

The biggest purge in decades hits U.S.S.R.

by Konstantin George

It was "the biggest purge in recent memory, at least since the Khrushchev years," according to a Radio Liberty veteran who oversees the station's compilation of Soviet purge data dating from October 1952. The source was commenting on the results of the Communist Party (CPSU) elections for 1,600,000 party secretary posts from the level of single factories up to multi-provincial regions. The elections, held in December and January, elected the party leaderships of the districts (*okrug*), counties (*rayon*), provinces (*oblast*), and regions (*krai*).

Radio Moscow's domestic service of March 18, in the first summary of the results, reported that fully *one third of all party officials up for "elections"* lost their posts, being "retired," demoted, or promoted. Thus, in a two-month span, over 2 million party members changed positions.

The function of the purges in the current drive for total militarization of the Soviet economy was underscored in Radio Moscow's assertion that the "elections" would result in "greater labor discipline" and were part of the continuing "fight against corruption," themes prominent during the December Central Committee (CC) Plenum. The Dec. 26 announcement that Mikhail Solomentsev, former prime minister of the Russian Republic, and the current holder of that post, Vitalii Vorolnikov, were appointed to the Politburo, and that Viktor Chebrikov, KGB chief, was made a candidate Politburo member, signaled the consolidation of those allied with the military and the Orthodox Church's "Moscow the Third and Final Roman Empire" doctrine.

The prelude to this consolidation of the Russian chauvinist grouping includes the following shakeups:

In April 1982, Andropov officially "vacated" his KGB chief post and joined the elite Party Secretariat; Chebrikov became first deputy chief of the KGB. In July 1982, Sergei Medunov, the first secretary of the important Krasnodar *krai*, was dumped and replaced by Vitali Vorotnikov, who was brought back from political exile as ambassador to Cuba. (The June 1983 Plenum expelled Medunov from the CC and elevated Vorotnikov to a candidate member of the Politburo.)

On April 29, 1983, Yegor Ligachev succeeded Ivan Kapitonov as head of the CC's Organizational Party Work Department—i.e., the hatchetman who travels around the country overseeing elections and dismissals. On Dec. 26, 1983, as newly appointed CC Secretary for Party Work, Ligachev

took over all Kapitonov's functions.

The Soviet Union is divided into 151 provinces; party secretaries in at least 30 of these *oblasts* have been removed or shifted in the recent purge, a 20% turnover, with at least nine—all CC members—permanently "retired." Three of the replaced *oblast* first secretaries, Mikhail Voropayev (Chelyabinsk *oblast* since 1970), Mikhail Ponomaryov (Vladimir *oblast* since 1961) and Nikolai Konovalov (Kaliningrad *oblast*), all close associates of Solomentsev, were coopted in December and January as his deputies on the Committee for Party Control, which Solomentsev was named to head by the June 1983 Plenum.

Military and media: Yepishev and Zimyanin

Since April 1962, Gen. Alexander Yepishev—a deputy minister in 1951-53 of the MVD, the combined interior and security ministry under Lavrenti Beria—has headed the Main Political Administration (MPA) of the Soviet Armed Forces. Yepishev runs the military media, defining the war-conditioning of the troops and the portrayal of the enemy. Recent features include the violently anti-Semitic diatribes in *Red Star* starting in August, the "We'll do it again" treatment of the KAL airliner affair, and, since December, a *Red Star* campaign against "Nazis and neo-Nazis" in the West German military, as well as campaigns against alleged Danish and Norwegian violations of post-war understandings with Russia—so Ivan will know why he's marching in, should orders come.

At the same time, the interior ministry (the police) acquired the Yepishev look. For the first time in Soviet history, it has an MPA, headed by Maj.-Gen. Victor Gladyshev, who told *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on Nov. 26: "There are still many shortcomings in the activities of the organs of internal affairs," attesting that the purge that began with the removal of Interior Minister Gen. Nikolai Shchokolov in December 1982 is not over.

Since March 1976 (one month before Dmitri Ustinov became defense minister), the CC secretary in charge of media and propaganda has been M. V. Zimyanin, like Yepishev a former close associate of Beria, like Yepishev protected by the foreign ministry and given an ambassadorial career in the first post-Beria years, and like Yepishev a "comeback" to the top leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1965, Zimyanin and his close associate L. N. Tolkunov were made respectively chief editors of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, posts both held until 1976. Before his editorship, Tolkunov had been Andropov's deputy at the CC's department for relations with East European parties, which Andropov then headed. In the December 1982 purge, Zimyanin appointed Boris Stikalin, the former deputy chief editor of *Pravda* he had brought with him to *Pravda* in 1965, as the new chief of the CC Propaganda Department, and in February 1983, Tolkunov again became chief editor of *Izvestia*, which has led the Soviet campaign against *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche.