

Bush's first year: blundering toward war

by Kathleen Klenetsky

When George Bush took office last January, "caution" quickly became his semi-official slogan. The word from the new administration was that Bush intended to follow a "prudent" path, especially in the realm of foreign and strategic policy, because of the rapidly shifting course of world events. In contrast to his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis, Bush pledged that he would not rush into a hasty embrace of Mikhail Gorbachov, nor would he permit U.S. defense capabilities to be undermined.

Yet, barely a year into his presidency, Bush's "cautious" path has actually brought the world closer to World War III. The President's first year in office is the story of one strategic blunder after another. On the most crucial issues affecting the future of the United States and the West, he has chosen precisely the wrong options.

In his relations with China and the Soviet Union, Bush has displayed a sickening enthusiasm for appeasing the enemies of human freedom; he has given the United States a defense budget which even a Dukakis Democrat might shy away from; and his response to the revolution sweeping Eastern Europe has been to apply the brakes, especially on the question of German reunification. The world is witnessing a revolution on behalf of human dignity, and Bush has put himself on the wrong side.

The Kissinger effect

Far from stabilizing the global situation, Bush's actions have exacerbated tensions tremendously. The mental and moral weakness, pragmatism, and stupidity which have characterized his reign can only convince hardline Soviet factions that America is begging to be conquered.

Much of the blame for this sorry state of affairs can be laid squarely on Bush's devotion to the "New Yalta" policies espoused by Henry Kissinger. As *EIR* reported last January,

Kissinger was already exerting heavy, behind-the-scenes influence on the administration, both directly, and through two of his top protégés, Brent Scowcroft and Larry Eagleburger, whom Bush had named as national security adviser and deputy secretary of state, respectively. If Kissinger's influence were not checked, we warned, the administration would become a disaster.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened. Kissinger's influence has been evident in virtually every important strategic policy initiative the administration has taken, so much so that it would be no exaggeration to say that Bush has made the implementation of Kissinger's global condominium his number one priority.

Although Bush insisted that he intended to carry out a sweeping review of strategic policy before making any initiatives, so eager was he to cement a deal with the Kremlin, that he deployed Kissinger to Moscow even before his inauguration. In a mid-January 1989 visit to Moscow, Kissinger, who traveled with a Trilateral Commission delegation, delivered a letter from Bush to Gorbachov.

From this point, the Bush love affair with Gorbachov blossomed rapidly, culminating in the "seasick summit" at Malta in December. Although the "hard cops" in the Bush entourage—Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gates, Vice President Dan Quayle, and Defense Secretary Richard Cheney—maintained a steady stream of rhetoric about the Soviet threat, the administration was actually working out a policy predicated on the supposed need to prop up "reformer" Gorbachov, to protect global power-sharing arrangements.

This devil's pact proceeded with embarrassing haste. In July, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, past chief of the Soviet General Staff and currently Gorbachov's top military adviser, visited the United States, where he lobbied for economic assistance and, reportedly, received assurances that the U.S.

would not react negatively, were the Soviet authorities to order a Russian "Tiananmen" to suppress the strikes and other rebellions against the regime.

Then, in late September, Moscow obtained important arms control concessions from the Bush administration when Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Several weeks later—when it was beginning to become clear, even to some of the more obtuse Soviet watchers in the West, that nothing could save Gorbachov's *perestroika*—the administration decided to publicly announce its support for that failed policy. In two speeches in October, James Baker proclaimed that *perestroika* represented a golden opportunity for moving "beyond containment" to a new era of superpower rapprochement. "The President has said, and I have said, that we want *perestroika*, including the restructuring of Soviet-American relations, to succeed," Baker told the Foreign Policy Association Oct. 17, "because *perestroika* promises Soviet actions more advantageous to our interests."

"Superpower relations," he told the San Francisco Commonwealth Club Oct. 23, "are as promising as we have ever found them since the Second World War. . . . Looking forward, we face the clearest opportunity to reduce the risk of war since the dawn of the nuclear age."

Defense? Who needs defense?

Less than a month after Baker's twin speeches, the administration put out the word that it intended to lop an incredible \$180 billion from the defense budget over four years. While the defense cuts would drastically affect major weapons systems, including the MX and Midgetman missiles, the B-2 bomber, and the SDI, the worst casualty would be the American military presence in Europe. The proposed reductions would require that at least half of the American troops stationed in Western Europe be withdrawn.

This was a move of utterly breathtaking stupidity. The East bloc had become a tinderbox; Gorbachov was tottering on his throne; figures associated with the Ogarkov doctrine for winning an offensive war against the West were suddenly coming to new prominence in Moscow. Yet, at the precise time that the U.S. should have been beefing up its military forces, Bush chose instead to grant Moscow one of its principal objectives: the beginning of the end of U.S. military presence in Europe.

The administration's justification for its move reflected the same deluded thinking behind its overall foreign policy: that global stability can be enforced if concessions are made to Moscow. As Defense Secretary Cheney put it Nov. 19, the likelihood of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union is "at its lowest point since World War III," and, while "you need to be concerned about possible reversal of trends in the Soviet Union," yet "there's a real sense that you want to take advantage of these developments."

Two weeks later, Bush held his Malta summit with Gor-

bachov, the chief aim of which was to buy time for the beleaguered Soviet dictator. Although unable to offer any major economic giveaways—not that he didn't want to; it was just that the American economic depression made it impossible—Bush proffered a host of arms control deals, which Gorbachov could take back home as proof that he was getting the better end of the bargain with the U.S. Among them, Bush committed himself to ensuring that a strategic arms limitation treaty, and a treaty to reduce conventional forces in Europe, would be negotiated, signed and enacted before the end of 1990.

This reckless behavior prompted much dismay, including among members of Bush's own party. In an interview with *EIR* Dec. 6, Donald Rumsfeld, defense secretary in the Ford administration, attacked Bush for speeding up the conventional force reduction process. "The people of Eastern Europe don't want any Soviet troops in their countries," he said. "Why in the world would the U.S. rush to accelerate conventional force reductions when they will lead, at best, to a 50% cut in Soviet forces in Europe? This is tantamount to ratifying and legitimizing the remaining Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. If you think back to the old Brezhnev Doctrine, we are just about to accept it!"

The Malta summit was preceded by deep fears, especially in Europe, that the two superpowers intended to work out a new version of the Yalta accord, which had handed over Eastern Europe to Moscow's domination.

Naturally, the Bush team vehemently denied such accusations, deploying various spokesmen to make repeated public assertions that there would be no "new Yalta" (White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater), no "condominium" (Lawrence Eagleburger). Yet, there can be little question that at Malta, Bush assured Gorbachov that the U.S. would do all in its power to slow the pace of the revolutionary developments in Eastern Europe.

That hypothesis has since been borne out by the blatant hostility which the Bush administration has demonstrated toward the prospect of a reunified Germany. Kowtowing to Soviet opposition to a united Germany, the administration has sought openly to sabotage the reunification process, most recently by sending James Baker, first to Bonn to tell Helmut Kohl to stop promoting reunification, and then to Potsdam, to assure the Modrow government that the U.S. wants to keep it in power.

In accepting the Republican presidential nomination in August 1988, Bush set forth his vision of America "as a unique nation with a special role in the world." This has been called the American Century, Bush went on, "because we were the dominant force for good in the world. We saved Europe, cured polio, went to the Moon, and lit the world with our culture. And now we're on the verge of a new century, and what country's name will it bear. I say it will be another American Century." Bush's first year in office has made a mockery of that promise.