

'Shield' demands tools for production

A programmatic resolution passed in January by "Shield," the organization of younger officers in Russia, Ukraine, and other states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, exemplifies the revival of "American System" dirigist economic policies now under way within certain institutions in the republics of the former Soviet Union. It demands the creation of a CIS "special fund" to finance the means to enable hundreds of thousands of soon to be demobilized soldiers and officers to become productive, modern private farmers. This plan is the cornerstone of a demand for full social protection for all active and demobilized officers, soldiers, and their families.

The resolution is a striking example of a revival of late 19th-early 20th century "American System" dirigist traditions exemplified by the policies of Count Sergei Witte, who transformed Russia into a leading food exporter, gave it the highest industrial growth rate in the world, and the prospect of becoming Europe's leading industrial power by the 1920s, had not World War I and the Bolshevik nightmare intervened. We reprint the full text of the resolution.

Resolution of Shield Moscow Union

In evaluating the situation unfolding in the country and in the Armed Forces, the conference considers that the question of social protection in the full sense for military serviceman, military dependents, conscript members, and members of their families, should be decided at the national level.

The formation of the CIS does not carry full clarity on defense questions. The instability of the political and economic situation is also being reflected within the ranks of the Armed Forces. Many nations of the former Union have expressed the demand for the creation of their own Armed Forces. This is their right to create their own Armed Forces, as with any sovereign nation. Since these countries took part originally in the creation of the Soviet Armed Forces, these countries therefore have the right to decide the fate of the Armed Forces of the former Union.

Concerning what this fate will be and who will determine it, the role of each nation ought to remain proportional to its share in the common budget of the former Federation and its former republics. This can be arranged by the council representing the heads of state of the nations of the CIS. And

the sooner this is done, the sooner the present unnecessary and dangerous tensions will be lifted.

The biggest concerns for the military are that which the impending budget cuts will call forth, and the absence of a reliable system of social protection. Moreover, any military servicemen ought to be reassured that when he goes into retirement after years of service, or in the case of loss of their ability to work (disability), he can receive sufficient pension and benefits, housing, and a plot of land. This can only be guaranteed by law. Under the absence of such guarantees, the Army will cease to be a clearly defined organism, turning into an unruly system. And what can happen when the Armed Forces get out of any governmental control was demonstratively shown by the Yugoslav experience. This [Yugoslav model] variant for nations and states of the former Union is most unwelcome and must be excluded. That is why we call on the heads of the states of the former Union to sit down at the negotiating table, and hold negotiations on the entire complexity of questions concerning the Armed Forces.

It is necessary to therefore quickly adopt a package of laws which would guarantee departing military servicemen a normal status and conditions to enable them to adapt to the free market conditions now beginning. In this context we call for the following:

- The right to professional retraining, at state expense.
- The receipt of adequate severance pay, including to cover retraining.
- The receipt of credit on favorable terms.
- The right to a free plot of land, together with favorable terms for procuring equipment and materials required for farming.
- Exemption during the first three years after service from all taxes.
- Obviously for this program to be realized, the creation of a special state fund is needed, for the protection of military servicemen, their dependents, conscripts, and their families. Such a fund can be created in part on the basis of allocations drawn from the profits of entrepreneurs, shareholding companies, bourses, and banks. Thus, allocations into the fund will come in part from private enterprises, the rest from the state and state enterprises. Proceeds from the fund will back state guarantees for retaining production enterprises, ensuring the supply of the construction materials, farm production technology, fertilizer, and equipment required.

All these measures will allow, on the one hand, the lifting of social tensions caused by the burden of uncertainty on military servicemen, and on the other hand they will give the reforms a healthy impetus. One can expect no less. Any delay in this threatens to have irreparable consequences, the breakdown of all that has been achieved to date, and halting in its tracks the first steps of democratic reform. People must be assured that their earthly labors are being protected, and those to be protected must receive firm guarantees that they will possess proper social protection.