

Soviets and Chinese speed up cooperation

by Mary Burdman

Despite the delay in the visit of Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov to Beijing to discuss the development of Sino-Soviet military cooperation, originally set for March 4, Sino-Soviet relations are warming steadily. The "Eurasian" policy launched by Mikhail Gorbachov in his 1986 Vladivostok speech, is moving forward rapidly in the wake of the Gulf war.

Yazov's visit was put back because the Soviets gave their highest priority to an urgent "special conference" convened by the Defense Ministry to assess American weaponry and tactics in the Gulf war. The awesome show of high-technology force by the U.S. military in the Gulf war was closely watched in China as well as the Soviet Union, and, despite continued Maoist propaganda campaigns in the People's Liberation Army, has provoked serious discussion on military modernization.

The Communist Party of China's Central Military Commission held an enlarged meeting Jan. 11 with the leadership of all three arms of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), military regions, and military academies to review the modernization of the Chinese army, especially in the context of the Gulf war. President Yang Shangkun, who is also Military Commission first vice chairman, said that Deng Xiaoping is "very concerned" about building the army, and especially on research and development of sophisticated weapons. "A modern war will not resemble the rough and crude strategies" used in Korea, against India, or Vietnam, Yang said. It will "begin with a struggle to control the air, and develop overall in a three-dimensional way."

At the same time, a *Pravda* editorial on Feb. 28 emphasized, a result of the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations is that "each of the two neighboring peoples have sensed that they have a reliable, secure rear."

The long visit of Deputy General Secretary of the Soviet CP Central Committee Vladimir Ivashko to Beijing went ahead as planned Feb. 26 to March 2. Ivashko was preparing the visit of Chinese Communist Party head Jiang Zemin to Moscow, set for May, which will consolidate party-to-party relations between the two countries. Ivashko was the highest-ranking Soviet official to visit China since Mikhail Gorbachov's trip to China in May 1989, at the time overshadowed by the mass student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

Ivashko was effusive on his return to Moscow. The Soviet and Chinese people have a "traditionally close friendship," he told Radio Moscow March 6. There was a period of es-

trangement and even confrontation, he said, but that is a thing of the past, "gone for good. We should take a closer look at China," Ivashko said, "at its experiences, including its economic experiences both positive and negative, and not at the West, as some of our economists mistakenly believed."

China will grant the Soviets a goods-credit worth 1 billion Swiss francs, for food and consumer goods. This is "moral support for our country at a crucial moment in our history," Ivashko stated.

The *Pravda* editorial, published during Ivashko's visit, asserted that "the motto of Sino-Soviet cooperation now is not to teach one another, but to learn from one another." Trade and other ties "open before our countries the prospect of becoming piers of a bridge between the Atlantic and Pacific basin" at a time when the center of world business activity is shifting to the Asia-Pacific region, *Pravda* wrote. A rail line linking Moscow and Beijing through Alma Ata and Urumqi in Central Asia is already under construction. In addition, "Soviet Communists will find much that is instructive in the material of the Seventh Chinese Central Committee Plenum, especially on the questions of demarcating central and local powers and combining market relations with state economic regulation," *Pravda* stated.

Moscow endorsed Beijing's concept of a "new international political order," which Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has been elaborating since the end of 1990. Qian, on a 17-day tour of Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Greece, and Malta, called in Madrid on March 1 for a "new international political and economic order" which must be "different from the old one which rested on the hegemony and politics of force."

Reactions to U.S. 'unipolar' world

There were interesting eruptions in Beijing coinciding with Ivashko's visit. A position paper on "the Gulf War and China" by He Xin, a top strategic adviser to Prime Minister Li Peng, warned that the United States will try to "tame" China after defeating Iraq, in its attempt to consolidate an Asian-Pacific empire. The internal document was just leaked to the Hong Kong press. "The U.S. used its absolute military superiority to annihilate Iraq and control the Arabian Peninsula through intimidation," he wrote. China is also on the target list, he continued. Washington "has decided to destroy the current order in China and recompose the Chinese regime. The isolation of China, its disintegration due to internal problems, and its weakening through democratization is the U.S. strategic objective in Asia." China must turn to the Third World and the Soviet Union to resist this U.S. "hegemony," he concluded.

However, this is one faction in Communist China reacting to propaganda about a "unipolar world." It does not mean that the Beijing regime wants to (or can afford to) burn all its bridges to the Anglo-Americans.