

Gorbachov unveils new advances in space defense

by Konstantin George

We in the West have just been treated to a new equivalent of the 1957 "Sputnik Shock." For the better part of three days, May 12-14, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov conducted an extraordinary tour of the Soviet Space Flight Center in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, to inspect the first Soviet space shuttle, scheduled for launching later this year, and a just-completed giant new booster rocket, capable of carrying extra-large payloads for the construction of military orbital bases in space.

The visit underscored the fact that Moscow's top priority is its "Strategic Defense Initiative" (SDI) and military space program, designed to revolutionize warfare and pave the way for Russian global domination.

Most extraordinary was the defense-related composition of the Politburo-level group that accompanied Gorbachov to Baikonur: Defense Minister Marshal Sergei Sokolov, a candidate Politburo member; KGB boss and Politburo member Viktor Chebrikov; and Politburo member Lev Zaikov, the Central Committee Secretary in charge of the military industry, or, to use a more precise term, the Soviet war economy and industrial pre-war buildup.

The Baikonur tour demonstrates that the essence of the highly publicized Gorbachov *perestroika* ("transformation") of the Soviet Union, is the crash implementation of a Soviet SDI and related high-technology-based war plan, drafted by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

Marshal Ogarkov was recently named deputy commander in chief of all the Soviet Armed Forces, placing him, protocol-wise, directly under General Secretary Gorbachov in the U.S.S.R.'s highest military body, the Soviet National Defense Council. Ogarkov's appointment is unique in Soviet peacetime history (the post has been vacant since World War

II, when Marshal Georgi Zhukov was named to command all Soviet fighting forces). It makes him both wartime commander, and chief overseer of current war preparations.

There was another unusual dimension to the Baikonur tour, which underlines the significance of the new military reorganization. In a rare display of actual *glasnost* ("openness"), the Soviet news agency TASS significantly dropped all standard ritual references to Russia's "peaceful" space program. On May 14, the day that Gorbachov returned to Moscow, TASS announced that a "new type of very large booster rocket" had been completed and was being readied for launching at Baikonur. Here again, the ritual phrases of praise for the new rocket's "contributions to the Soviet Union's peaceful program for the exploration of outer space" were conspicuously lacking.

Gorbachov's speech to the Baikonur Space Center scientists, engineers, and workers was an impassioned praise of Russian high technology in the Soviet military-related space program: "Everything here at the Cosmodrome, from the sophisticated launching structures and laboratories, to the powerful carrier rockets, space vehicles, their life-support systems, fitted with modern computers and highly sensitive instruments—all this is Soviet-made, everything is of a high quality and of modern technological standards."

Gorbachov called for a surge in the Soviet military space program, saying, "The vast scientific potential we have accumulated in 70 years of Soviet power should be brought into play."

The zero-option deal

The coincidence of the Ogarkov appointment and the Gorbachov tour of Baikonur, should be causing alarm bells

to ring in the capitals of the West. Yet events of recent days, with the exception of certain developments in France, have been far from encouraging in this regard.

The day Gorbachov returned to Moscow, the NATO defense ministers were meeting in Stavanger, Norway. The meeting generally reflected an adaptation to the scandalous pro-"zero-option" appeasement raging in Washington, within the administration (the Pentagon under Weinberger being a notable exception) and Congress. A few days before the Stavanger meeting, the House of Representatives further cut the administration's request for \$5.6 billion to fund the SDI, down to the paltry sum of \$3.1 billion.

At Stavanger, some European NATO allies, privately apoplectic over the ramifications of a U.S. nuclear missile withdrawal, began to fall into line behind the State Department lead. British Defense Minister George Younger announced that London would approve "under certain conditions" a "double-zero option," i.e., scrapping of both longer-range (1,000-5,000 km) and shorter-range (500-1,000 km) medium-range missiles stationed in Europe. The British Foreign Office issued a parallel statement to this effect. The conditions listed included: exclusion of British and French nuclear forces; strict verification; provision for West Germany to keep its non-nuclear (though nuclear capable) Pershing IA missiles.

The Dutch and Belgian defense ministers, present at Stavanger, joined in the call for the "double-zero option," thus joining the core appeasement bloc within NATO which embraces the governments of Greece, Norway, and Denmark.

Further reflecting the sense that an agreement on the missiles is possible this year, the top three defense ministers present, Weinberger of the United States, Younger of Britain, and Manfred Wörner of West Germany, held lengthy sessions discussing post-zero-option alternative nuclear missile and aircraft deployments by the United States, in and around Europe.

But Weinberger was sharply critical of the Soviet proposals. He told the other NATO defense ministers on May 12 that there was "no logical basis" for a zero-option withdrawal from Europe, which would allow the Soviet Union to retain 100 medium-range missiles aimed at Asia. "We don't want to give up on the issue," he said. On a "straight, substantive, moral basis," the U.S. administration should refuse to capitulate. He said he was not concerned about appearing to undercut the arms agreement with such statements, because his position on the Soviet missiles deployed against Asia "is not mine; it is the President's."

Even at this late date, the shock that Moscow is prioritizing space-based warfare capabilities, and the realization that the zero option will serve to exponentially increase Soviet investments in that realm, could lead to some startling, abrupt Western breaks with this pattern of drift and appeasement.

The Ogarkov war plan's timetable would be accorded a significant, if not crucial boost, by a U.S.-Soviet zero-option

agreement on medium-range missiles. Getting rid of the obsolescent Soviet SS-20, for example, and other relatively out-of-date nuclear weapons systems, would be welcomed by Ogarkov and the Soviet leadership. This could allow Moscow to concentrate on the SDI, and producing the most modern weapons systems, or what Ogarkov calls "the highest possible technological rates of attrition." Thus, a Euromissile agreement would not only begin the process of rendering Europe defenseless to the Russian Empire, but would correspond to Soviet war-planning priorities.

The more Moscow can siphon off from older nuclear and conventional arms programs, into its military space program, the closer becomes the target date where the war-winning goals of the Ogarkov war plan can be realized.

France not fooled

On the European continent, the nation responding most appropriately to the Ogarkov war plan is France. The government of Premier Jacques Chirac has not only led European opposition to the zero-option sell-out, but unveiled a program earlier this spring, ratified by Parliament, to quadruple the number of French nuclear warheads over the next five years.

On May 14, Chirac arrived in Moscow for a meeting with Gorbachov. His visit was preceded by the greatest barrage of Soviet attacks against a Western government, on the eve of a prime minister's visit, perhaps in the entire postwar period. An article in the Soviet KGB-linked weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, which appeared on May 13, denounced Chirac for: supporting the SDI; repeatedly denouncing the "Soviet danger"; "extreme reserve" toward the "new" Gorbachov policies; maintaining and expanding the French *force de frappe* (nuclear deterrent); France's "excessive anti-Soviet campaign"; arresting and expelling Soviet spies; "violating the 16th Parallel in Chad"; and denouncing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The Soviet attacks continued after Chirac's first Moscow meetings, with Soviet Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

Premier Ryzhkov, facing Chirac at the May 14 Kremlin dinner, said: "Some West European governments have voiced doubts and objections [on the zero option]. Progress depends on whether Europe responds appropriately. . . . We regrettably have failed to see France among the critics of the nuclear arms race."

In a meeting the following day with Gorbachov, the same differences emerged. Gorbachov reiterated to Chirac his "double-zero option" proposals for arms control, calling on Chirac to support them. Chirac replied that the French nuclear potentials were "definitely not negotiable," and that his government had no intention of commenting on the issue of the U.S.-Soviet Geneva talks, since France was not a negotiating party in these talks. Concerning the short-range missiles, the French premier reaffirmed that France would remain "in full solidarity with her European allies."