

## Voice of military sounds in Soviet succession fight

by Konstantin George

On April 12, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the party newspaper of the Russian Republic, formally conceded its “errors” and announced that it shared the “main arguments, conclusions and essence of the criticism” against it by *Pravda* one week earlier; the main daily of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had denounced *Sovetskaya Rossiya* for having printed on March 13, an article that constituted “a manifesto of anti-perestroika forces.” In Europe and the United States, press commentators hastened to conclude, that Gorbachov has “gained the upper hand” over his opponents, who were now “in retreat.”

Gorbachov himself, however, said April 13 that the excitement was only just under way: “An acute confrontation—I would even say, clash of views—has begun.”

In reality, the Soviet leadership succession fight entails much more than the personal fate of Gorbachov. Like the momentous shift of 1927-1934, from the Bukharinite liberalization of the New Economic Policy (NEP) to a Russian nationalism-centered era under Stalin, it is being waged at the level of key institutions in Soviet society. Behind the duel of personalities that grabs headlines abroad, the institutions of the military, the defense industry and the Russian Orthodox Church, all of them repositories of Russian nationalism, are asserting themselves in a way not seen in decades. Gorbachov stays or goes, at the discretion of these elites.

Of particular importance, is that whatever staying power Gorbachov has—his “magic”—depends on his success or failure in extracting more strategic, regional and other concessions from the Reagan administration and Western Europe. The ostensible capitulation by *Sovetskaya Rossiya* was timed with a high point in Soviet-American discussions

of new such concessions.

The Russian newspaper’s *mea culpa* appeared the day before the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Trade and Economic Council (US-TEC) session opened in Moscow, on April 13. This extravaganza is attended by more than 500 American corporate leaders, led by Secretary of Commerce William Verity. Then the following day, was scheduled an extra round of pre-summit talks between Secretary of State George Shultz and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, as they came to Geneva to witness the signing of the Afghanistan settlement.

### Meanwhile, in the heart of Russia. . .

During the first two weeks of April, the time period of *Pravda*’s attack on *Sovetskaya Rossiya* and the latter’s acknowledgement of it, polemics reflecting the power struggle rolled along at a rapid boil.

- A slew of letters to the editor, printed in various publications to show support for *Pravda*’s rebuke, conveyed that the confrontations over policy are far from over. A letter in the April 12 *Pravda* offered the less than triumphant opinion, that the fact that *Pravda* replied to *Sovetskaya Rossiya* on April 5 meant “there is still hope” for perestroika.

- In the April issue of the literary journal *Novy Mir*, radical reform economist Academician Nikolai Shmelyov—in a piece that called for the state to parcel out land to peasant families and to spend foreign exchange and the proceeds of expanded gold sales to finance a large increase in Western imports for the consumer goods industry—warned that the succession fight has just begun. Alluding to the population’s “reservations against perestroika,” he said that food availability being worse than “three years ago” was a factor in

this. It was Shmelyov who observed, when Gorbachov became party general secretary three springs ago, "If, *in the next 1 to 2 years*, we don't achieve something tangible, that everyone can feel, it cannot be excluded that the fate of perestroika is sealed."

- *Pravda* on April 12 included in its letters column a "telephone call from a war veteran," who said the drafters of the *Pravda* reply (an unmistakable reference to Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev) "should be expelled from the party."

- Politburo member and Central Committee Yegor Ligachov, widely believed to have commissioned the *Sovetskaya Rossiya* challenge to perestroika and glasnost, surfaced—in the company of prominent members of the Russian Republic party and government establishment—at an April 4 conference on folk art, where he echoed *Sovetskaya Rossiya's* diatribe against the proliferation of "mass culture", including through "percolation" from the West, in recent years.

- KGB chief and Politburo member Viktor Chebrikov spoke April 13 in the town of Cheboksary, where he said that recent nationalist demonstrations in non-Russian Soviet republics (many participants in which have publicly thanked Gorbachov's glasnost for making it possible for them to speak out!) resulted from the exploitation, by "secret services of imperialist powers," of weaknesses in Soviet policy.

- On April 10, *Pravda* launched a second attack on the tendency expressed in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, this time hitting the military directly. In an article timed with the celebration of Air Defense Forces Day, the chief military procurator, Gen. Lt. Boris Popov, denounced rampant corruption in the military. The offensive timing—since June 1987, the Air Defense Forces are directed by close associates of Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov—and the content, indicated non-military authorship or inspiration.

*Pravda* denounced widespread "corruption," "poor discipline" and "improper" personnel practices in the military, which it said had damaged "combat readiness." In a ritual of humiliating self-criticism, Popov was forced to describe his own department as riddled with "drunkards" and "bribe-takers" and to state that the collapse of morals in the Armed Forces was worse than in the "rest of society."

## Russian nationalism and the military

Why was such an article really a second attack on *Sovetskaya Rossiya*?

The March 13 "manifesto," in fact, contained much more than the voice of Yegor Ligachov, just as the succession fight neither begins nor ends with some putative personality clash between Ligachov and Gorbachov. Throughout its text (see Documentation), a Russian nationalist message in a 'voice' identifiable as that of the Soviet military, points to the powerful combination that launched the challenge: Ligachov's forces in the party Central Committee Secretariat, the mili-

tary, and Chebrikov's KGB. This is a call for the sort of Russian nationalism desired by the military leadership: Russian nationalism, befitting a Muscovite world empire, but without a burden of "religious-mystical" backwardness.

On March 25, Russian Republic's literary weekly, *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, carried an item that should, coming as it did on the heels of *Sovetskaya Rossiya's* "manifesto," have provided Western reporters with an explosive story, but instead was blacked out. It said that the Soviet Defense Ministry had just awarded its 1987 literary prize to one of the most notorious Russian chauvinist writers, Valentin Pikul.

Pikul, who writes for the extremely chauvinist and often anti-Semitic publications, *Molodaya Gvardiya* (*Young Guard*) and *Nash Sovremennik* (*Our Contemporary*), was honored for his "treatment of military-patriotic themes," for publicizing "heroes," "revolutionaries," and "the military traditions of the Russian Navy." The award ceremony took place in the Baltic Military District, with Gen. Lt. Ryabov of the Defense Ministry's military publishing section as presenter and the Ground Forces political boss, Gen. Col. Popkov, at his side.

Besides the wartime correspondence of Stalin with FDR and Churchill, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* on March 13 advocated that the memoirs of Marshal Zhukov and other famous Red Army commanders be published, for the illumination of Soviet youth. Author Nina Andreyeva singled out as especially important for publication and discussion, wartime reports, speeches and orders, especially "Order #227."

On March 26, the Defense Ministry daily, *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*), obliged with a full-page spread, dramatically headlined "Order #227." This order, issued by Stalin on July 28, 1942, as the German Wehrmacht, having crossed the Don, was advancing towards the Volga and Stalingrad, was immortalized in the Soviet liturgy of the Stalin era as the "Not One Step Backwards" directive.

The *Krasnaya Zvezda* author, Colonel Filatov, echoed *Sovetskaya Rossiya*: "I think it is symptomatic, that precisely today Order #227 is more and more at the center of attention." In a swipe at perestroika's assault on "command-administrative methods of economic management," Filatov said that orders are essential, not only for the military, but in all sectors of Soviet society—factories, laboratories, and scientific R&D. Also striking, in context, was that *Krasnaya Zvezda* put Order #227 in the Russian military traditions, beginning with Prince Dmitri Donskoi's defeat of the Mongols in 1380, of "no retreat" and of carrying the war "into the enemy's territory." The article was adjacent to one headlined "Reportage from Afghanistan."

## The 'strong man' theme

The active phase of the Soviet succession fight was initiated by the February eruption, with the KGB's helping hand, of unrest in the Transcaucasus republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Another fuse is burning away in that area, as a mass demonstration has been scheduled for April 14 in the

capital of Soviet Georgia, the third of the region's republics, to call for greater official use of the Georgian language. According to sources, among the protest's organizers are those who want to press territorial claims—as did the Armenians—against neighboring Azerbaijan.

Should Gorbachov again falter in dealing with such an outburst, calls for the emergence of a "strong man" to rule Russia, will likely escalate. Such a campaign has already started.

On March 12 and again on March 29, *Krasnaya Zvezda* carried articles by military historians, who stressed the importance of Stalin's strong-handed leadership. "The very fact that Stalin took on the leadership of such a vast war and the war was won, is enough to eclipse and overshadow many other things in his life," wrote Col. A. Khorev in the first article. "Facts show," said Col. A. Khorkov in the second, "that for the strengthening of the country's defense capability and the development of the Army and Navy, (I.V. Stalin) did a lot."

The campaign for a strong hand has also been conducted by the Russian nationalist section of the *nomenklatura*, in the press of the Russian Republic. The outright pro-Stalin "letter" in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* focused its praise of Stalin around the "Great Leader" theme. At the end of March, an apparently anti-Stalin "letter" in *Literaturnaya Rossiya* was used to the same end. The author described how her family had all been wiped out under Stalin, how she had suffered, branded as a "child of the enemies of the nation." Her conclusion: "Yet, I cried when he died. Because he personally was able to build by himself the party, and rule the nation. With his death, it appeared to me that a part of all that is sacred departed with him."

---

## Documentation

---

*Excerpts from Sovetskaya Rossiya's March 13 "letter" from Nina Andreyeva:*

And there's nothing [youth] aren't discussing! A multi-party system, freedom for religious propaganda, resettling abroad, the right to broad discussion of sexual problems in the press, the need to decentralize leadership in culture, abolition of compulsory military service, . . . the country's past.

What is there here to be worried about? Here is a simple example. One would think that on the Great Patriotic War and the heroism of its participants, plenty has already been written and said. But recently, we had in a student dormitory of our Technology Institute, an event with Hero of the Soviet Union Col. of the Reserves V. F. Molozeyev. Among other things, he was asked about political repressions in the Army. The veteran replied that he had never come across any repressions, and that many of those who fought in the war with him, from start to finish, became high-ranking military leaders. Some were disappointed by this reply. Now that it has

become topical, the subject of repressions has been blown out of all proportion in some young people's imagination. . . . Examples like this are by no means isolated. . . .

Take for example the question of I.V. Stalin's position in our country's history. The whole obsession with critical attacks is linked with his name and, in my opinion, this obsession centers not so much on the historical individual himself, as on the entire highly complex epoch of transition. An epoch linked with unprecedented feats by a whole generation of Soviet people. . . . Industrialization, collectivization, cultural revolution, which brought our country to the ranks of great world powers, are being forcibly squeezed into the "personality cult" formula. . . .

I support the party call to uphold the honor and dignity of the trailblazers of socialism. I think that these are the party-class positions from which we must assess the historical role of all leaders of the party and the country, including Stalin. . . .

I recall the anthology of Stalin's reports, speeches, and orders, dating from the last war, on which the heroic generation of the victors over fascism was raised. . . . Our young people are familiar with none of these documents. Particular importance for the cultivation of historical awareness attaches to the memoirs of military leaders Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Golovanov, and Shtemenko, and the aircraft designer Yakovlev, who all knew the Supreme Commander personally.

### **Praise of Russian nationalism**

*The voice of the military also comes across in the differentiated way "Andreyeva" supports Russian nationalism—endorsing nationalism, but denouncing anti-technology "traditionalism" in terms almost as strong as those employed against "cosmopolitanism."—ed.*

In Trotsky's view, the idea of "national" connoted a certain inferiority and limitation. . . . That is why he emphasized October's "national tradition," wrote about "the national element in Lenin," claimed that the Russian people "had inherited no cultural heritage at all," and so forth. We are somehow embarrassed to say that it was indeed the Russian proletariat, whom the Trotskyites treated as "backward and uncultured," who accomplished . . . "three Russian revolutions" and that the Slav peoples stood in the vanguard of mankind's battle against fascism.

When students ask me why thousands of small villages in the non-black earth zone and Siberia are deserted, I reply that this is part of the high price we paid, for victory and the postwar restoration of the national economy, just like the irretrievable loss of large numbers of monuments of Russian national culture. I am also convinced: Any denigration of the importance of historical consciousness produces a pacifist erosion of defense and patriotic consciousness, as well as a desire to categorize the slightest expressions of Great Russian national pride, as manifestations of great power chauvinism. . . .

While the “neo-liberals” orient to the West, the other “alternative tower,” to use the language of Prokhanov [a popular author on military themes], the “conservationists and traditionalists” strive “to overcome socialism by regression.” In other words, by reverting to the social forms of presocialist Russia. . . . In their opinion, the moral values accumulated by peasant communes in the misty fog of centuries, were lost 100 years ago. The “traditionalists” certainly deserve credit for what they have done in the exposure of corruption, . . . ecological problems, the struggle against alcoholism, the protection of historical monuments, and the opposition to dominance by mass culture, which they correctly evaluate as consumerist psychosis.

At the same time, the views of the ideologists of “peasant socialism” contain a lack of understanding of October’s historical importance for the fate of the fatherland, a one-sided assessment of collectivization as a “terrible atrocity against the peasantry,” an uncritical understanding of mystical religious Russian philosophy and the old czarist concepts in our historical science, and hesitation to recognize the post-Revolution split of the peasantry as well as the revolutionary role of the working class.

When it comes to the class struggle in the countryside [during collectivization], for example, excessive emphasis is often placed on the ‘rural’ commissars, who “shot the kulaks [middle peasants] in the back.” In our vast country, at the height of the revolutionary conflagration, there were, of course, commissars of every sort. The main path of our lives was, however, paved by those commissars who were shot at. . . . The “attacking class” to sacrifice not only the lives of commissars, Chekists, rural Bolsheviks and members of the Committees of Poor Peasantry, but also those of the first tractor drivers, rural correspondents, young women teachers, rural Komsomol members, and tens of thousands of other nameless fighters for socialism.

## Behind Gorbachov’s back

A striking example of behind-the-scenes collusion by the military and the KGB at Gorbachov’s expense, is the story of Stefan **Mukha**. Until early 1987, when Gorbachov had him removed in disgrace, Mukha was the head of the KGB in the Ukraine. But he recently surfaced, with the rank of *Army Gen. Lt.* (two stars), as the chief political officer of the Turkestan Military District, which has headquarters in Tashkent and adjoins Afghanistan and Iran. The military not only got away with this maneuver, but Mukha’s superior, Gen. Col. Nikolai **Popov**, commander of the Turkestan MD, was promoted in early March to General of the Army (four stars).

## Yakovlev’s ‘Russophobia’ attacked by chauvinists

by Luba George

On April 9-10, for the first time ever, Soviet television broadcast live sections of the Russian Orthodox Easter midnight Mass at the crowded Epiphany Cathedral. The broadcast included Moscow Patriarch Pimen’s Easter Message. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church hailed the upcoming June celebrations of the “Millennium of Russian Christianity,” and stressed that the jubilee is having a “large and positive influence on culture, morals, and family life” in the Soviet Union.

The Easter “kickoff” for the millennium celebrations also included an interview with Patriarch Pimen in the government newspaper, *Izvestia*. Pimen spoke of a “beneficial process of perestroika” affecting all institutions, including the Church. Signaling the rising power of the Church as an institution in the context of the current post-Gorbachov succession fight, Pimen, for the first time, used the interview to attack state “repression” against clergy and believers. The attack, and the fact that *Izvestia* printed it without comment, attest to the process of expanding Church influence in the new power constellation emerging in Russia.

This is a signal of what to expect from Pimen’s successor—a new *public* assertiveness from the Church hierarchy, absent during Soviet rule until now. The Patriarch has been the head of the Church in the Soviet Union since 1971; 78 years old and ailing, he will not remain much longer as Patriarch. In the Church, as in the Kremlin, a succession fight is under way.

At the end of March, religious dissident Father Gleb Yakunin and five other Orthodox activists—all of whom were permitted to return from forced exile in Siberia last year—accused Patriarch Pimen of senile incompetence and suggested he step down before the millennium. Their statement, released at a press conference in Moscow, read, “Your Holiness has been so weakened by your enemies that you are no longer in a fit condition to bear the burdens of Patriarchal office.” It was angrily rejected by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galich, often cited as a potential successor—very unlikely, since his surname is Ukrainian, Denisenko. “The rule in our church is that the Patriarch is elected for life. I see no grounds to introduce changes.” Other possible successors being mooted: Metropolitan Alexei of Leningrad, Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk, and Metropolitan Yuvenaly.

With the continuing calls for a “perestroika” in the Church, there is also the strong rumor that the state is planning to ease