

Gorbachov's purges signal gear-up of the war economy

by Konstantin George

Mikhail Gorbachov arrived at the Geneva summit amid much speculation about what sort of demands, offers, and deals he had in his briefcase. But he tipped his hand—for anybody paying attention—with a number of high-level personnel changes in Moscow on the eve of the summit.

The Gorbachov purges, sweeping the Soviet Union since he became general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party last March, are accelerating toward the 27th congress of the party in February 1986. Without exception, the changes are elevating those economic leaders who have marked themselves as capable of and intent on carrying out a dramatic mobilization of the Soviet economy as a full-fledged war economy. The countries of Eastern Europe have been caught up in the same process.

Nearly 20 government ministers have been replaced since March. The latest changes, again, touch defense-related ministries: Minister of the Electronics Industry Alexander Shokin retired "for health reasons" Nov. 18, to be replaced by Vladislav Kolesnikov, 60, an engineer by profession. On Nov. 2, Apollon Sytsov succeeded Ivan Silayev as Minister of the Aircraft Industry; Silayev became a deputy prime minister. During a June 1985 visit to the aircraft plant in Kiev, Ukraine which produces the Antonov-124, the world's largest military transport plane, Gorbachov singled out the Soviet aircraft industry for special praise.

Silayev was only the latest of several leading lights of defense-sector industries, to join the upper echelon of the government—the deputy prime ministers and first deputy prime ministers. Gorbachov has thoroughly pruned the Council of Ministers of "dead wood," with the included ouster of octogenarian Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov, a holdover from the Leonid Brezhnev era, in September. The new prime minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov, is a former engineer and plant manager in the machine tool industry. His two new first

deputy prime ministers, named in October, are the new chairman of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), Nikolai Talyzin, and party official Vsevolod Murakhovskii, from Gorbachov's home province of Stavropol (see *EIR*, Oct. 25, 1985, "Soviet Central Committee Plenum backs Gorbachov's war-economy drive").

On Nov. 15, as Gorbachov packed his bags for Geneva, two veteran deputy prime ministers were replaced by men linked to the Soviet war economy. Deputy Prime Ministers Leonid Smirnov and Nikolai Martynov retired in favor of Lev Voronin, 57, and Yuri Maslyukov, 48, both of whom worked until now at Gosplan. Smirnov had headed the government's Military Industrial Commission and Martynov the State Committee for Material and Technical Supply.

The experience and careers of the two new deputy prime ministers demonstrate that raising the efficiency of the Soviet war economy is the main goal of these purges. Maslyukov, who succeeds Smirnov, was promoted to be a deputy chairman of Gosplan at the age of 45, in 1982, when Yuri Andropov and Mikhail Gorbachov were just beginning to shake out the entrenched Brezhnev machine men. He has worked closely with the new Gosplan chairman, Talyzin.

The case of Voronin is even more telling. Martynov's successor at the State Committee for Material and Technical supply comes from Sverdlovsk, the same defense industry city as Prime Minister Ryzhkov. Voronin was a key official in the Ministry for Defense Industry since 1968, and became first deputy chairman of Gosplan in 1980.

Voronin was a key speaker at the June 10, 1985 special Central Committee conference called by Gorbachov, to plan the accelerated introduction of science and technology into the Soviet economy. There, as documented in the *EIR* Special Report *Global Showdown*, Voronin championed "special attention . . . to the election of those directions of scientific

and technological progress, which give the greatest effect in the framework of the entire national economy. . . . In the long term, the increase in efficiency of production is connected with the creation and widespread utilization of fundamentally new technologies—laser, plasma, radiation, membrane, biotechnical, and others.” Here and elsewhere; Voronin thus has identified himself as a director of the industrial sectors being mobilized for Soviet beam weapons development and other military programs.

Writing in the military daily *Krasnaya Zvezda* in July, Voronin made a grim allusion to what was accomplished in the brutal pre-war period of the 1930s, as he outlined the tasks of today: “To overcome all the obstacles on the path of introducing the achievements of science and technology into production, and thus to accelerate the rate of socio-economic development, is no easy task. But this task, without doubt, will be solved, just as in their day, the grandiose task of industrializing the country, collectivization of agriculture, and the cultural revolution were carried out, under the leadership of the party.”

Under the reign of Andropov and now of Gorbachov, the Soviet Politburo has been all but purged of carryovers from the Brezhnev era. This clean-out continued with the Nov. 17 retirement of Vasilii Konotop, 69, as first secretary of the Moscow provincial party organization; he was replaced by Valentin Mesyats, 57, who was minister of agriculture since 1976. Konotop's fall puts the handwriting on the wall for Politburo member Viktor Grishin, 71, first secretary of the Moscow municipal party organization since 1967 and the last heavyweight Politburo member not belonging to the new inner core formed by Andropov and Gorbachov.

The new Polish government

Eastern Europe, too, has been the scene of major government reshuffles, mainly affecting economic ministries. The purges in the satellite countries have the same purpose as those in the Soviet Union: to achieve higher economic productivity, to serve the ever-expanding needs of the Soviet war economy. Bureaucratic “dead wood” is to be cut and replaced by technocrats agreeable to Gorbachov and his military cohorts.

In Poland, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski's military regime has just accomplished the biggest purge of government ministers since World War II. On Nov. 12, 13 of 30 Polish cabinet ministers were dumped, including Foreign Minister Stefan Olszowski (who was also expelled from the Politburo), Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Obodowski, and four other deputy prime ministers. Other ministers ousted were those for construction, domestic trade, foreign trade, the merchant marine, prices, economic reform (the latter two ministries were dissolved), education, health and youth affairs.

With the cosmetic exception of Jaruzelski himself, who relinquished the post of prime minister to Zbigniew Messner, an economic official handpicked by the military, none of the

cabinet posts occupied by the Polish military were touched. Gen. Czeslaw Kiszczak remains as interior minister and Gen. Czeslaw Piotrowski as energy minister, keeping the bituminous coal and lignite industries—the single largest branch of Poland's economy—and the strategically important matter of portioning out Soviet oil and gas supplies to Polish factories, under the continued firm control of the military.

The Polish purge also pointed to Moscow's intention to step up, after Geneva, its activities with political circles in Western Europe who favor appeasement or a “New Yalta” deal with the Soviets. The new Polish foreign minister, Marian Orzechowski, is an expert on West Germany, who has written extensively on West German foreign policy. A guest lecturer at the University of Hamburg in the 1970s, Orzechowski has cultivated many contacts and channels in the Federal Republic.

Romanian militarization

In Romania, Foreign Minister Stefan Andrei was shifted to a Central Committee assignment, after holding his post since 1978, in preparation for a broader shake-up of the Central Committee at its Nov. 14 plenum. A few days earlier, two more high-ranking officials in the energy the sack. The Romanian energy sector, suffering under the effects of drought and too-diffuse investment in small, inefficient power plants, has now been put under the direction of the military.

The Soviet economy is not a domestic economy as such, but a Comecon economy. One of the key factors determining the expansion of the Soviet war economy is the rate of increase possible in the looting of the East European economies. The current acceleration of such looting is proven through the enormous increases in East European exports to Russia, and compulsory East European investments, including forced labor to build Russia's most crucial energy and infrastructure projects, already evident in the last year of Brezhnev's and during Andropov's reign.

What this means in concrete terms can be seen from the 1986-90 Polish-Soviet Trade Treaty, dictated to Poland by Russia in October, one month before the purge. Poland must unilaterally increase its exports of coal, copper, industrial and transportation equipment to Russia by ca. \$1.5 billion to reach a trade balance by 1988. Then in both 1989 and 1990, a further \$1.5 billion increase in exports is mandated to eliminate the 1986 and 1987 trade deficits. For 1990-91, a further annual increase of nearly \$1.5 billion in Polish exports is scheduled, to cancel the 1981-85 accumulated trade deficit.

Russia waited till after its purges—which included the Nov. 2 naming of Deputy Prime Minister Aleksei Antonov as the new Standing Representative to the Comecon—and the purges in Poland before calling a special meeting of Comecon deputy prime ministers, which began in Moscow on Nov. 19. The Soviet news agency TASS announced that they would discuss a Comecon program “for scientific-technological cooperation in the next 15-20 years.”