

Sino-Soviet summit: troubled giants embrace

by Mary Burdman

Both China and the Soviet Union treated the first Sino-Soviet summit in Moscow in 34 years as a "major event." Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin was treated as if he were a head of state. Jiang was accompanied by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Defense Minister Qin Jiwei, who conducted talks with their Soviet counterparts. Soviet CP head Mikhail Gorbachov emphasized Jiang's status by sending both Soviet Vice President Gennady Yanayev and party Deputy General Secretary Vladimir Ivashko to greet Jiang at the airport. Ivashko had visited Beijing in March to arrange the trip.

During the visit, Jiang, who speaks Russian, met with Gorbachov at least twice, Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, and parliament chairman Anatoly Lukyanov.

Mutual support for each other's stability was the basic theme of the summit. As Ivashko had said on his visit to Beijing, the critical issue for both nations is to "secure their rear" in a tumultuous world. In an interview with the Soviet daily *Pravda* just before the trip, Jiang emphasized both peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation. China and the Soviet Union, Jiang said, have mutually complementary needs and favorable geographic conditions for cooperation. Gorbachov and Jiang both agreed, Radio Moscow reported May 17, that threats to stability in the U.S.S.R. and in China are "of great importance for the stability of Asia and Europe, and thus for the rest of the world."

Jiang's visit was useful to Gorbachov for internal consumption, allowing him to emphasize to conservatives the importance of the Communist Party and socialism. By paying so much attention to the leader of China's CP, he emphasized that the party is at the helm in China and that the Soviet Union still has ties to external CPs.

Both leaders emphasized that their renewed friendship was not aimed at anyone, and that this was not a return to the alliance of the 1950s. However, Radio Moscow commented May 20, the two sides agreed in their opposition to "hegemonism" and both opposed any form of international domination—a swipe at George Bush's new world order.

Soviets can still stand up to U.S.

The question is what the U.S., in its industrial collapse, could possibly offer China. Washington would do well to take note of a recent comment by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. "The Soviet Union faces layer upon layer of

domestic contradictions and its national power is declining, but militarily it is still the only power capable of standing up to the United States," Qian said.

The fact that Defense Minister Qin Jiwei went to Moscow to meet again with Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov so soon after Yazov's five-day visit to Beijing May 3-8, indicates that a sale of advanced Soviet SU-27 fighters to China is in the works. China, cut off by the U.S. from arms sales after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, could become a major Soviet market.

A partial solution to the disputes over the eastern section of the Sino-Soviet border along the Amur River, the site of battles in the 1960s, has been worked out on the basis of "mutual concessions," one Chinese official said. The Chinese conceded the largest of the disputed border islands in the Amur River to the Soviets, and the Soviets agreed in principle that the border runs down the middle of the river, which means that most disputed territory will revert to China.

The potential for broader economic cooperation exists. Mutual trade is minuscule in international terms, but, as Radio Moscow said in its sum-up of the summit May 20, the two economies "complement one another" and there is potential for expansion. About 40% of Soviet sales to China are of machinery and equipment that the Soviets could not market in the West because they are sub-standard, but are cheap enough to be attractive to the Chinese. The Chinese can supply the Soviets with needed consumer goods, particularly textiles. Moscow also needs Chinese labor to develop the mineral resources of Siberia. Tens of thousands of Chinese already work in the Soviet Far East, which has a population of only 2 million people.

But what could become the most important element of Sino-Soviet rapprochement is the potential for infrastructure development in the vast eastern region of Eurasia. This can only happen if Europe consolidates its economic potential along the lines of Lyndon LaRouche's Berlin-Paris-Vienna "Productive Triangle" policy. There are some aspects of the Sino-Soviet discussions which could, with an "economic engine" in Europe, at some point contribute to Eurasian development.

On the eve of Jiang's visit, the Soviet paper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* stressed the "importance of our joint efforts to develop infrastructure along a vast zone" including the Soviet Far East, Manchuria, and Mongolia. The Soviets look forward to cooperation with small and medium-size Chinese enterprises, the paper wrote. China badly needs Soviet industrial and transport technology, including trucks, rail engines and cars, and machinery building technology, the article reported.

In addition, the last section of a rail link between the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan and Xinjiang in China will now be completed even more rapidly than planned, probably by the end of this year. This link will greatly shorten the European-southern China rail route. These developments are a far cry from what both nations, and the rest of Eurasia, need, but they are a start.