

Ogarkov lays down the line: Buy time, prepare for war

by Konstantin George

The real Soviet response to President Reagan's irrevocable decision to develop and deploy a laser-technology strategic missile defense system, was delivered at the end of the third week of January, south of Berlin between the little East German towns of Zossen and Wünsdorf—location of the headquarters of the Soviet armed forces in East Germany. There, an "insider" policy speech was given by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, since early September 1984 the commander of what the Soviets call the "Western Theater of War," and in that capacity responsible for war operations against the U.S.A. and NATO.

The Ogarkov speech, so far broadcast only in excerpted form on "Radio Volga," the Soviet military station, compared the present situation to the late 1930s, that is, "a pre-war situation." Stated Ogarkov: "The situation today is comparable in all respects to that which existed at the end of the 1930s." The main policy point in the "analogy" he proffered is that, when Russia was "not ready" for war, it was forced to enter negotiations to "buy time" to modernize its armed forces.

Now, once again, Ogarkov states, "The danger from the military threat is growing," with the "Reagan administration . . . making material preparations for war," "compelling" Russia to enter negotiations to "buy time."

French military-related sources who have studied the text of the speech are calling it "the first real Soviet response to Reagan" after Soviet realization that the SDI program will never be dropped by the United States. In addition to giving a historical justification for the 1939 negotiations between Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, talks which led to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Ogarkov is flatly stating that the Kremlin considers current

talks with the United States necessary for exactly the same reason and no other. To the Russians, Geneva is a tactical ploy to gain time for the next phases of their military buildup and preparations for strategic confrontation and the contingency of war.

The Soviets are intent on "buying time" not only for their own laser-technology defense program, but also for further increments in the entire array of conventional ABM, anti-aircraft, and anti-cruise missile air defense forces, called the PVO after their Russian initials. The ongoing buildup of Soviet conventional air defense forces must be seen in conjunction with their offensive missile buildup, both elements already existing in large numbers. The combined Soviet buildup aims at a complete first-strike capability—"taking out" U.S. strategic nuclear forces and shooting down as many of the surviving "retaliatory strike" U.S. missiles as possible. The near-term goal is to lower Soviet nuclear-war losses to an "acceptable" level even before beam weapons are deployable.

West German political commentator C. Graf Brockdorff, in *Die Welt* on Jan. 23, writes that in cognizance of the PVO's importance, "the U.S.A. will make the entire Soviet strategic defense the object of negotiations. . . . One cannot talk about space-based weapons without bringing the Soviet air defense forces to the negotiating table." Brockdorff accurately labels the Soviet air defense system "the most extensive in the world." The United States has no such anti-aircraft and anti-cruise missile defense for North America. Whatever existed was dismantled during the early 1970s when Henry Kissinger held sway.

The Soviet system consists of 4,000 jet fighter-interceptors and 13,000 surface-to-air missile (SAM) launchers, giv-

ing the Soviet Union a very effective, modern anti-aircraft and anti-cruise missile capability, as well as a partial anti-missile capability through the most recently installed SAM types, which have both anti-aircraft and anti-missile capabilities. The Soviets also have "the only ABM system (a conventional one) in the world against ICBMs . . . which is now being modernized."

Seeking soft spots in the alliance

The Kremlin, unable to break the U.S. commitment to the SDI through either negotiations or threats, is now renewing and escalating the campaign to utilize European political opponents of the American program to exacerbate the threat of U.S.-European strategic decoupling.

being used as the pretext to mount the renewed decoupling offensive. If the Soviets cannot stop the SDI per se, they intend, in compensation, to try to strip the United States of as many overseas allies and as much overseas influence as possible.

The maximum goal remains stopping the SDI, at all costs, as was again stressed as late as Jan. 23 by Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko in a message to an ongoing "Congress of Peace Activists" in Moscow: "There is no task more important today than to prevent nuclear war. The start of a successful solution of this task would be the prevention of an arms race in space." The converse of this statement would be that failure to prevent "an arms race in space" would probably lead to nuclear war. Not very "peace-loving."

On the same day, Jan. 23, *Pravda* stated in the most explicit manner to date that a decoupling offensive is under way, saying that President Reagan's "excessive emphasis on space weapons" could "cause a political separation in the NATO camp" and "rock the foundation of so-called 'Atlantic Solidarity.'" Then, to intimidate Western Europe to the maximum, *Pravda* adds, "The Star Wars program will increase the probability of war being waged on the European continent."

To further the decoupling drive, the Soviet Union will definitely increase its intimidation policy against Western Europe. In this regard, it ought to be viewed as no coincidence that on both occasions where Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov has publicly or semi-publicly reappeared after his early September disappearance from public view, the reappearance has occurred in East Germany, on the front line, so to speak, where most of the first-echelon Soviet "blitzkrieg" armies facing the West are stationed.

Even former Inspector General of the West German Armed Forces Gerd Schmückle, not exactly known (to be charitable) for being an alarmist on the Soviet threat, said in a *Die Welt* interview on Jan. 25, "The greatest danger is without question the military threat." Schmückle subsequently added: "We must not fall into the appeasement policy of the 1930s. . . . That must serve as a lesson for us."

Ogarkov's policy address the third week of January makes that point more starkly than ever.

Are Russians serious about arms talks?

by Rachel Douglas

The Soviet official press now admits that President Ronald Reagan is totally committed to his Strategic Defense Initiative, that it was not offered up as a "bargaining chip" for the arms talks agreed upon by Secretary of State George Shultz and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and that it has the potential to uncork a revolution in science and technology. Moscow would still like to put the genie back in the bottle.

The Communist Party daily *Pravda* now grudgingly refers to the SDI as "the so-called Presidential Strategic Defense Initiative," instead of just "Star Wars," but *Pravda* complained Jan. 20 that "proponents of [the SDI] have not given up their stand. There is still an opportunity to reach an agreement about the non-militarization of space and to . . . prevent the decline of mankind into the nuclear abyss," warned *Pravda*, "Tomorrow might be too late."

Radio Moscow's Yuri Saltov broadcast on Jan. 21 that if the anti-missile defense program is not stopped "now," "it will cancel out everything previously agreed on" and "the situation will become more complicated later.

"*The world is on the threshold of a new stage of the technological and scientific revolution, [which] can get out of human control,*" said Saltov. But, "There is still the possibility to reach an agreement now."

This objection to the SDI, blurted out by Saltov, gets to the heart of the matter. The Kremlin realizes that the game is up, whereby the U.S.S.R. intended to pursue its own strategic defense program—based on the much-advertised Soviet "scientific and technological revolution"—while the United States slumped into a dark age of economic collapse. If the United States fully mobilizes for the SDI, Moscow fears, it will outstrip the Soviets in science, technology, and industry in no time.

Moscow's quandary

The first-hand evidence obtained at the Gromyko-Shultz meeting that Reagan has no plans to bargain away the SDI has thrown the Soviet command into turmoil. The Kremlin's bluff, the threat to walk out on the talks if Reagan didn't drop the SDI, has been called. If the Soviets are serious about the arms negotiations, they will have to talk on Reagan's terms. If they do not, the danger of their launching war zooms.

Moscow's quandary is aggravated by developments in Europe, where in one country after another politicians on whom the Soviets were counting to oppose the United States are lining up behind the SDI. (See articles, pages 34, 41.)