

Ogarkov on how to fight the 'next war'

by Konstantin George

Marshal of the Soviet Union Nikolai Ogarkov, the foremost Soviet military figure of the past 12 years, confirmed in an interview published in early June that the Soviet military High Command is presently, as during 1939-41, engaged in planning how to fight and win the "next war."

Ogarkov, 71, retired to join the "Group of Inspectors" in April, after seven and a half years as chief of the General Staff and four years as Western Theater commander-in-chief. He is the author of the Soviet war plan of the 1980s, and developed the plan for a military-industrial reorganization of the economy which Mikhail Gorbachov later adopted and called *perestroika*.

The interview was published in issue No. 11 of the Soviet military bi-monthly journal *Kommunist Vooruzhennikh Sil* (*Communist of the Armed Forces*). Articles and interviews by Ogarkov are extremely rare, his last published writing having been in 1985.

Though never covered in the Western media, the extraordinary piece did not escape the attention of those experts who have no illusions concerning Moscow's policies. A senior U.K. source termed the interview "perhaps the most important Soviet development in the public domain this year," since it reveals plainly "that there is a crucial debate raging in the Soviet leadership, not on *whether*, but *how* to fight the next war . . . and regardless of other differences, the Soviet leadership does have a consensus that 1989 is comparable to 1939. . . . Ogarkov had one message to get out . . . that there is a debate underway on how to fight the next war, a debate that Ogarkov and his allies feel they cannot afford to lose."

'Mistakes of the past'

Ogarkov declared in the interview that the crucial mistake of the 1939-41 period, both pre-war and during the critical opening phase of what Moscow calls the Great Patriotic War, was the "mistake" of those commanders who prepared to fight the "next war" like past wars. This same problem, he said, "can be observed among us to a certain degree even now."

The short interview—about one page—centered on the theme of the Soviet military errors that were made during the 1939-41 pre-war period by the *political* leadership, which caused the catastrophic defeats in the opening phase of the war with Nazi Germany. These errors included Stalin's massive purge of the military command, as well as devastating

mistakes in strategy and tactics.

With these few words, Ogarkov disclosed that:

1) The Soviet military command, now, as during 1939-41, is in the midst of working out a concrete plan on how to fight the "next war."

2) There is, now, as during 1939-41, a debate raging in the Soviet political-military leadership on this question, and no agreement has yet been reached.

Ogarkov's statements confirm what *EIR* and its Special Report series, "Global Showdown Update," have been warning for many years, uniquely among Western media. At the same time, they expose the idiocy of the Bush administration appeasement of Gorbachov and global condominium arrangements with the Soviet Union.

Ogarkov praised the development by the Soviet High Command during the 1930s, of the theory of the "deep operation," and the formation of combined arms tank and mechanized corps, acting in conjunction with airborne forces to carry out the offensive military doctrine. He stressed that a "great mistake" was made when these tank and mechanized corps were dissolved in 1939.

He attributed the mistakes to "the mass repressions of military cadres" that had occurred in the late 1930s. This was the first time that Ogarkov had brought up this theme in writing. It was a clear reference to the 1939-41 disaster that developed because of the execution of strategist Marshal M.N. Tukhachevsky, author of the "theory of the offensive"; his demise led to the imposition of military insanities by an incompetent military coterie around Stalin, centered on Defense Minister Marshal K. Y. Voroshilov.

It was on order of Stalin, acting under Voroshilov's advice, that the tank and mechanized corps were abolished, and the Soviet General Staff's War Plan overruled. The General Staff had envisaged a dual-purpose, defensive-counteroffensive concentration of troops and fortified points along what were the Soviet western borders before the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, with only thin covering forces along the new borders. This would have eliminated any vulnerability to encirclement and annihilation for the Soviet counteroffensive troop concentrations, should Nazi Germany strike first.

Another major blunder of 1939-41, relevant to any pre-war period, was the politically caused failure of Soviet industry to retool in time and produce in sufficient numbers the newest, most modern tanks and aircraft, and to integrate them into the armed forces before war began. While this theme as such did not appear in the Ogarkov interview, the theme of ridding the Soviet armed forces of obsolete equipment, and incorporating the latest technology at the fastest rate possible, has been a central focus of his past writings.

Ogarkov's direct comparison of the current situation to that of 1939-41, provides the West solid and alarming proof that Moscow has decided it is now in a pre-war operations countdown—a countdown to be counted in months, or a few years at the very most.