Gorbachov troop cuts exposed as fraud

by Konstantin George

Gorbachov's United Nations announcement of a "unilateral cut" in the Soviet Armed Forces was a well-staged propaganda trick, where the numerical cuts indicated will in fact greatly strengthen the Soviet Union's combat power. Moscow's fraudulent troop "reductions" are designed to catalyze U.S. troop reductions in West Germany, accelerating the process of United States-Europe strategic decoupling, and simultaneously open the door for fools and appeasers in Bonn to institute severe reductions in the size of the West German Armed Forces.

This intended effect was being achieved within hours of the conclusion of his U.N. speech. From West Germany, the appeasement leaders went into high gear, in the following public reactions, monitored from West German TV and radio:

- Christoph Bertram, former director of the London International Institute for Strategic Studies, now editor of the liberal pro-appeasement weekly *Die Zeit*. Interviewed on West German television, he called for a "20% reduction in the West German Armed Forces," and for NATO to scrap "its nuclear field artillery."
- Volker Rühe, deputy chairman of the parliamentary group of the governing Christian Democratic/Christian Social Union parties. He said on West German television that now "we must concentrate all of our energy on the negotiations in the conventional realm," to achieve troop cuts in Europe. A week earlier, Rühe had called for Bonn to spearhead a "new Western defense concept" which would eliminate nuclear battlefield artillery.
- Horst Ehmke, deputy chairman of the Social Democratic (SPD) opposition party parliamentary group: "It was a great speech. It was a great offer," and, now is the time for "a comprehensive answer to Gorbachov," with the goal of achieving "on both sides, a non-attack capability in Europe."
- Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, of the minority party in the ruling coalition, the Free Democrats. He was quick to declare that the West should eliminate anything that "could aggravate the next round" of conventional arms talks, and the West German government should abstain from calling for modernization of NATO nuclear weapons.

Gorbachov's announcement

Let's start by reporting what Gorbachov actually said, and then show the sinister increased war readiness plan behind the apparent "generous" move.

Gorbachov announced: "Today I can report to you that the Soviet Union has taken a decision to reduce its Armed Forces in the next two years by 500,000 men." Gorbachov then added, "We have decided to withdraw six tank divisions from the Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary, and to disband them. . . Airborne assault troops and assault landing units are also to be withdrawn." The withdrawn six tank divisions would amount to "a reduction by 50,000 men and by 5,000 tanks."

He also added that "airborne assault units . . . assault landing units" and some of the bridge-laying engineer units would be *withdrawn* as well.

Next, he declared that the total to be cut from the Soviet forces in Eastern Europe and in "the European part of the U.S.S.R.," would be "10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces, and 800 combat aircraft." Gorbachov then specified, "In agreement with the government there, a major portion of the Soviet troops stationed in Mongolia will return home."

The reality behind the fraud

Gorbachov himself tipped us off to a large part of the aims behind the so-called "disarmament" plan: "All of our forces and those of the Warsaw Pact are being reorganized. Their structure will be different from what it is now."

Over one year ago, *EIR* had reported that Moscow was in the midst of reorganizing its Ground Forces into a new corps and brigade structure, eliminating the division, and warned the West to watch out for a Soviet propaganda move taking the form of a grand announcement of "withdrawals" from their forces in Central and Eastern Europe, that would leave behind at best slightly smaller force levels, but with much greater firepower and mobility. Beyond that, the new structure allows for extremely rapid reinforcing and expansion of the corps and brigades to a much higher wartime strength.

Let's look at the facts, keeping in mind that the Soviet Army has three readiness categories among its Ground Forces troops: Category A, meaning fully combat ready and at full wartime strength; Category B, meaning 50-75% of wartime strength, and correspondingly under-equipped; Category C, meaning below 50% of wartime strength, the divisions with the poorest soldiers and the most outmoded equipment. Category C divisions tie down a significant fraction of the Soviet Armed Forces' logistical component to service and maintain these—from a combat standpoint—worthless units.

Fact 1. Broadly speaking, the cuts will eliminate Category C divisions and their manpower, giving the Soviet Ground Forces the "free energy" in terms of "liberated" manpower and resources to transform all Category B troops into Category A—full wartime readiness. Through the reorganization of the Ground Forces into the corps/brigade structure, Moscow gets a bonus increase in all crucial firepower and mobility. Here the purpose of Gorbachov's sleight of hand "unilateral cuts" move becomes clear. Had Moscow undertaken the same plan to upgrade its entire Ground Forces into full wartime readiness *without* "cutting" their size, even the blind and half-blind of the West's leadership would have seen the plan for what it is—an acute intensification of *war* preparations, or certainly, preparations for outward military thrusts.

Fact 2. Notice how Gorbachov only specified that the *divisions* to be withdrawn from Eastern Europe will be "disbanded," *not* the precious Category A manpower. The troops will be transferred to increase the combat readiness of other Soviet combat units in accordance with the plan we outlined above. Notice also that the airborne units will only be *withdrawn* from Eastern Europe, i.e., transferred elsewhere. These elite units are extremely mobile and can be back in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary within hours at any time. Ironically, by temporarily leaving Eastern Europe, they add tremendously to the Soviet airborne forces concentration available for *other* near future military missions, perhaps in the Balkans, or against Turkey or Iran, to cite but a few possible options.

Fact 3. The amount of troops to be withdrawn from Eastern Europe, some 50-60,000, is *less than 10%* of the Soviet forces stationed there.

Fact 4. Reflecting the internal crisis inside the Russian Empire, Gorbachov omitted any mention of reducing Soviet troop strength in Poland.

Equipment 'cuts'

Let us now analyze the "cuts" to be achieved in equipment categories.

Fact 5. The 10,000 tanks to be cut are T-55s and T-62s, that is, tanks built in the 1950s and 1960s, which are still used in the Category C divisions. Eliminating them will not only get rid of a lot of obsolete junk, but by giving Russia a large surplus of tank crews and maintenance personnel, allow Moscow to staff the remaining, strictly modern tank forces with a markedly higher quality of tank crews and tank repair troops.

Fact 6. The 800 combat aircraft to be disposed of are the ancient MiG-21s, flying coffins for their pilots in any modern war. Here again, nothing is lost.

Fact 7. The 8,500 artillery systems to be eliminated are *towed* artillery, and will thus complete the reorganization of artillery begun at the start of this decade, when Russia started a huge program to replace old towed artillery with highly mobile, far more combat effective, tank-like, self-propelled guns. If one actually includes the thousands of self-propelled guns added to the Ground Forces inventory during the 1980s, and those to be added over the next two years to replace these obsolete, indeed useless, towed artillery pieces, one gets a de facto increase in tank-like mobile, armored artillery, greater than the total of the 10,000 obsolete tanks now to be retired from service.

The final element underlying the fraud in Gorbachov's package was contained in his announcement that most Soviet troops would leave Mongolia. This would have soon occurred anyway. It was signaled at the end of November in the "agreement to settle border issues" signed by mainland China and Mongolia in Peking, directly prior to the Dec. 1 arrival of the Chinese foreign minister in Moscow, and all part of the moves toward a Soviet-Chinese summit.

The Mongolia announcement underscores that one of the main policy agreements worked out between Russia and mainland China has been for heavy reductions in the Soviet military presence opposite China. The Soviet troops in Mongolia are Category A, and like those to be withdrawn from Eastern Europe, will be *transferred*, in this case *away* from the Far East, and not disbanded. In short, behind the smokescreen of "reductions" in the Armed Forces, we will see an actual increase, a very large one, even in numerical terms, of totally combat-ready Soviet Armed Forces facing NATO, and in place for military operations in the Balkans or opposite Transcaucasia against Turkey or Iran.

If appeasement and illusions do not continue to blind Western governments, they too will see the same ugly and menacing reality taking shape behind the mask of Gorbachov's "reductions"' fraud.

From our archives: In our Nov. 27, 1987 (Vol. 14, No. 47) issue, under the headline, "European experts: Soviet arms control is a fraud!" *EIR* carried an exclusive report on a conference in The Hague on the theme, "Europe's Security After the Zero Option." The article stressed that the Soviet Ground Forces would be restructured along the lines of corps and brigades and that the division would soon disappear from the Soviet Order of Battle. We stated at that time: "With the new corps structure, Moscow can maintain a 'post-conventional cuts' Order of Battle in East Germany and Eastern Europe of corps with a strength of 24,000 men each. If and when Moscow decides for war, each corps can be almost overnight filled to a wartime strength of 41,000 men. And what counts the most, Moscow will have a structure which can best accomplish a 'deep strike offensive' and 'breakthrough' on the central front, i.e., against West Germany."