

# PROVIDING FOR THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD TO MARKET RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATION

*Oleg Duko*

*Chairman of the Committee on Economic Issues of Defence  
Ministry of Economy, Republic of Belarus*

The Republic of Belarus is a newly independent European state with an economy in transition where the consequences of the militarization of the economy and the Cold War are most evident. As recently as six years ago, Belarus stationed attack troops of the second strategic echelon of about 250,000 persons who were divided into 10 divisions of the Soviet Army. Belarus was ahead of many European countries with regard to heavy arms. In addition to conventional arms, Belarus housed tactical and strategic nuclear arms, namely: three divisions of strategic troops with 81 mobile nuclear missiles "Topol" or SS-25 type. This war armada was intensively serviced by a powerful military-industrial complex created in Belarus whose share in the industry of the Republic was between 40 to 60% with at least one million people being involved in military production and its service sectors.

From the time of independence, Belarus has been carrying out a consistent policy aimed at the disarmament and demilitarization of the economy. Proceeding from the defensive military doctrine, military forces have been reduced by 165,000 persons and now total some 85,000. About 2,000 tanks and a similar number of armed vehicles have been destroyed. November 27th 1996 is an historic date for Belarus, being the date when the last nuclear missile was withdrawn from the country. That was also the last nuclear missile stationed in Central and Eastern Europe. Belarus has fulfilled fully its international commitments on the withdrawal of nuclear arms. Thus, our country has made a huge contribution to the reduction of the threat of war and to the normalization of the military and political situation in Europe, thereby gaining the trust of World society.

However, the fulfilment of these commitments has become a heavy burden for the Belarussian economy which is still in the state of protracted economic crisis which has been exacerbated by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Demilitarization represents a most complicated and complex problem

related to the solution of social, economic and ecological tasks. As international experience shows, progress is complicated by and connected with great financial expenditures even when performed by industrially developed states. A specially difficult situation faces former military bases and settlements. More than 200 military settlements have been handed over for civil use since 1992. Tens of thousands of people who were connected with military service or other services rendered to the military have lost their jobs and have been left to solve their problems by themselves. These settlements are located mostly in outlying areas far from populated areas where it is impossible to find a job.

Defence and safety provision in the Republic of Belarus is at the same time strictly influenced by the difficulties of transition from command methods to a free market economy. It would seem natural that the creation of the national army on the basis of the disbanded Belarusian Military okrug would not cause any serious problems. The Republic inherited hundreds of fully-equipped military settlements, stores, bases, arsenals, remount plants, workshops, a great deal of modern arms and technics, ammunition and other military equipment. However, this complicated military infrastructure turned out to be a heavy burden for a small Republic since conversion and its material and technical provision leads to the depletion of what is a limited military budget. And along with this surplus of military technics and arms, the national army suffers from a deficit in many positions.

At the same time, the annual expenditure per serviceman in the Belarussian army is several times lower than international standards. Under the conditions of limited financing when the main expenditures are for wages, salaries, food, communal services and fuel, there is almost no money left to pay for new types of military technology and arms and for their maintenance. Such problems with army financing encouraged the most effective use of the resources allotted for defence and security.

The reduction in both military production and armed forces in Russia, Belarus and other CIS countries have been a serious blow to many enterprises and science-research institutions of the Military-Production Complex of the USSR. During the conversion of many enterprises and institutions of the complex, the mutual interests and previously formed contacts were often not taken into account. At the present time, only some 40 out of 100 science-production units are still producing spare parts in cooperation with enterprises of the Russian Military-Production Complex. The science-production potential of the defence branch is seriously harmed because of qualified personnel outflows. Production capacities are not used fully.

One feature of the Belarusian Military-Production Complex is that it is not - despite its high quality and potential - oriented towards final production and cannot be regarded as a production and technical base for the national army. The arms and technical material supply to the units of the Belarusian Military okrug were provided mainly from the enterprises of the Russian Federation. Thus, making a brief summary of the conditions regarding the financing of

defence and security matters in the Republic of Belarus, one cannot but underline a set of peculiarities which must be taken into account during the transition to a market economy:

- First, the production and technological dependence of the defence enterprises of the Republic on the Military-Production Complex of the Russian Federation. Opportunities to produce even limited types of arms and military technology based on existing facilities do not exist, at least in the near future. This means that Belarus will be oriented even further towards the supply of arms and military technology from outside, mainly from the Russian Federation.
- Second, that the surplus supply over demand of the basic types of arms inherited from the Belarusian Military okrug will allow the Belarusian army, despite its existing difficulties and for some 5-10 years into the future, maintain its readiness spending at only some 1.2-1.3% of GNP for defence. By comparison, the majority of European countries with highly developed economies allocate between 2 and 4% of GNP to the military.
- Third and finally, the basic factor at the present time during the transition period is the dependence of defence financing upon overall economic performance which is even greater now than in the former USSR. Defence and safety provision to the desired level is impossible to achieve without visible improvements to both the production sphere of the economy and income to the state budget.

The state centralized economic model in the USSR was formed in the 1930s and functioned well enough until the 1980s. The tightest control was in the Military-Production Complex. All of its activities were regulated by the state: placement of the production order, supply of raw materials, transport deliveries, management, output prices and so on. The state was the owner and manager of all the material factors of military production and management and maintained the USSR at a leading position in the world arms market. The union branch Ministries, the State Planning Committee Departments and the Republican Ministries were the organizers of military production. The role of coordinator in this field was played by the Military-Industrial Commission of the CPSU Central Committee.

It is worth mentioning that the centralised system had certain advantages, especially in the sphere of military production management and maintaining military parity between the Cold War opponents. These advantages were understood by the leading developed countries. As the analytical works show, the most effective method is a combination of central production order management combined with a contract system for its realization on a competitive basis.

The integration process between Belarus and Russia in defence and security matters has progressed far in recent years. According to the Treaty signed on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 in Moscow and according to the Union of Belarus and Russian Statute signed on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1997, the following significant tasks in the field of defence and security were highlighted:

- coordination of the activities of the participating Union states in the area of military build-up and development of their Armed Forces including joint use of military infrastructure;
- joint defence procurement; provision for the delivery and sale of armaments and military equipment, establishment of a joint maintenance system for the Armed Forces of Union member states;
- implementation of a coordinated border policy, the development and realization of joint programmes on border issues, the provision for interoperability of the border troops' command and control systems.

The work in this sphere is being done through the creation of a sound basis for defence and safety provision, common military construction, promotion of military equipment by the defence enterprises of the Russian Federation and Belarus, joint efforts in the protection of the inviolability of the territories of the participating states, guarding and equipping borders, and finally the joint fight against organized crime, corruption, terrorism and other kinds of illegality. Special Union bodies were created for the achievement of these tasks: the Committee on Security Matters, Border Committee of the Union, Joint Collegium of Defence Ministries, Joint Collegium of Internal Ministries. The mutual efforts of State Security bodies, Ministries and other state bodies are used to work out the conception of a common defence policy and Union security provision.

In the field of joint defence and military construction, a "Treaty on Military Cooperation and Agreement on Joint Region Safety Provision in the Military Sphere" was signed and the "Common Principles for the Military Construction and the Military Infrastructure Usage and the Conception of the Joint Defence Policy of Belarus and Russia" was approved. These documents have allowed the mechanism of agreed decisions in the field of joint defence policy to become reality. They concern planning, the provision of a regional western group of troops, and the modernisation of military infrastructure.

To conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to remind Colloquium participants of the fact that the Republic of Belarus, as a state with an economy in transition, strictly demands external financial and technical assistance for the fulfilment of measures connected with the demilitarization of the Belarusian economy and for the rehabilitation of former military settlements. World community assistance in this sphere will positively influence not only Belarusian development but will finally improve the stability and safety of human development in the European region and the World. I am confident that meetings such as this will help us to develop our experience and successful cooperation in the framework of the "Partnership for Peace" programme.