One of Gorbachov's former deputies in the Agriculture Department, **Nikolai Kruchina,** now heads the Administration of Party Affairs Department.

Less than a month after Gorbachov became general secretary of the party, the clean-out of the regional apparat, as well as the government, recommenced. P. A. Smolskii of Ligachov's department presided over the March 22 removal of Ivan Bespalov, 69, First Secretary of the Kirov Oblast (province) party committee, and his replacement by V. V. Bakatin, a party inspector in his fifties. *Pravda*'s write-ups of meetings being held in other oblast and city committees, in preparation for a spring plenum of the Central Committee, point to a further crackdown. On March 25, the party daily reported from a meeting in Ufa that "officials who have committed serious misdeeds were being protected," and cited corruption and embezzlement in Volgograd and Irkutsk. The party committee first secretary and the mayor of Bratsk, Irkutsk Oblast, were fired "for gross abuse of their positions."

In the government, Pyotr Neporozhnii found himself retired on March 23 after 23 years as Minister of Power and Electrification and the day after a *Pravda* editorial criticized the ministry's performance in rural electrification. After that, *Pravda* blasted the Coal Ministry, so more heads will no doubt roll.

This rapid turnover of personnel and Gorbachov's speeches mark a push to reorganize the Soviet economy which, as one West German observer put it, "is following the script worked out by Ogarkov." Gorbachov's role is to speed up the process of turning the Soviet civilian economy into a Stalinist wartime economy, he commented.

Gorbachov gave a keynote for his policy on Dec. 10, 1984, in his report to a conference called, "The Improvement of Developed Socialism and the Party's Ideological Work in the Light of the Decisions of the June [1983] Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee"—June 1983 being the major plenum held while Andropov was in office.

Gorbachov said: "Profound transformations must be carried out in the economy and in the entire system of social relations. . . . Only an intensive economy, developing on the latest scientific and technological basis, can serve as a reliable material base for increasing the working people's prosperity and ensuring the strengthening of the country's position in the international area, enabling it to enter the new millennium fittingly, as a great and prosperous power. . . .

"Priority must be given to fundamentally new and really revolutionary scientific and technical solutions capable of increasing labor productivity many times over. . . .

"The fierce enemy of lively thought and lively action is formalism. . . . Its essence is incompetence. . . . Our party will become still more cohesive and authoritative if we continue to rid ourselves of those who do not value party principles and party honor and get rid of moral degenerates. . . ."

With these fighting words about "profound transformations" and ridding the party of dead wood, the "Andropov Dynasty" announced itself to be in the saddle.

Strategic Defense

Mexico opens way to world participation

The Mexican government has officially called upon the Soviet Union to accept President Reagan's offer to share the technologies of the Strategic Defense Initiative, and to include developing-sector countries in the research effort to achieve an effective defense against nuclear-missile attack. Mexico's proposal—the first official endorsement of the SDI from a developing country—was presented to both sides at the U.S.-Soviet arms talks in Geneva.

Backing up the government initiative, a group of leading Mexican scientists has called for investigation of how the technology spinoffs from the SDI could enhance the development of the Third World.

On March 21, Alfonso García Robles, Mexican ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, argued the Mexican case to the U.N. Defense Committee. Not only the Soviet Union, but also one of the countries that signed the New Delhi Declaration of January 1985, he said, should be included in the technology-sharing program.

Socialist International scheme blocked

The Mexican proposal cuts across the grain of standard Soviet and Socialist International-inspired propaganda which portrays the SDI as the "Star Wars" bogeyman which is stealing scarce resources away from development efforts in the Third World. Mexico has placed the debate on a different level: How can all the world benefit from the SDI? The proposal to place one of the New Delhi countries—Mexico, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Kenya, Argentina, and India—in a privileged briefing position regarding the SDI's progress gives the Reagan administration an opportunity to open a "window" for understanding of, and support for, the President's SDI program throughout the Third World.

The Mexican move thwarts one of the objectives inserted into the deliberations of the New Delhi summit by Olof Palme, the pro-Soviet premier of Sweden. Palme's original draft for the New Delhi Resolution insisted on a crusade against the U.S. space defense initiative. The final wording watered this down, but kept the flavor of a "world peace initiative" to prevent "militarization of space."

Now Mexico has taken the outcome of that forum—which included India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi—and steered it in a different direction.

The move by García Robles, Mexico's senior ambassador in international negotiations and 1982 Nobel Peace Prize winner, also opens new possibilities for the Ibero-American

heads-of-state summit which is being proposed by Argentina's President Raul Alfonsín for sometime before the end of the year.

Alfonsín had proposed that the summit deal with implementation of a nuclear-free zone in Ibero-America, a propaganda line exploited by the Soviets. The statements by García Robles—who is the author of Mexico's version of the "nuclear-free" proposal, the Tlatelolco Treaty—could place more positive consideration of the SDI on the table in consultations on the summit.

The Mexican career diplomat, a personal friend of Mexico's President Miguel de la Madrid, stated that the model for the kind of technology-sharing which he envisioned was expressed by President Reagan in his second campaign debate with Walter Mondale on Oct. 21, 1984. García Robles recalled Reagan's statement that "this possibility of shared research is probable."

He endorsed Reagan's statement, adding that the sharing should not come only after the defensive systems have been developed, but "starting now," and that "the Soviet Union be invited to participate, on a plane of absolute equality of rights, together with a member state of the New Delhi Declaration."

García Robles emphasized that such a measure would reduce the "lack of confidence" between the superpowers, each concerned about a possible "first-strike capability" of the other.

Excelsior newspaper of Mexico City reported the García Robles statements on its front page onMarch 22, under the headline "Mexico calls for Third World Access to Defensive Space Technology."

Two weeks before the Mexican government proposal was announced, top researchers at Mexico's Mexican Petroleum Institute (IMP), one of the most advanced research and development facilities in Ibero-America, gave the first indications that a policy change inside Mexico was under way. The researchers called upon Ibero-American scientists and officials to study the technological potentials of the SDI program and their possible applications to efforts to develop the Ibero-American continent.

Documentation

The Mexican magazine Novedades *described the Mexican scientists' call for their country to join the Strategic Defense Initiative effort, in a Feb. 18 article entitled, "IMP: 'Star Wars' is a Hope for Humanity." Excerpts follow.*

The "Star Wars" military project, with the intrinsic risk that it carries, nonetheless also signifies a hope for humanity to avoid the danger of nuclear holocaust and reduce atomic force in great measure to use for peaceful progress. In other words, if the "Star Wars" project is brought to fruition, nuclear arsenals will no longer be important militarily, in light of the eventual ease in counteracting them. Also, radioactive materials will then have a minimal strategic value, but will be vital for peaceful uses such as the production of electricity, medical procedures, food-processing, and other fields in which this type of energy has been experimented with. The costs of radioactive materials will, as a result, be markedly cheapened, and finally humanity will have at its disposal one of the most formidable sources of energy that has been created in the modern age, for peaceful and progressive ends. This thesis is maintained by experts of the Mexican Petroleum Institute and of the Mexican energy sector who have closely followed the matter.

For these specialists, the "Star Wars" project implies that the possibility of using laser beams to create a national protective shield against nuclear attack, based on neutralizing military missiles in space without exploding them, is totally feasible.

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In terms of engineering, they explained to *Novedades* that the advance achieved under the program is 80% effective, and that it only remains to provide the laser beams with sufficient power to be projected, especially from the ground, into space, and to neutralize nuclear missiles in flight. When this is achieved, the military nuclear missiles—and obviously, the radioactive materials which are the prime material for their construction—will lose their attractiveness for war and, thus cheapened and rendered unusable as means for achieving power, will remain at the disposal of all the peaceful and progressive ends that human ingenuity is capable of developing.

In the course of the interviews conducted by *Novedades,* it became clear that although much is said and assumed about the risks of nuclear war, in reality the world has remained continuously under the threat of it. In effect, since July 16, 1945 when the U.S. produced its first atomic explosion, 1,486 of these detonations have occurred through 1984. The nations which have participated in the development of nuclear power with the explosion of test weapons and which achieved success are, in chronological order: U.S., 7/16/45; U.S.S.R., 9/23/49; Great Britain, 10/3/52; France, 2/13/60; China, 10/1/64; India, 5/18/84.