

Soviet military prepares U.S. for 'Russian Tiananmen'

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Amidst some of the worst political and economic upheavals to sweep the Soviet Union since its inception, key Soviet military figures have undertaken an extraordinary deployment to Western capitals.

During the last week in July, Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov took a surprise trip to Britain, for high-level meetings with the Thatcher government; simultaneously, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, the immediate past chief of the general staff and currently a top military adviser to Mikhail Gorbachov, took a ten-day swing through the United States. Two weeks earlier, General of the Army V.N. Lobov paid a little-publicized visit to West Germany. And several weeks before that, the current chief of the general staff, M.A. Moiseyev, accompanied Gorbachov to France.

According to reliable sources, the main purpose of this high-level military deployment is twofold: first, to appeal to the West for an emergency influx of foodstuffs and other consumer goods, at bargain-basement prices; second, and more important, to inform Western leaders that the Soviet military may soon have to take matters in their own hands, and act to restore internal Soviet "stability."

They are assuring their Western hosts that if such a "Russian Tiananmen" transpires, it will represent no threat to Western security interests, and that it should not be seen as an impediment to the evolving East-West condominium, but as an unavoidable step that will result in putting the "New Yalta" arrangement on a more sober and realistic footing.

Publicly, Akhromeyev and Yazov, in particular, have exerted more pressure on the West to make further concessions in the arms-control arena, threatening that both the START and Vienna conventional forces negotiations will be put on hold unless the West agrees to standing Soviet demands. Yazov held a press conference in London July 25, to put out the word that, unless British, French and other non-

U.S. troops deployed in West Germany, were included in the 275,000 troop ceiling proposed by the Bush administration, the Vienna talks would fall apart.

Akhromeyev, in the U.S. at the invitation of the House Armed Services Committee and Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. William Crowe, focused his attacks on U.S. naval forces and the SDI, while baldly lying that the Soviet Union is vastly reducing its military might.

In a virtuoso four-and-a-half-hour performance before the Armed Services Committee July 21, Akhromeyev, adorned in full military regalia, told his gullible audience that Soviet military expenditures were 50% lower than Western intelligence estimates; that Moscow was "radically reducing" the production of tanks, and that tank production "will be reduced to the tune of over 40% by the end of 1990"; and that the Soviet Union was far more interested in developing its economic, rather than military, muscle.

With the majority of committee members hanging on to his every word, Akhromeyev proceeded to blast the SDI, and to demand U.S. concessions on the issue of naval forces. Negotiations on limiting U.S. naval forces are a "major prerequisite for further improvement of Soviet-American" relations, he told the panel, adding that Moscow is regarding this refusal as a reflection of the U.S. commitment to military superiority.

Labeling the SDI a "source of danger to peace in the world," Akhromeyev told the committee: "We cannot agree to the assessments given by some of your politicians and ranking military officers of the impact of the creation of the national ABM system. . . . If the U.S. ABM system, particularly its space strike echelon, is created," he said, "the signing of a treaty cutting strategic offensive arms by 50% would become inappropriate. The arms race in strategic weapons, including new types of weapons, would become

inevitable with all the negative effects for the entire world.”

Akhromeyev also floated a new proposal—which he characterized as his own, personal idea—for holding “consultations between Soviet and American experts on the issue of possible agreements to limit or even reduce R&D work in the military field.” If such consultations had been in effect before President Reagan launched the SDI in 1983, the initiative would have been iced before it got off the drawing boards, Akhromeyev implied. He carefully skirted the issue of Soviet internal unrest and the Soviet military’s response, during questioning by committee members.

Not only did the committee give Akhromeyev a standing ovation, but just days later, the full House gave the marshal a token of its esteem by slashing the SDI budget nearly \$2 billion, the largest cut which either chamber has yet made in the program.

The broader picture

Although Akhromeyev’s appearance before the Armed Services Committee represented the public highlight of his tour, gulling U.S. congressmen with standard disinformation about the nature of the Soviet threat was just one aspect of his trip. The nature of Akhromeyev’s itinerary confirms the reading that his visit to the U.S.—along with the deployments of his fellow Soviet military colleagues to key Western European capitals—possesses much greater political significance than mere lobbying against Western weapons systems.

The pattern of deployments strongly suggests that the Soviet military is already moving into position, and is signaling Western governments that in the future, they will be in control, and it will be through them that the West will find itself carrying out economic and political, as well as military, negotiations.

Akhromeyev’s trip was unusually wide-ranging. In addition to his Hill testimony, he met with Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, attended several public and private events hosted by Admiral Crowe, addressed the National Press Club on July 28, and held a one-hour meeting with President Bush that same day, before returning to the Soviet Union on July 29.

But the marshal did not confine his activities to Washington, nor his discussions to military matters per se. Accompanied by a representative from Admiral Crowe’s staff, Akhromeyev spent several days each in California, Chicago, and New York, where he held a series of public and private discussions with influential individuals and organizations—precisely those in a position to respond to the Soviet military’s

In California, he was the personal guest of former Secretary of State George Shultz, who now teaches at Stanford University. As arranged by Shultz, the West Coast leg of Akhromeyev’s journey included a visit to Hewlett-Packard, the well-known defense and electronics firm; tours of various Stanford institutes, including the Linear Accelerator; and

participation in a strictly-off-the-record roundtable discussion of military doctrine sponsored by the Center for International Security and Arms Control. In Chicago, where he was hosted by the National Strategy Forum, Akhromeyev gave a joint presentation with Admiral Crowe on the “evolving nature of U.S.-U.S.S.R. military doctrine.” And in New York, he was the guest of honor at a private dinner thrown by the elite New York Council on Foreign Relations.

Perhaps the most interesting, and unusual, component of Akhromeyev’s itinerary, was the extensive meetings he held with leading U.S. businessmen and financiers. Akhromeyev met with the chairman of the Chicago Board of Trade, and also held a lengthy, private dinner with leading Chicago business executives, among them, Bob Galvin, chairman of Motorola, Jay Pritzker of Hyatt Hotels, and Richard Fanslow, chairman of Mutual Life Assurance of Pennsylvania. According to one participant, discussion centered on the prospects for U.S. investment in the Soviet Union, and specifically, joint ventures. “The marshal was very interested in finding out how the American free enterprise system works,” said the informant. “He asked penetrating questions.” Afterward, Akhromeyev told the group that he had come to the U.S. with a negative bias about American capitalism, but would leave with a very favorable impression of American businessmen. Akhromeyev also told the gathering that “you are the kind of people we want to do business with.”

Akhromeyev’s stop in New York centered on similar activities. He toured the New York Stock Exchange, and also lunched with top executives of Merrill Lynch. The Merrill Lynch event, which was personally arranged by Admiral Crowe through friends in the investment firm’s management, was devoted to explaining the “machinations of American business,” as a Merrill Lynch spokesman put it.

Times: Bail out Gorbachov

And how is the U.S. elite responding to Akhromeyev’s mission? It was hardly fortuitous that the *New York Times* chose the middle of Akhromeyev’s visit to the U.S. to run a lead editorial in July 27 editions, demanding that the U.S. come to Gorbachov’s assistance. Arguing that America has a vital stake in Gorbachov’s fate, and that if the U.S. doesn’t bail him out “hardliners” may take over, the editorial recommends a series of initiatives to help Gorbachov deal with his “staggering problems.” In addition to “nailing down treaties quickly to cut strategic arms and conventional forces in Europe and to phase out nuclear testing and production of fissionable material. . . . The United States could also suspend trade restrictions against Soviet imports, provide credits, and loosen controls on technology,” advises the *Times*. “Nor should it be unthinkable to help Mr. Gorbachov, if he wants help, to overcome the far-flung strikes that threaten his economic reforms. What would be wrong with sending food and medical supplies to these workers and miners who have been living in such misery?”