

Gorbachov's troop 'withdrawals' a fraud

by Konstantin George

Three months after Gorbachov's Dec. 7 U.N. announcement of a unilateral withdrawal of 50,000 troops from Eastern Europe, enough details have emerged to prove that, even numerically, the "withdrawal" conceals an actual *increase* in Soviet troop strength facing West Germany. Contrary to popular belief, there will be no *net* reductions among the Soviet forces based in East Germany, and an actual net *increase* of the Soviet forces stationed in Czechoslovakia.

How has this occurred?

The Soviets have linked their fraudulent pullout to a "restructuring" of their armed forces in accordance with a new "defensive" doctrine. These high-sounding words have formed the cover, under which Moscow is implementing an *offensive* reorganization of its armed forces, above all the ground forces, to place them on a war footing within the next two years. This includes an actual troop buildup in Eastern Europe.

Confirmation of this was given by Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov, in a March 2 Radio Moscow interview. Yazov announced that "some of our forces," referring to those based in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, "will be reorganized to increase their defense capabilities." He specified that:

1) Each of the nine Soviet motorized rifle divisions in the German Democratic Republic and the three in Czechoslovakia will replace its sole tank regiment with a motorized rifle regiment;

2) Each of the six remaining Soviet tank divisions in the G.D.R., and the one remaining tank division in Czechoslovakia, will replace one of its three tank regiments with a motorized rifle regiment;

3) Substantial "increases in anti-tank, artillery, and anti-aircraft" units will occur.

The troop strength additions that will result from the last point alone will at least offset the 20,000 troop strength of the four Soviet tank divisions leaving the G.D.R., and will cancel out the 5,300 troops leaving Czechoslovakia.

Add to this what Yazov did not state: that a Soviet tank regiment contains 1,600 men, while a motorized rifle regiment has 2,300 men. This measure will result in a net *increase* of 10,500 in Soviet troop strength in East Germany, and of 3,500 Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia.

In sum: 30,000 Soviet troops will leave East Germany, and at least the same number will be sent in, under the cover of "increasing defense capabilities." Some 5,300 will leave Czechoslovakia, but, at least 9,500 will be added, for a conservatively estimated increase of 4,200.

The expansion in anti-tank, artillery, and anti-aircraft capabilities is designed to raise the all-around combat capabilities of Soviet corps in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Beyond that, the "cuts" and reorganization give Moscow, politically, the best of both worlds, since the troop "cuts" propaganda coup gives better leverage in negotiating with the West.

The one category where an actual net Soviet reduction is taking place, namely, in tank strength, also conceals a fraud. Granted, some 5,300 tanks will be withdrawn from Eastern Europe during 1989 and 1990. However, during the 1980s, the Russian Groups of Forces in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary modernized their artillery forces, replacing the towed artillery of the motorized rifle formations with heavy-calibre self-propelled guns, and fast-moving mobile armored artillery pieces. The addition of self-propelled guns to the Soviet Groups of Forces over the past eight years far more than offsets the departing number of tanks.

On a war footing

The move to a war footing is not confined to the Groups of Forces in Eastern Europe, but involves a reorganization of the Soviets' entire ground forces. The dimensions of this program were revealed in the Feb. 23 Soviet Armed Forces Day speech given by the new chief of the general staff, General of the Army Mikhail Moiseyev. Moiseyev declared: "We are reorganizing our ground forces. . . . The number of motorized rifle divisions and tank divisions will be reduced by between 30 and 35%."

Thus, on paper, over 60 (mostly skeletal Category C divisions) of the 193 Soviet motorized rifle and tank divisions will be eliminated. The consequent consolidation will result in an army of 120-130 motorized rifle and tank divisions, fully manned, fully equipped with the most modern weapons, and most important, raised to total war readiness. This unit reorganization is in accordance with Moscow's new airborne/*spetsnaz*-centered offensive doctrine. Moiseyev omitted mention of any reductions concerning Russia's 7 airborne divisions, 12 air assault brigades, and vast *spetsnaz* forces.

The importance of Moiseyev's omissions can be seen in Moscow's mid-February naming of General of the Army Valentin Varennikov as commander in chief of the ground forces. Varennikov was selected in 1979 by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, as chief of the Operations Main Directorate, the brain center of the General Staff. In this capacity, he was at the center of Soviet war planning, and supervised the General Staff's Radio and Electronics Directorate. At the General Staff, it was Varennikov who directed the reorganization plans of the Soviet ground forces. In his new post, he will oversee the implementation of the reorganization plans.