

C/S - THE LONG MARCH

MUNICH, AUG 21 (CNR) - THE SOVIET UNION FLEXED ITS MILITARY MUSCLE ACROSS THE FACE OF NORTH EASTERN EUROPE DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS AS THE CONFRONTATION WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA DREW TO A CLIMAX.

THERE HAVE BEEN THREE DISTINCT MILITARY EXERCISES CENTERED IN AND AROUND CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND A FOURTH IN THE BALTIC.

IN ADDITION, A LARGE BUT UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF SOVIET TROOPS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ITSELF TOOK PAINFUL WEEKS TO PLOD ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON THEIR RETURN TO BASES IN THE SOVIET UNION AND POLAND - ONLY TO TURN AROUND AGAIN LAST NIGHT.

IT ALL BEGAN ON JUNE 21 WITH THE OPENING OF WARSAW PACT STAFF EXERCISES MAINLY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BUT SPREADING INTO THE SOVIET UNION, POLAND AND EAST GERMANY.

THESE EXERCISES, INVOLVING FORCES OF THE SOVIET UNION, HUNGARY, EAST GERMANY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND POLAND, WERE STATED BY THE COMMANDER OF THE WARSAW PACT, SOVIET MARSHAL IVAN YAKUBOSKY, TO INVOLVE ONLY COMMAND STAFF, SIGNAL AND TRANSPORT AND AUXILIARY UNITS.

YAKUBOVSKY SAID THE MANOEUVERS WERE DESIGNED AS OPERATIONAL TRAINING FOR COMMANDERS AND STAFF EXERCISES.

BUT LITTLE BY LITTLE IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THERE WAS A CONSIDERABLY LARGER NUMBER OF TROOPS INVOLVED. IT WAS VARIOUSLY EXPLAINED IN AN OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED CZECHOSLOVAK PRESS THAT THESE WERE ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND TROOPS NEEDED TO REPAIR EQUIPMENT. IT WAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT ONE SOVIET TANK UNIT WAS BEING USED AS A MARKING UNIT.

(MORE)

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by