

Vitalii Yurchenko, the CIA, and the 'Holy Matushka Rus' debate

by Criton Zoakos

There now appears to be a consensus among the members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, that the CIA erred in its handling of Soviet KGB defector Vitalii Yurchenko. According to senators' opinions reaching the public, the consensus appears to include the opinion that there is a larger, more pervasive problem with the CIA in particular and with the intelligence community more generally. **Sen. David Durenberger** (IR-Minn.), the Select Committee's chairman, believes that whatever flaws exist, derive from a lack of clearcut policy perspective, i.e., a lack of criteria by means of which intelligence collectors and analysts would judge, evaluate, and set intelligence and counterintelligence goals for themselves. Those to whom more details of the Select Committee's thinking have been intimated, say that this specific form of Durenberger's criticism is aimed against **William Casey**, the director of Central Intelligence.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and others are more explicit in their criticisms against Mr. Casey, and they accuse the CIA of attempting to go back to the "good old days" and eliminate any and all responsible congressional oversight over the government's intelligence activities.

Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), in a letter to the President, gets more specific, as he accuses the CIA of having suffered, over the past 20 years, from a systematic bias, at least in the areas of analysis and evaluations of Soviet capabilities, a bias which consistently causes the agency to underestimate Soviet military and other capabilities.

Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), in an article penned under his name, makes a most interesting case: He argues, in qualified terms, that at least in the area of counterintelligence, U.S. intelligence is suffering from a bureaucratic complacency which verges on downright incompetence. In an unusual departure from standard and pat criticisms of the CIA, Wallop argues that the problem is the epistemological malaise of empiricism. He says: "Most of our technical collectors remain innocent of the fact that the other side can manage its exposure to our satellites. Our collectors continue to believe that 'a picture is a picture' and 'a signal is a signal' or even worse, that 'a defector is a defector.' . . . Frequently, the intelligence community is so eager for intelligence successes that it believes any Soviet secrets it receives are genuine."

Wallop then goes on to argue that these basic flaws in

method became dramatically evident in the case of Vitalii Yurchenko. He says that Yurchenko made himself a credible "defector" in the eyes of the CIA, because "Yurchenko told it exactly what it wanted to hear—that the CIA was basically unpenetrated and their operations were safe." Finally, in an aside against Deputy CIA Director **John McMahon**, the senator informs us, "Just 48 hours before Yurchenko's redefection, a very high-ranking intelligence official told me he would stake his career on Yurchenko's *bona fides*."

Senator Wallop, with subtlety and guile, is raising again the old specter of the "Soviet mole," a subject on which **James Jesus Angleton** consumed a lifelong career to no discernible result. Senator Helms, in his letter to the President, raises the same subject in a more blunt way: "The bias of the CIA for underestimating Soviet intention and capabilities over the last 25 years has already had deleterious effects on U.S. national security. . . . But the recent implications of information resulting from KGB defections suggest that we should inquire further into the problem of this bias."

As all the critics of the CIA at this time have linked the subject of Yurchenko in particular with that of Soviet disinformation by means of fake defectors, one is led to believe that all these critics are engaged in an effort to discredit whatever information Yurchenko may have passed on during his debriefings. What this information is, we do not know. But both the CIA and its critics do know.

Prior to Yurchenko's redefection, and therefore prior to the Senate Select Committee's open criticisms of the CIA, there was one other line of criticism, generally attributed by the press to "sources in the National Security Council." The fight between NSC and CIA, as it appeared in the press prior to Yurchenko's redefection, was centered on the question of whether or not Yurchenko's information was sound. The CIA said it was, the NSC said it was not. By NSC, one must assume is meant the Soviet Affairs desk chief there, **Jack Matlock**, and his sidekick, **John Lenczowski**, author of the notorious "Foreign Policy for Reaganauts." Matlock is a **Kissinger** protégé who replaced, under mysterious circumstances, **Richard Pipes** in that NSC post, right before President Reagan's historic speech of March 23, 1983, inaugurating the Strategic Defense Initiative. Matlock and Lenczowski are believers in the theory that the United States

should do everything in its power to strengthen the Great Russian chauvinist tendencies inside the Soviet elite, as a foil to "communism." Matlock believes that a revival of Holy *Matushka Rus*—Mother Russia—is the political force with which the United States can comfortably deal. This same belief is shared by at least one more critic of the CIA, the shadowy **Jon Speller**, who exerts great influence in Senator Helms's office on these matters.

Not being privy to Yurchenko's debriefings, we are not in a position to categorically assert that the issue of contention between NSC and CIA was related to the evaluation of the political potency of Russian chauvinist tendencies in Moscow. It is noteworthy, however, that Director Casey, defending himself against Senate critics, wrote a letter arguing that the CIA's "recent analyses in support of arms control were praised by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, representing the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board" and that "recent CIA analyses of the crisis in the Philippines, Shi'ite Moslem fundamentalism and the energy problem . . . the CIA has been far out in front."

How are the Soviets to secure the rest of the world's acceptance of their emerging pre-eminence? Judge the current far-flung intelligence reorganizations in Washington from that perspective.

The broader picture

There is, however, a larger picture to consider: A reorganization of all Western intelligence agencies has been going on since the summer of this year, much of it prompted by a spate of defections and espionage scandals. In what direction is this reorganization going, and how much of it is induced by Soviet prompting?

Take for instance the reorganization of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), carried out Oct. 28, 1985, five days before Yurchenko's redefection. The reorganization, by executive order, strengthens the hand of four persons, chairman **Anne Armstrong**, vice-chairman **Leo Cherne**, **Henry Kissinger**, and **Jeane Kirkpatrick**. The Board's powers to set policy guidelines for the CIA and other agencies is increased, as is its access to the President. Those who know the political pedigrees and preferences of this group of people, will be able to judge on which side of the Holy *Matushka Rus* controversy, for example, they would be drawn.

The reforms of intelligence functions now proposed by Senator Durenberger and others at the Select Committee,

appear to be headed in the same direction as the reorganization of the PFIAB—more power to the Social Democratic, Aristotelian Society "old hands" of "The Trust," whose only big quarrel with Russia has been that Joseph Stalin cut them out of the action during the mid-1930s and reneged on earlier agreements of condominium. Of course, the final outcome of the reorganization now underway at the Select Committee and elsewhere, is not yet in sight and is far from determined.

But Washington's is not the only intelligence reorganization project underway. Since July and August, the West German and French intelligence establishments have been shaken to their roots. The first, directly as a result of Soviet-orchestrated defections and other revelations; the second, with help from Moscow-aligned British intelligence operations associated with the Greenpeace affair in France, and also with help from the Trilateral Commission. As a result, official French intelligence institutions are now, at least temporarily, hemmed in by that extensive Soviet-controlled Mediterranean Nazi-Communist capability known as the "Curiel Apparat." British intelligence, on the other hand, has been aligned with current Soviet short-term strategic objectives in Europe, the Middle East, and in the arms-control arena, at least since Lord Carrington became secretary general of NATO.

In these matters of strategic political intelligence, "victory," "defeat," "takeover," and so forth, are not defined as in football or in physical combat. Instead, they are the products of subtle tilts and shifts in the *criteria of policy* which guide the work of governmental intelligence agencies. The difference between strategic victory and strategic disaster may, sometimes, result from a single paragraph, omitted or included in a policy guidance memorandum.

At the present time, the relevant such paragraph is likely to be on one of three major strategic subjects: fundamental science policy, fundamental choices in economic policy, and Holy *Matushka Rus*. The present Soviet leadership, rallied around a messianic idea of unique national mission, that of the Third and Final Rome, is already making preparations to celebrate its millenary anniversary in 1988. This leadership is managing its eruption into world dominion, backed by history's most unprecedented, and most sustained military buildup. The "home stretch" of this buildup, between now and 1988, has been envisaged by the current Soviet leadership, to be based on its most ambitious drive yet to expand the frontiers of science and technology, which is at the core of Gorbachov's current 20-year plan.

One of these leaders' major concerns is how to manage the rest of the world's acceptance of their emerging pre-eminence. They are concerned with influencing the guidelines and policy criteria under which Western intelligence services are mandated to work. This year's far-flung and widespread "intelligence reorganizations," including the one now underway in Washington, should be seen from this perspective.