

CN 176

C/S - 1ST ADD - THE LONG MARCH (CN - 175) XXX EQUIPMENT

ON JUNE 30 THE MANOEUVRES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ENDED - IN A FOG OF CONFUSION.

THE SOVIET NEWS AGENCY TASS ANNOUNCED THAT THE EXERCISE WAS OVER, AND THEN WITHDREW THE REPORT, SAYING IT WAS UNTRUE.

THE NEXT DAY THE CZECHOSLOVAK NEWS AGENCY SAID THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL WAS NOT CORRECT AND THAT THE MANOEUVRE HAD IN FACT ENDED. THIS WAS CONFIRMED LATER IN THE DAY BY CZECHOSLOVAK DEFENCE MINISTER GENERAL MARTIN DZUR, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT ANNOUNCED FROM THE SOVIET UNION FOR ANOTHER 11 DAYS.

THEN BEGAN THE SLOW, MONTH-LONG MARCH OF THE SOVIET UNITS OUT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IT WAS TO TAKE A MONTH. NOT UNTIL AUGUST 3 - THE DAY OF THE BRATISLAVA SUMMIT MEETING - WAS IT OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE LAST SOVIET TROOPS HAD LEFT THE COUNTRY.

DURING THOSE FOUR WEEKS IT WAS NEVER CLEAR JUST HOW MANY SOVIET TROOPS WERE STILL IN THE COUNTRY, OR HOW MANY WERE MOVING WHERE.

SEVERAL TIMES CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA REPORTED THAT FINAL WITHDRAWALS OF SUCH THINGS AS "COMMUNICATIONS UNITS" AND "PACKING UNITS" WERE IMMINENT, AND THEN A FEW DAYS LATER FURTHER DELAYS WOULD BE ANNOUNCED.

TRAFFIC ON THE ROADS WHICH FORCED THE SOVIET TROOPS TO MOVE ONLY AT NIGHT WAS GIVEN AS ONE REASON FOR THE SLOW PROGRESS.

BUT AT ONE POINT - JULY 11 - A CZECHOSLOVAK DEFENCE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SAID POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA WERE DELAYING THE WITHDRAWALS.

ON JULY 17 A PRAGUE NEWSPAPER REPORTED THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK DEFENSE MINISTER HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN TOLD HOW MANY FOREIGN TROOPS HAD BEEN SENT INTO THE COUNTRY FOR THE EXERCISE. THIS WAS OFFICIALLY DENIED LAST WEEK - ONE MONTH LATER - BY THE MINISTRY.

(MORE)

BG/HE/PTAUG 21

1418/68

by