

Military modernization for Soviet armed forces and industry

by Rachel Douglas

On the eve of a plenary session of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, slated to convene at the end of June and to deal with economic policy, the thorough rejuvenation of the Soviet armed forces moved ahead with a jolt. As usual, the shifts were wildly misinterpreted in the West, with a rash of irresponsible speculation about how party chief Mikhail Gorbachov was finally cutting the Soviet military down to size, with respect to its political power and consumption of resources.

On June 17, Marshal of Aviation A.U. Konstantinov got the sack. He was commander of the Moscow Air Defense District, which just this past January had been awarded an Order of Lenin. Konstantinov himself, who commanded the district since 1980, had achieved the status of candidate member of the Central Committee, at the 27th Party Congress in March 1986.

He became the latest scapegoat for the flight of Matthias Rust, the West German teenager who landed his Cessna airplane in Red Square on May 28. Already, the "shortcomings" in the military, criticized by the Politburo in the wake of Rust's landing, served as the occasion for retirement of Defense Minister Marshal Sergei Sokolov and the ouster of the national commander of the Air Defense Forces, Chief Marshal of Aviation A.I.

missed following a meeting of the Moscow Communist Party, at which municipal party chief Boris Yeltsin, a member of the Politburo, said, "We want commanders to look straight in our faces and say how this could happen." Radio Moscow, which reported on this, also cited an article in the June 17 issue of *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*), the defense ministry paper, that said, "Several generals were expelled . . . and several will be dealt with later," because of the Rust affair.

On June 11, *Krasnaya Zvezda* reported on the case of a rear admiral, who was fired for incompetence in the execution of naval maneuvers. A few days later, 68-year-old Marshal of Engineering Troops I.F.

struction and billeting since 1979, became the latest deputy defense minister to retire.

All the self-criticism by the military, firings, and other

publicized disciplinary measures—which occur in the context of Gorbachov's ongoing purge of the party and economic leadership—should not be allowed to obscure the character of the commanders who are coming in, and whose promotion the Rust affair merely made it possible to accelerate.

Contrary to the analysis featured in such locations as the *Washington Post*, which on June 18 suggested that, since new Defense Minister Dmitri T. Yazov was "a middle-ranking general with no ties to Moscow's circle of military leaders," his appointment represented a setback to the power of the military, *EIR* has already reported, that Yazov came through the combat training programs and the new wartime command structure, designed by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. The same can be said about two other recent appointees to senior defense ministry positions:

Stanislav Postnikov, recently promoted from General-Colonel to Army General, was revealed in April to be the new First Deputy Chief of Ground Forces—one of the five branches of the armed forces. Postnikov came from a posting as commander of the Transbaikalian Military District, where he had been since 1984. The Transbaikalian MD lies adjacent to the Far East Military District, which Yazov moved out to command in 1984. Thus, Postnikov and Yazov commanded two of the military districts of the wartime command, High Command Far East (which was instituted in 1979, as the first component of the new structure), starting right when the wartime command network went fully operational. Ogarkov "disappeared" as chief of staff and took over High Command West, in September 1984.

Gen.-Col. V. N. Lobov has become a First Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Before this, Lobov was commander of the Central Asia Military District, where he succeeded none other than Dmitri Yazov in 1984, when the latter moved to the Far East MD.

In wall assessments of these shifts, General Lobov is a specialist in disinformation! In the March issue of a defense ministry journal, Lobov published his second major article in a year, on the concept of *voyennaya khitrost*, or "military cunning."

He stressed the decisive importance, throughout military history, of *maskirovka* (camouflage), deception, and related techniques of military art, for securing victory by hitting the enemy when he least expects it, and preached that this area required a lot more emphasis in Soviet military thought today. For Ogarkov and his students, *voyennaya khitrost* applies not only to battlefield camouflage and so forth, but very much to the strategic realm.

The new appointees also fall into the class of technology-oriented, would-be "modernizers" of the armed forces, promoted under Ogarkov. Ogarkov's economic policy, which is what Gorbachov is carrying out under the banner of *perestroika* (restructuring), demands that the entire Soviet economy be shifted onto wartime status, before the outbreak of any shooting. Likewise, Ogarkov and the young officers around him stress the crucial importance of weapons based on "new physical principles"—including radio frequency weapons.

One of the chief spokesman for such modernization is Gen.-Col. Makhmud A. Gareyev, an Ogarkov appointee to the general staff who has echoed Ogarkov's own writings on the importance of these weapons. Now a deputy chief of the general staff, Gareyev authored an unprecedented half-page open letter in the popular press—printed in the weekly *Lit'eraturnaya Gazeta* June 3—on the "sacred duty" of all Soviet citizens to support the armed forces. Citing the military traditions of Prussia, among other things, Gareyev stressed the

unity of science and military practice, as greater than ever before, "in the age of scientific and technical progress."

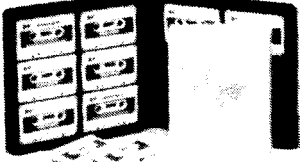
Defense industry boss

Also in advance of the plenum, Gorbachov continued to thin out the old guard in Soviet industry. On June 7, Minister of Machine Building V.V. Bakhirev retired after 19 years in office, to be replaced by 52-year-old Boris Belousov. Belousov comes from the ministry of the defense industry, where he was a deputy minister, to lead the ministry that produces munitions and other military products, including solid propellants.

On June 8, Gorbachov addressed a preparatory meeting for the plenum, attended by only a handful of Politburo members, plus leaders in Russia's defense industries. Here, party secretary Nikolai Slyunkov announced that central ministries must prepare to end their "day-to-day control over enterprises," so as to concentrate on scientific and technological advances in their sectors of the economy.

Also present was L.N. Zaikov, the Central Committee secretary who in May accompanied Gorbachov to the Baikonur Space Center, when Gorbachov said *perestroika* meant putting the whole economy on the same footing as the heavily militarized space program. The directors of several large defense-related plants, and ministers from the defense and heavy industry sectors, spoke at the June 8 session.

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