

# Pacific Soviet 'new thinking' not matching deeds in military sector

by Argus

The third quarter 1989 figures on the performance of the Soviet economy tell it all (*Pravda*, Oct. 29, 1989): Production of civilian automobiles was thrown into reverse and reached only 94% of the level of production of autos achieved during the same period the previous year. The statistical summary said: "Production of machinery for the agro-industrial complex worsened during the current year." By contrast, however, output of the defense-oriented "machine-building" component of the Soviet economy (Sovietese for output of tanks, armored infantry vehicles, missiles and launchers, and other military hardware) chalked up great gains. This sector also scored over double the average rate of productivity of labor of the other heavy-industrial and civilian-industrial sectors. Why? Read on.

About one-half of the defense factories in the Soviet Union double, when so ordered, as producers of civilian equipment (tractors, for instance); today such "conversion" to civilian production is affecting only about 5-10% of the defense factories. In the meantime, heavy-industrial and defense plants, which the Kremlin clearly favors, are kept on defense production while being given the latest computer-driven technology (for automated production lines). Early in the Gorbachov period, the practice of keeping to such priorities in the name of "apple-of-the-eye" (Lenin) defense needs of the state, *regardless of pressing consumer needs*, was freely admitted in the official press, especially in military print media.

The above introduction is pertinent to exposing as lies present Soviet claims that its "new thinking" is leading to "unilateral arms cuts" and "massive conversion" of defense plants to the production of cars, television sets, personal computers, washing machines, refrigerators, and other sorely lacking essentials (all of which, incidentally, have turned up serious shortfalls during the third quarter). However, the opposite of what the Soviets claim about conversion, emphasizing consumer needs, etc., is the case: Heavy industry and defense remain the number-one Kremlin concerns. Moreover, two-thirds of Soviet investments go into heavy industry and defense. One objective, according to Dr. Ellsworth Raymond, an internationally known scholar on the Soviet economy who was the U.S. Moscow embassy's resi-

dent economist before and during World War II, the skewing of investments in favor of defense under Gorbachov is more striking today than it was at any time under Stalin, except, of course, for World War II itself.

All this present emphasis on defense is seen right on the firing lines in Central Europe facing NATO. Here Moscow also claims that "great reductions" in its forces—affecting especially tanks, so it claims—are taking place. What Moscow does not admit is the connection between what it calls in the military press "accenting quality over quantity" in armaments, and what is going on in the actually deployed divisions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and throughout European Russia. These forces are being constantly modernized, souped up while at the same time being recycled, permitting "economy of forces," as Soviet military writers say (meaning some reductions).

Privileged American observers have seen exactly what is going on right under their very noses on NATO's eastern front. For instance, after 14 members of the House Armed Services Committee, under the chairmanship of Wisconsin Democrat Rep. Les Aspin, visited this front last summer, one of their number, Rep. John Kasich (R-Ohio), admitted: "We bought the hype [of Soviet troop reductions] and didn't look at the substance."

While the congressmen obviously could see relatively little with their own eyes, they saw enough to conclude what this "substance" was. This is well documented in the West in such reports as the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies' annual *Military Balance* and the Pentagon's 1989 edition of *Soviet Military Power*, as well as in the House committee's own ambiguous but nevertheless shocking report. Concerning tanks alone, Aspin noted while Gorbachov had promised in his mellifluous December 1988 U.N. speech to withdraw six tank divisions from Central Europe, when the congressmen arrived in East Germany, they found that only a regiment from one division had in truth been withdrawn. And what happened to it? It was merely reassigned to another division within East Germany, the Democratic congressman said.

Concentrating in this analysis here only on tanks, one must observe the following about Soviet tank strength and quality,

their tank production, and the West's ability to deal with this traditionally offensive spearhead-arm in anyone's army, especially one applying *blitzkrieg* tactics as the Soviets do:

- Late-model Soviet battle tanks, of which there are twice as many types as in the U.S. Army—T-64A/B, T-72, and T-80—continue to be upgraded, the latter two with explosive reactive armor, known by the initials ERA, which is an Israeli invention. ERA consists of a triple-layered "skin" of armor embedded with small explosive steel containers bolted onto both tanks and the Soviets' infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs). When hit with an enemy shell, the armor plate literally explodes outwards. It can readily fend off NATO missile warheads, chemical shells, or anything else that might be thrown at it, with the exception of the neutron shell (nuclear physicist Dr. Samuel Cohen's invention), whose production the United States, unlike France, unfortunately declined to undertake after the peace movement's and liberals' vicious attacks on the concept.

- Production of Soviet tanks now is some triple that of the United States, which has two types of battle tanks, the M-60A1/3 and the famous M-1/M-1A1 Abrams, models of which are exported to Arab countries, among other places (thus, their "specs" and vulnerabilities are clearly known). The Soviet tank production schedule—4,200 per year!—is keeping pace with the demand to replace withdrawn obsolescent T-55s and T-62s (but not the Soviets' aging farm tractors). The Soviets promised to withdraw six tank divisions (at 330 tanks per division) and an additional quantity of tanks—totaling 5,000 by 1991. Twenty-four other motorized rifle and other types of combat divisions are to be put on a "defensive" footing, Gorbachov claimed.

The Soviet-equipped Warsaw Pact forces, including especially tanks, are becoming "leaner and meaner," better protected, more accurately firing (precision), more computerized, more automatic. In other words, as Defense Minister Gen. Dmitri Yazov declared at a special military conference held in the Kremlin Oct. 21 (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, Oct. 22, 1989), qualitative improvements are urgently required since a "sharp confrontation [*protivoborstvo*] in socialist vs. bourgeois ideology continues [and with it] the need to have an offensive strategy [by] making predominantly qualitative improvements in military technology guaranteeing the highest requirements for defense of the Soviet Union and of its allies."

The general singled out the Soviet Western Group of Forces for special attention in this regard (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, Oct. 22, 1989, p. 2), and not, say, those many divisions facing China.

Here Yazov simply echoed former Chief of the General Staff Marsal Nikolai Ogarkov's plea four years ago to economize on forces (quantitatively) by making qualitative improvements (along parameters of firepower, precision guidance, protective devices such as ERA) in order to use "political measures" in the name of enhancing Soviet military

strength. Translated, the latter means that the Soviets bid on the diplomatic level for so-called arms reductions, cheat on whatever reductions are agreed, while de-fanging NATO with soft talk about "new thinking" while the West engages in gradual, steady disarmament.

So far this ploy is working beautifully for the communists. And that's one of the reasons why talk of a "coup" against Gorbachov is nothing more than Soviet-concocted camouflage for Comrade Smiley's (with iron teeth) great accomplishments as a one-man Fabric Softener *vis-à-vis* the West.

As to how NATO might overcome ERA, if it could: Well-aimed shots "between the ERA explosives" might do it. But according to experts, this is a little like repeating Lee Harvey Oswald's "lucky hits" at the back of JFK's skull in Dallas in November 1963. To partially defeat reactive armor, *Defense News* recently pointed out, a NATO gunner firing anti-tank, non-line-of-sight (NLOS) precision-guided, fiberoptic-cable missiles must be aimed, to use the old World War II tank expression, "at the bogey wheels." In the case of Soviet T-72s and T-80s, this vulnerability is extremely small. To penetrate the tank, a shell is exploded directly above its turret.

The West also has a more doable trick up its sleeve that could work better against ERA: double-whammy shells. Known as a "tandem-charge" shell, when fired at tanks in two rapidly following volleys, the first detonation activates the tank's ERA box in the portion that is hit, while the second well-aimed hit is free to deliver a penetrating blow through the now unprotected armor—or so it is claimed.

This makes the much-touted (by the Soviets) factor of stealth and surprise all the more critical. The latest Soviet military literature, dating as recently as 1988, places no less stress on surprise than did Brezhnev-period writings. In fact, it emphasizes it even more since, it says, the more firepower and accuracy the enemy possesses in his weaponry, the more crucial tactics become.

Put another way, if the Soviets can knock out Western defenses (including the latest anti-tank weapons) even before they can be brought into action against advancing Soviet tank divisions (known as "preemption" in the literature), it doesn't much matter how fancy those anti-tank and other weapons are.

Reducing Western readiness—indeed, resolve—to defend itself is thus *from a strictly Soviet military point of view* the main motivating factor in current Soviet arms-control diplomacy and propaganda. The West may be attempting to fight Soviet military modernization—e.g., of tanks—on one front, the technological, while steadily losing ground on the military-political front.

As Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist (who is praised in the current *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*) put it: Defeat the enemy's tactics and strategy and you will win—maybe without even firing a shot.