

Remarks by Y.I. Shaposhnikov [to the USSR State Council meeting]

November 4, 1991

Esteemed comrades! Against the background of the deepening disintegration of society, the growth of the socio-economic crisis, and sharp interethnic conflicts, the threat of a dangerous crisis in the military sphere is becoming increasingly real.

What are the signs of this crisis? The erosion of the general system of defense, the undermining of the unity of command, the breakdown of the autumn draft for the USSR Armed Forces, and the growth of tension in military units including on ethnic grounds. There is also the confusion, I want to say plainly, the misunderstanding of our actions by the international community. And that makes it impossible to carry out a high-quality military reform.

Unfortunately, despite the measures taken by the Ministry of Defense to coordinate and consolidate the actions of the republics in the military sphere, the preconditions for the crisis are deepening, and the actions of the Ministry of Defense to consolidate efforts in some republics are being perceived negatively.

Therefore, if urgent and decisive measures are not taken, this may draw the Armed Forces into a political confrontation with all the fatal consequences that this would entail. And the USSR, in the end, may turn into a conglomerate of antagonistic principalities. The most complex conditions are currently developing around the Armed Forces in Ukraine; the situation in Azerbaijan has seriously deteriorated, and the situation with the troops in Georgia is concerning. The Baltic states are putting forward demands for the immediate withdrawal of troops from their territory. A most difficult situation is unfolding regarding the [autumn] draft. The mobilization resource has decreased due to the withdrawal of the Baltic republics from the Union.

Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan declared the main principle for the conscription of troops to be territorial. Armenia has not taken part in four drafts already. There is a real threat of a breakdown of the draft and staffing of troops. This could cause a loss of combat effectiveness among units and formations, including those on airborne alert in air defense, missile defense, and CPRN [missile attack warning system], and so on. If we do not stop these processes, then in one or two years the armies located on the territory of the republics will become national nationalized on their own.

The texts of the military oath worked out by some republics are also not conducive to unity within military units, where interethnic conflicts already take place. As a result, unilateral actions by some republics are actually blocking the functioning of the unified defense system, which has been established over decades. Over these decades, a unified infrastructure, a unified aerospace and military-strategic sphere, structures of intelligence, personnel training, and troop staffing have been created. The composition of the troop groupings did not take into account the borders of the republics. The vital activities of the troops have been carried out in a centralized manner.

Our commitments relating to cuts in the Armed Forces, in the framework of disarmament, also did not take into account the republics' borders. This leads one to the conclusion that regardless of the form of the [future] state structure, the terms of all the treaties must be observed, and this can only be achieved with a unified Ministry of Defense and General Staff.

Accordingly, after the completion of these processes, the Armed Forces cannot be a subject of division, nationalization or privatization. On the other hand, the desire of the sovereign republics to have their own national armed forces is legitimate, especially since the leaders of the sovereign republics (I have some of them in mind) often find themselves in a difficult position as well, as if they are between a rock and a hard place. I am referring to the demands of the radical wing in parliaments to have their own armed forces on the one hand, and the views of their leaders, on the other.

Therefore, we need prompt, constructive, and mutually acceptable decisions that meet the highest interests of the entire state and sovereign republics, and at the same time satisfy the world community, which could be adopted during the transition period. At the same time, I am asking you to support me in my position that neither weapons, nor equipment, nor indeed military units should be divided on the basis of ethnicity, let alone chaotically and uncontrollably. It is necessary to find civilized and worthy ways of solving these difficult issues at the present stage.

In this regard, the Ministry of Defense, without questioning the right of republics to address defense issues, submits the following proposals for consideration by the members of the State Council.

First. To form an Advisory Committee of the defense ministers of the sovereign states, which should be instructed to develop common approaches in defining the main positions of

military policy, economics, the development of the Armed Forces, and their support and management.

Second. The Ministry of Defense of the USSR and the General Staff should provide assistance in the formation of the structures of the republican Ministries of Defense, since many republics have already made such decisions and have appointed such Ministers of Defense by the Supreme Soviets. And the rest of the structures. To delegate to them, after their establishment, such functions as management of civil defense, military recruitment stations, training youth for military service, participation in the development of issues of military policy, [military] economy, budget, and doctrine. [To grant them the authority of] daily management and support of the national guards formed on the basis of the internal troops of the republics and financed from the republics' budgets, as well as full participation of the republics in the work of military councils and associations deployed on their territories.

Interaction between the command of the troops on the territory of the republics and the government authorities is to be implemented according to the following chart. Here in the left corner, on the left side of this chart, you can see... There are military districts on the territory of the republics, as in the Russian Federation, in Ukraine, in Belarus, and in other republics. One district includes several republics. There are also commanders who are based on their territory. We request that these senior commanders be included in the Defense Councils of the republics, and from the Defense Council of each republic a plenipotentiary representative should be delegated to those associations as a member of the Military Councils.

As a result, the State Council of each republic will understand what the Armed Forces are doing through these representatives. These new relations require, of course, refinement and a mechanism. Therefore, the Ministry of Defense asks for permission from the State Council to enter into negotiations with the Councils of Ministers of the republics on all these issues in order to conclude the necessary agreements.

Third. It is necessary to determine the status of the Armed Forces on the territory of the sovereign states and to affirm it with a special provision.

Fourth. The Ministry of Defense is appealing to the State Council with a request to guarantee the autumn draft of citizens for military service in accordance with the quotas developed by the General Staff and the republics. It should be kept in mind that reforming the

recruitment system will require serious efforts from all the republics and, naturally, will entail significant costs.

By the way, the defense budget has not yet been discussed, and there are less than two months left before the beginning of 1992. Therefore, we ask the State Council to take measures to accelerate the process of formulating the defense budget for 1992, which cannot be drastically reduced, and given the indexing of prices and the reforming of the draft system, naturally, it might be larger than in 1991.

Unfortunately, due to the general economic confusion, there have been serious delays in the financing of the troops and the Navy, industrial production, and major construction; the provision of the Armed Forces with weapons and military equipment, food, medicines, and POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricant] is in danger of collapse. There are delays in paying salaries to our military personnel.

The debt for financing Soviet troops stationed abroad now amounts to 150 million hard-currency equivalent rubles, including 125 million for the maintenance of troops in the WGF [Western Group of Forces] and Poland, and also for paying the cost of military transport through the territory of Poland and Mongolia ...

Taking into consideration the repayment of this debt, the minimum need for foreign currency by the end of the year could amount to more than 300 million rubles. In this regard, taking into account the dis of the MFER [Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations] of the USSR, we propose to allow the Ministry of Defense to create a commercial center for selling [military] assets on the territory of these countries, because transportation by rail in Poland is very expensive. And in fact, we estimated, what would cost us more—transportation, or, so to speak, leaving [the assets] in place and selling them there. Of course, it would be leaving them and selling them there. But, of course, an inventory would have to be taken [of the assets].

End of the Report of Y.I. Shaposhnikov.

... In addition, we need a Committee for military policy and economics, which would support it, substantiate it, and so on, and so on, and so forth. I want to transform the deputy element into a committee of deputies for logistics—the Committee for logistical support. The construction and

accommodation of troops is not for a deputy but the Committee for construction and accommodation. Civil defense is the same, because it is all-encompassing, so to speak. Well, here too ... I have already said that the social and legal protection of military personnel is the same as the financial and budgetary, and the state technical commission, that are in place. But these are committees. Otherwise they would all be elevated to the rank of deputy ministers. The public is always saying: why do you have 12 deputies? Well, there won't be 12, there will be committees, they will be half civilian, and this, in general, is a civilized way of improving the structure of the Ministry of Defense as a whole.

And last but not least. Comrades! I want to say that the Armed Forces are one of the government structures that characterize the general stability of the state both in the international arena and within it. With regard to our Union, this is one of the last structures which is still holding on and which obliges the world community to consider us, both the negative and the positive, with which we are dealing.

We have a very difficult economic situation ahead of us, which has been mentioned here. A hard winter. Russia's most potent program is initiating the pulling of our country out of the crisis. Without solving these problems, we cannot but plunge the country into chaos. Especially, if we also start dividing the Armed Forces. Therefore, I appeal to the members of the State Council, I urge them to show the utmost balance and responsibility, to not allow emotions to overwhelm common sense [in connection with] the problems of the Armed Forces. Otherwise, not to frighten anyone, but I want to say that we may find ourselves—not only without the Armed Forces, but without something much bigger.

With that said, we have worked out proposals for resolving these issues, with charts that were distributed to the members of the State Council. Without claiming they are the ultimate truth, I ask [you] to study them, express your opinion, give an assessment, and make a decision. Thank you for your attention.

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