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MY 2 IPTS: GORBACHEV'S SPEECH, 17 AUGUST: FOREIGN AND DEFENCE ASPECTS

SUMMARY

1. ROBUST DEFENCE OF SOVIET EXTERNAL POLICY IN THE FACE OF CRITICISM AND OLD THINKING FROM SOME OF THE MILITARY. ASSERTS THAT POLICY ENDORSED BY PARTY AND SUPREME SOVIET. FAMILIAR LINE ON EASTERN EUROPE: NO ALTERNATIVE NEED FOR MILITARY REFORM. THE REVIVED DEFENCE COUNCIL TO PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE. MAINTAINING THE UNION WAS A PREREQUISITE OF SECURING NATIONAL DEFENCE.

DETAIL

2. AFTER HIS LONG DEFENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES AGAINST THE ORTHODOX OPPOSITION, GORBACHEV WAS EQUALLY COMBATIVE ON THE ISSUES CLOSEST TO THE HEARTS OF THE OFFICER CORPS HE WAS ADDRESSING. HE RECALLED THAT SPEAKERS AT THE RUSSIAN AND USSR PARTY CONGRESSES, 'INCLUDING SOME MILITARY OFFICERS' HAD NOT ACCEPTED THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY. HE HOPED THAT HIS PRESENT AUDIENCE WOULD UNDERSTAND WHY HE HAD REACTED ANGRILY. HOWEVER THE CONGRESS HAD ENDORSED THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WHICH HAD ALREADY HAD PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL. HIS MESSAGE TODAY WAS 'ALL STATE BODIES (INSTANTSII), CONNECTED WITH INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, ARE OBLIGED TO BE GUIDED BY THAT IN THEIR ACTIVITIES'.

3. THE CORRECTNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LINE HAD BEEN FURTHER UNDERLINED BY THE END OF THE COLD WAR. THIS WAS BEING REFLECTED IN DEEDS AS WELL AS WORDS. ONE MIGHT ARGUE THAT THESE HAD BEEN TIMID SO FAR, BUT NOT WITH THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION: THE ELIMINATION OF AN ENTIRE CLASS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, THE IRREVERSIBLE INTENTION TO CUT STRATEGIC NUCLEAR ARMS AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES, AND TO ELIMINATE CHEMICAL WEAPONS. THIS HAD INDISPUTABLY STRENGTHENED SOVIET SECURITY.

4. IT WAS NOW NECESSARY TO REEXAMINE WHAT WAS MEANT BY SECURITY.

PREVIOUSLY THIS HAD BEEN REDUCED ESSENTIALLY TO THE MILITARY ELEMENTS. 'FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT AGREE WITH, OR UNDERSTAND, OUR FOREIGN POLICY, ITS WEAKEST POINT SEEMS THE CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE. I WON'T WASTE TIME EXPLAINING THE OBVIOUS: ANY ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THOSE CHANGES BY FORCE WOULD NOT HAVE STRENGTHENED OUR SECURITY, BUT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT US TO THE BRINK OR ARMED CONFLICT WITH NATO. IT WOULD AT LEAST HAVE DESTROYED ALL THAT HAD BEEN DONE IN PREVIOUS YEARS TO PUT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ON A HEALTHY FOOTING...I DON'T NEED TO ADD THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN REJECTED AND CONDEMNED BY THE PEOPLES OF THOSE COUNTRIES...LET US CONSIDER SENSIBLY AND HONESTLY THE QUESTION HOW OUR SECURITY HAS SUFFERED FROM THE EVENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE. I AM CONVINCED THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT HAS BEEN GRANTED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE REINFORCED ON SOUNDER MORE RELIABLE PRINCIPLES.'

5. GERMANY WAS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE, NOT LEAST BECAUSE SOVIET IDEAS OF SECURITY HAD BEEN SHAPED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR. 'BUT THE POST-WAR PERIOD HAS ENDED. THERE HAVE BEEN POSITIVE CHANGES IN EUROPE...WHICH HAVE ALLOWED THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY AND OUR POSITIVE RESPONSE TO IT.' HE ADDED, 'EVERYTHING WAS THOUGHT THROUGH THOROUGHLY, WE TOOK ACCOUNT OF ALL THE REALITIES. IN A WORD, I AM CONVINCED THAT OUR POLICY ON A UNITED GERMANY WAS THE ONLY SOUND AND CORRECT ONE AVAILABLE.'

6. TURNING TO DEFENCE QUESTIONS, GORBACHEV NOTED THAT THE BASIC SITUATION OF ARMED OPPOSITION HAD CHANGED RADICALLY. WE WERE MOVING TO A QUALITATIVELY NEW INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF STATES MILITARY POLICIES, WHICH WOULD DETERMINE IF THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER WORLD WAR. 'THE DIRECT THREAT OF A WAR MOUNTED AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION HAS DISAPPEARED.' BUT THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THE SOVIET UNION COULD DO WITHOUT THE ARMED FORCES APPROPRIATE FOR A MAJOR STATE, A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL. BUT ANOTHER FACTOR WAS THE SATURATION OF THE WORLD WITH ARMS. THE REALISATION OF THIS FACT HAD PROMPTED THE SOVIET UNION ON THE PATH OF DEMILITARISATION, WHICH IT INTENDED TO FOLLOW DOGGEDLY. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ACT 'WITH THE HIGHEST SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, WITH CONSTANT REGARD TO THE RELIABLE SECURITY OF THE NATION. THIS MEANS THAT THE PROCESS OF DISARMAMENT SHOULD BE JUST (IDTA NA RAVNYKH), ON THE BASIS OF OBSERVING BALANCE AT ALL STAGES.

7. MILITARY REFORM TRADITIONALLY FOLLOWED THE ENDING OF WAR. TODAY WAS THE SAME, SINCE THE COLD WAR HAD NOW COME TO AN END, AND THE ASPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENCE POLICY.

8. FIRST, TO DEFINE, IN BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY, THE NECESSARY SIZE OF THE ARMED FORCES. THIS WOULD REQUIRE THE ANALYSIS OF UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON THE DOCTRINES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE USA, NATO, AS WELL AS, JAPAN, CHINA, IRAN, PAKISTAN, INDIA, A STRING OF ARAB STATES, ISRAEL AND THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA. THEN ONE WOULD NEED TO SET THE OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC TASKS NEEDED FOR GUARANTEEING THE DEFENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE NUMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AS A WHOLE, AND IN THE CONSTITUENT ARMS. SECOND, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE CURRENT MAKE-UP OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES WAS CORRECT. SHOULD THERE BE FIVE ARMS OF SERVICE?

8. THIRD WAS THE QUESTION OF CALCULATING, ON A NEW RATIONAL BASIS, TAKING STRICT ACCOUNT OF DEFENSIVE SUFFICIENCY, WHAT RESOURCES COULD BE DEVOTED TO DEFENCE. GORBACHEV IDENTIFIED VARIOUS BUDGET AREAS: DAY TO DAY RUNNING COSTS, INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING READINESS, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, BULK (SERIINYE) PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT AND ARMS, DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR PERSONNEL AND OFFICERS' FAMILIES, ACCOMODATION CAPITAL AND RUNNING COSTS, EDUCATION ETC. A PRESSING PROBLEM WAS THE COSTS INVOLVED IN THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM ABROAD. THE SOCIAL ISSUE, JUST AS THE PROBLEMS SUFFERED BY OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES REQUIRED NOT ADHOC SOLUTIONS BUT A PROPER PROGRAMME, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOW EXAMINING.

9. FOURTH, GORBACHEV ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF A PROFESSIONAL ARMY. THE PREVAILING VIEW FAVOURED THE MIXED APPROACH OF A PROFESSIONAL CADRE OF OFFICERS, SENIOR NCOS AND LONG-TERM CONTRACT SOLDIERS, SUPPLEMENTED BY SERGEANTS AND PRIVATES FOUND BY UNIVERSAL CONSCRIPTION. BUT OTHERS THOUGHT THE TIME HAD COME TO MOVE TO A FULLY PROFESSIONAL ARMY. HIS FIFTH POINT WAS TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SERVICE SHOULD BE UNION-WIDE, OR ORGANISED ON A TERRITORIAL BASIS, OR A MIXTURE OF THE TWO. EARLIER, HE HAD INSISTED, WHEN TALKING OF THE NEW UNION TREATY THAT THE DEFENCE OF THE CONSTITUENT REPUBLICS WAS INDIVISIBLE, AND THERE COULD NOT BE ANY SYSTEM OF REPUBLICAN ARMIES.

10. GORBACHEV SAID THAT ALL THESE ISSUES WOULD BE DISCUSSED IN 'THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENCE COUNCIL' IN SEPTEMBER, BEFORE BEING PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT. HE STRESSED THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP WAS NORMAL AND THEIR WORK PROCEEDED IN A BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER. A DEFENCE COUNCIL HAD BEEN FORMED TO ADVISE THE PRESIDENT, WHICH WOULD DISCUSS AND EXAMINE ALL MILITARY QUESTIONS. IT WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE CORRESPONDING COMMITTEES OF THE SUPREME SOVIET.

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