

Red carpet for Red brass on Capitol Hill

by William Jones

Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, is putting on the dog for his Soviet friends whom he had invited to testify before the committee on Soviet military plans on May 9. The rationale behind the unprecedented invitation is that if the U.S. Congress had concrete knowledge of Soviet plans, it could plan its own defense budget accordingly.

This is not the first instance of such touchy-feely exchanges between the Soviets and the Aspin committee. In March Andrei Kokoshin, director of the U.S.A. and Canada Institute, testified before the panel. On May 5, the panel held an informal get-together with some retired Soviet generals and admirals, led by GRU Lt. Gen. Mikhail Milshtein. Later in June, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, the chief military adviser to Gorbachov, will be testifying before the committee.

The plans to have the Soviets testify elicited some caustic remarks from a number of congressmen. Sen. James Exon (D-Neb.), the first senator to back the INF Treaty, not exactly a fire-breathing conservative, commented that he found the idea "scary." "Evidently Gorbymania has struck with a vengeance in the Halls of Congress," said Exon. "If we are going that far afield, why not invite Mr. Qaddafi over to give us expert testimony on stopping terrorism?" Exon and a few others didn't want to make the "committee process a forum for Soviet propaganda."

And yet that is precisely what it became—although the Soviets have come a long way from delivering their propaganda à la Khrushchov, pounding his shoe on the table. The sleeker Gorbachov style has permeated Soviet diplomacy. In fact, it seems as if Gorbachov has changed the old Russian proverb, "When you run with the wolves, howl like a wolf," to "When you run with the sheep, baa like a sheep"—at least until you're ready to gobble them up. Indeed, one would be astounded by the sheep-like nature of Soviet policy as presented by these witnesses.

The Soviet representatives were of course no amateurs. Andrei Kokoshin is deputy director of the U.S.A. and Canada Institute, an organization whose sole purpose is to monitor the movements of thought and changes in political philosophy on the North American continent. Roald Sagdeyev is the former director of the Soviet Union's Space Research Insti-

tute and was recently elected to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies. "We need very much that you open a second front against the cold war," pleaded Sagdeyev, alluding to the Soviet-U.S. alliance against the Nazis during World War II. Sagdeyev said that he ran his campaign for the Supreme Soviet on the program of getting control over "our own military-industrial complex."

'Help Gorbachov'

There was one clear message in their presentations. As Sagdeyev expressed it, there is still a lot of opposition to the Gorbachov policies because the psychological "trauma of World War II is a very serious one." Therefore it was imperative that the West respond to Gorbachov's initiatives before internal opposition put an end to their realization. "People ask," said Kokoshin, "How can we continue making these cuts without a response from the West?"

Sagdeyev claimed that Soviet military spending would be cut by 1.5% this year and would go down 7% next year, in order to reach Gorbachov's goal of 14.2% in 1991. When Aspin asked Sagdeyev when the Soviets would publish their defense budget, he responded, "We would also like to know," then argued that it is not such a simple thing to reduce one's forces so quickly without serious economic dislocations. He then noted that a commission had been appointed to examine the "socio-economic aspects" of the cuts.

Rep. William Dickinson (R-Ala.), who explained somewhat tongue-in-cheek that there was a significant cadre in the U.S. Congress which habitually takes the side of the Soviet Union against the United States, asked the witnesses if they didn't find it easier working with the Congress than with the administration. They avoided answering the question. Dickinson then asked if they thought it was feasible that the United States restrict its plans for an ASAT system, when the Soviets have their own system in place. With a look of mild astonishment, Sagdeyev answered, "I have my doubts that my colleagues have control over an ASAT system." "And yet I *know* you have," replied Dickinson, "but it's probably not much use arguing the point here."

Rep. Richard Ray (D-Ga.) wanted to know why there was a continued modernization of the Soviet military apparatus, including an increase in tank production, when the Soviets were aiming at reducing their military might. "We have a significant production of tanks," Kokoshin admitted, "but we will cut that production, although concrete figures will not be available until June. Marshal Akhromeyev will bring them with him when he testifies before the committee."

Kokoshin stressed the need for reducing tactical nuclear weapons and took exception to the suggestion made by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) that reductions in short-range nuclear forces be delayed until there are cuts in conventional forces. Kokoshin also stressed the need for a third zero—complete elimination of short-range nuclear missiles—the issue which is creating a major rift in the NATO alliance.