure is much higher than had been estimated in the US, where the Army Forces Combat Journal (Washington, No. 3, 1954) had suggested 4,700,000 to 4,900,000 for the previous year. Although there was an increase of nearly 12% in the Soviet defence budget in 1955 over 1954, no Western military analysis has approached the 5,763,000 mark. It is extremely difficult to see what Khrushchev would stand to gain by exaggerating this figure, and therefore it may well prove to be more accurate than the estimates of Western specialists. Experience of Soviet statistics has shown that when absolute figures are given they frequently can be relied on. If they are undesirable propagandistically, they are usually suppressed, or expressed in percentages of a meaningless or unknown base.

In this case there is no reason for Khrushchev to continue the Stalinist device of concealment. The 1960 figure which he gives is lower than the estimate of the Institute of Strategic Studies (3,900,000),<sup>2</sup> but this discrepancy might well be

<sup>1</sup> Tass January 14, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> 18 Adam Street, London, December 1959.

accounted for by the fact that Khrushchev considers the border guards as an armed police force, while the Institute has more realistically included them in its total. Most Western sources agree in asseessing the border guards at about 200,000.<sup>3</sup>

Thus at a time when the Western methods of calculating the size of the Soviet forces have developed to this degree of accuracy, Khrushchev might well ask himself whether anything further was to be gained by secretiveness. It is true that the Institute also believed that Khrushchev's last three demobilizations (September '55, 640,000 men; May 1956, 1,200,000; January 1958, 300,000) had in fact only affected about 1,100,000, but this is largely explained by its choice of too low a starting point <sup>4</sup> for its calculations.

An interesting cross-check on the rise and fall of the armed forces is provided by the published defense budget. It certainly does not disclose the total Soviet defence expenditures, but the broad harmony between the money voted<sup>5</sup> and the figures given by Khrushchev should not be overlooked:

Year	Billions of Rubles	% of total
1950	79.4	18.5
1951	96.4	21.1
1952	113.8	23.8
1953	110.2	20.7
1954	100.3	17.8
1955	112.1	19.9
1956	102.5	18
1957	96.7	16
1958	96.3	15
1959	96.1	14
1960	96.1	12.8

Khrushchev claims that his fourth demobilization will save 16-17 milliard rubles per annum, which is only one-sixth of the 1960 budget allocation. But the intention is to demobilize 1/3rd of the present numerical strength, and therefore there will clearly be ample funds available for the equipment of the remainder with more sophisticated and more expensive weapons.

In May 1956, General Gruenther, the Nato Commander at that time, said that he found it difficult to understand how the Soviet leaders could, in the atomic era, justify the retention of 175 divisions for such a long time (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, May 18th, 1956). The men in the Kremlin evidently agreed with him, since by the time the new demobilization is completed in 1962 the Red Army will not be able to field more than about 70 divisions, if the man-power needs of the air force, and navy are taken into account. As the London Times puts it today,

<sup>3</sup>e.g. H. Baldwin, The Great Arms Race, F.A. Praeger, N.Y. 1958, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>It took 5,000,000 (at Stalin's death) as its base-line.

<sup>5</sup>Le Monde, 7th November 1959.



"it is clearly high time the NATO authorities gave up using the time-honored figure of 175 divisions as a bogey for frightening their member countries. The Russians could not man anything like that number of divisions even on present Western strengths."

Moreover, it must be recalled that at the beginning of 1959, China had about 3,000,000 men under arms (President Eisenhower, speech in Washington on January 28th), and there is no evidence that Peking has been infected with Moscow's enthusiasm for slashing the standing army. Khrushchev has repeatedly emphasized that war is no longer inevitable (20th Party Congress), and that "capitalist encirclement" is out of date because it is not clear who is encircling whom (Le Figaro, March 19th, 1958), but should the need ever arise the Chinese could again provide the cannon-fodder, as they did once before in Korea. Secondly the vast size of Khrushchev's paramilitary force, Dogaaf, which now has a nominal strength of more than 20,000,000,<sup>6</sup> provides ample indigenous reserves for any necessary expansion.

Fortunately, Khrushchev has been careful not to make his fourth demobilization conditional upon a Western quid pro quo. As he put it:

"It is obvious that after the reduction in the personnel of the Soviet armed forces, we will not slacken our efforts to find an agreement with the Western countries on general and total disarmament."

Moreover in 1962 the Soviet plan involves a numerical strength slightly less than that of the US armed forces at present;<sup>7</sup> if it is carried out, a genuine reduction of the arms level on both sides of the iron curtain will be much easier to achieve, because both the US and the USSR would be starting from the same level. Further cuts could therefore be equal and simultaneous in both countries, provided that the present obstacle of adequate provision for inspection and control could be overcome. If Khrushchev is in earnest in proposing to demobilize one-third of his armed forces unilaterally, and at present there seems little reason to doubt him, then the prospects of an adequate control agreement are likely to be enhanced.

Similarly in the special field of nuclear development, the West was in the past forced to adopt a policy of nuclear deterrence by the knowledge of its inferiority in numbers of conventional divisions. If Khrushchev's plan goes through, the numerical inferiority of the West will be so reduced as to improve the hopes for nuclear disarmament as well.

At the time of the May 1957 demobilization announcement, Mr. John Foster Dulles, the former US Secretary of State, pointed out that extra man-power reserves working in the Soviet atomic industry would be much more dangerous than 1,200,000 men serving on guard duty or in peace-time barracks. This would certainly be true if the industry had ever been under-supplied

<sup>6</sup> Washington Post, May 13th, 1959.

<sup>7</sup> New York Times, Jan. 16th, 1959.

with manpower, but in the meantime the Draper Report to President Eisenhower (August 1959, USIS) has said:

"The Soviet Union now has or will soon have sufficient supplies of strategic (high yield) and tactical (low yield) atom weapons for use in any general or limited war; and delivery systems for launching them. The Soviet Union can, if it desires, furnish these weapons to communist China and other Communist countries."

Thus the point at which an overkill capacity is reached either has already arrived or will soon do so, since Khrushchev admits that the production and development of nuclear weapons is to continue. There is therefore no reason to fear that the men of the fourth demobilization will be transferred to weapons production. They will more probably be absorbed into the civilian economy, where industry is ahead of schedule while, partly as a result of the drought in 1959, agriculture lags far behind. Consequently it may well prove that a much higher percentage of the men of the fourth demobilization are drafted into agriculture than was the case with the first three.

The Deputy Chief of the Labor and Wages Department of Gosplan has already observed that there are plenty of jobs available, particularly in the North, Siberia, the Urals, the Far East and Kazakhstan, and that men going to collective farms and the virgin lands will enjoy special privileges (Tass, January 15th, 1960). This is a depressing prospect for the men concerned, but it is a sound indication of the areas in which many of them will find their civilian jobs.

Despite these probable individual hardships, the overall effect of the fourth demobilization can only be advantageous to the USSR, to E. Europe and to the free world. Moreover now that Khrushchev has told the world one of the USSR's major state secrets, there is still less reason for him to continue to oppose adequate inspection of disarmament plans. The West's diplomatic representatives may well argue that as he has taken the major decision, there can be no genuine reason for opposing the minor one - if his intentions are as innocent as he constantly proclaims.

r.r.g.