

Bush gives green light for Soviet bloodbath

by William Jones

As President Bush was leaving for Malta for what were billed as informal talks with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov, signals from the administration indicated that the mini-summit could become the biggest U.S. capitulation since the 1945 Yalta summit between Soviet party boss Joseph Stalin and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Bush administration and their intelligence advisers seemed to be intent in rushing headlong into wide-ranging concessions to the Soviet leadership, including giving Gorbachov a carte blanche for a bloody crackdown in the Soviet Union.

The hastily convened "floating summit" between Mikhail Gorbachov and President Bush off the coast of Malta was originally portrayed as a "get-acquainted" session, a portrayal which was met with a great deal of scepticism by official Washington, knowing the Soviet general secretary's penchant for "grand flourishes" on such occasions, and with a great deal of anxiety by the European allies, who bitterly recall the near-sellout by President Reagan at the Reykjavik summit in 1988.

These fears were further fueled when Defense Secretary Richard Cheney on Sunday, Nov. 26, after discussions with President Bush, told reporters at a NATO defense ministers' meeting in Brussels that the rapid "erosion" of the Soviet military threat in Europe made it possible to consider even deeper cuts in conventional arms than those now being negotiated with the Soviets in Vienna. A few days later, the *Washington Post* in a front-page article reported a U.S. intelligence community reassessment of the military balance in Europe, which claims that the NATO forces would have some 33-44 days of warning time before any Soviet attack and that a Soviet "standing-start" or blitzkrieg attack was no longer a credible scenario.

A furor broke out. West European defense ministers

made it clear to Cheney that they did not want the Bush administration reaching any understandings about U.S. and Soviet troop cuts at the Malta meeting. President Bush, running his own "spin control," tried to assuage the allies by railing against the "hyped speculation" and insisting that there would be "no surprises" at Malta.

In a press briefing on Nov. 27, White House press spokesman Marlin Fitzwater admitted for the first time that arms control and conventional force structure would be on the agenda at the Malta session, but complaining that there was "too much focusing" on the possibility of new proposals to reduce troops in Europe beyond the cuts Bush proposed in May to the NATO allies. The Cheney announcement was clearly a signal to the Soviets that the United States was prepared to go much further in arms reductions. In his first-ever interview to the Soviet paper *Izvestia* on Nov. 23, President Bush himself had indicated as much, saying that at Malta "we will attempt to show him [Gorbachov] that arms reduction will not cause damage to their security inasmuch as we have no intention of committing an aggression against the Soviet Union."

Will U.S. wink at crackdown?

But the real danger presented by the Malta mini-summit is the acquiescence of the United States to a bloody crackdown by the Moscow leadership on the revolt within the Soviet empire. The growing unrest in the Soviet Union, with increasing civil war-like conditions in certain areas of the country, forecast over a year ago (and hysterically ignored by the administration) by now-congressional candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, was now becoming apparent to even the most naive. The rapid deterioration of economic conditions in the Soviet Union and the veritable revolution against the

Communist power structure within the satellite states in Eastern Europe, prompted Gorbachov to seek this mini-summit, in a request forwarded to Bush by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze when he met with Secretary of State James Baker III in Wyoming this fall.

A desperate Gorbachov, with dwindling support within his own country, was seeking assistance from the U.S. President in order to maintain his hold on power a little while longer. In a private message to the administration in October, Gorbachov said "that he may be obliged to take steps that seem inconsistent with his goal of democratizing Soviet society." Preparing to drop the *glasnost* mask in a brutal repression against the subject peoples of the empire, Gorbachov was now seeking an agreement from President Bush to "turn a blind eye" to a potential bloodbath.

Baker, Webster give the green light

Already on Nov. 29 through comments made by Secretary James Baker III and CIA Director William Webster, the administration indicated publicly that it was prepared to do just that. At a White House press conference, Baker said that the U.S. would condone a repressive crackdown inside the Soviet Union "under certain circumstances." Splitting semantic hairs between "forcibly suppressing peaceful dissent" and "maintaining order" in the face of inter-ethnic rivalries and civil war, Baker said that the administration would raise no objections to limited repressive measures if packaged in the right way.

On the same day, CIA Director William Webster, at a press briefing at the National Press Club said that chances of a crackdown in the Transcaucasus were great. "They (the Soviets) will not tolerate unrest inside the Soviet Union," said Webster, adding that "shipping troops to Armenia helped stop the unrest." He did not think, however, that there would be such "brutal repression" as in Georgia earlier (where the military used poison gas against demonstrators), although he did not rule out Soviet reprisals even there. He felt the Soviets, for political reasons, could not afford to crack down in Ukraine, and that the situation of the Baltic states, which wanted Finlandization, "could be important for Malta," thus giving an outline of what will undoubtedly be Bush guidelines to Gorbachov for the permissible geography of repression within the Empire.

The Bush administration's willingness to turn a blind eye to massive repression by the Soviets was signaled by two foreign policy actions of great importance the week before the summit. First, in the Middle East, as Soviet-backed Syrian forces began to prepare for a major offensive aimed at eliminating the Christian forces of Lebanese Prime Minister Gen. Michel Aoun, the United States backed the Syrian President Hafez al-Assad—the Butcher of Damascus—against Aoun. Then on Nov. 30, President Bush vetoed a bill which would have allowed Chinese students studying in the U.S. to remain in the U.S. instead of returning home for two years

before applying for a new visa; the bill had been passed by the whole Congress because of the dangers of reprisals—including possible execution—against the students returning to China.

Earlier, the threat of a presidential veto had forced a congressional committee to eliminate from a foreign aid bill a widely supported amendment which would have imposed sanctions on the Chinese government in retaliation for the Tiananmen Square massacre. Thus Bush gave his support to the Butchers of Beijing as well.

The limits of diplomacy

The administration's apparent belief that superpower diplomacy can put geographical or ethnic limitations on a Soviet crackdown when it does come, is foolish, in the kindest interpretation. The prevailing thinking around Washington is that the Soviet empire is running a "two-tier" policy, with leniency in the outer belt of Eastern European satellites, but harsher actions in store for those within the U.S.S.R. proper. Yet even now, the very tenuous situation in Eastern Europe is by no means out of the line of fire of possible Soviet reprisals. The vitriolic Soviet reactions to West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's program for reunification indicate Soviet concern about where the reform movement in East Germany is heading. In Prague on Nov. 30, the Czech defense minister warned that there were limits to what the Czech military could accept. "Anarchy is spreading," he said.

In the Czech city of Ostrava, the Communist Party was organizing a strike in support of the Communist government. Czech reform economist Valtr Komarek commented that "the Communist Party has collapsed, but there is still a danger of its revival." Prague is presently filled with rumors of a coup d'état. In spite of massive pressure for him to resign, hard-line Czech President Gustav Husak has not followed the lead of East German party boss Erich Honecker and retains his position. In Poland on Nov. 29, for the first time since the installation of the Solidarity-backed Mazowiecki government, the police used tear gas and a water cannon to force back demonstrators in the city of Nowa Huta outside of Cracow who attacked the Lenin monument. The demonstrators were also demanding the removal of the estimated 40,000 troops in Poland.

More dangerously, in his desperate rush to save *perestroika*, President Bush seems prepared to make significant military concessions with regard to U.S. military forces in Western Europe in order to prepare the ground for a speedy agreement on conventional forces reduction. Assured by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who visited President Bush in Washington a week prior to his departure for Malta, that Gorbachov was "firmly in the saddle," the White House indicated that it was prepared to use the Malta meeting to speed up the process of arms control, perhaps with President Bush even making some "grand offer" to up the ante for Gorbachov.