

Soviet succession fight erupts into the open

by Konstantin George

The April 5 edition of the Soviet Communist Party paper *Pravda* published an editorial denouncing *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the party newspaper of the Russian Republic, and in protocol terms, the second-ranking party newspaper, after *Pravda*, in the Soviet Union.

With this open attack by the Gorbachov group against an equally open attack from the group around Politburo member Yegor Ligachov, a threshold point has been reached in the Soviet factional wars around the succession to the leadership.

On March 13, the day before General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov's departure for a week-long visit to Yugoslavia, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* carried a full-page declaration of war on the Gorbachov "period," and proclaimed, in effect, a post-Gorbachov Great Russian and Slavophile "period," as such violent swings in policy were characterized in the early decades of Soviet history. *Sovetskaya Rossiya's* broadside was couched as a "reader's letter" by a Leningrad chemistry professor, one Nina Andreyeva, titled, "I Cannot Forsake My Principles."

Pravda finally got around to replying, three weeks later, on April 5. "In essence," *Pravda* wrote, "two basic theses run like a red thread through its entire content: Why all this perestroika, and haven't we gone too far in questions of democratization and glasnost?" Perestroika, "restructuring," and glasnost, "openness," are well known as Gorbachov's watchwords.

Why the delay before *Pravda's* reply? Gorbachov had to wait until a week where he would be in, relatively speaking, the best position between now and the crucial All-Union Party Conference that begins on June 28. Gorbachov timed his counterattack with the only occasion when the Politburo's most powerful power broker after Yegor Ligachov, namely Lev Zaikov, boss of the military-industrial complex, was out

of Moscow on a four-day visit to Finland that began April 5.

The April 6 edition of the weekly *Moskovskiy Novosti* (*Moscow News* in its English edition) echoed *Pravda* in attacking the *Sovetskaya Rossiya* piece as "an attempt to form a platform for the resistance to perestroika." The Moscow weekly then identified the centers of resistance as 1) "the most conservative part of the [central party] apparatus," a thinly veiled reference to Yegor Ligachov, 2) "young people, who were educated and began their careers during the time when things stood still [the Brezhnev Period], and, most significantly, 3) "representatives of the armaments industry." The latter reference meant not only the aforementioned Lev Zaikov, but the promotion pattern of the past ten months that has heavily strengthened the military-industrial complex in the Communist Party's executive bodies, the Politburo and Secretariat.

Since May 30, 1987, Zaikov has had with him on the Politburo (as non-voting members, so far) Defense Minister and General of the Army, Dmitri Yazov; Yuri Maslyukov (since February 1988), until Feb. 6, deputy prime minister in charge of arms production, and now boss of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan). Zaikov brought onto the CC Secretariat on Feb. 18, Oleg Baklanov, who had been in charge of Soviet missile and hi-tech military production.

The need for *Pravda* to reply was also forced by the fact that the East German party leadership reprinted the *Sovetskaya Rossiya* article in full in the party paper, *Neues Deutschland*, April 2. As the lead editorial of the April 6 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of West Germany's leading dailies, noted: "The SED [communist party] leadership would never have allowed this broadside against perestroika were they not certain that they were with the stronger side." The Frankfurt newspaper added that the *Sovetskaya*

Rossiia piece marked the first time in 32 years that the epithet "class traitor" had been openly used in Moscow factional battles.

Gorbachov has launched such an unprecedented style of attack in order to set alarm bells ringing in the appeasement-minded capitals of the West, to have today's Neville Chamberlains march to his rescue with strategic concessions—a result that will benefit, of course, the entire Soviet leadership. West German Social Democrat Egon Bahr, in Moscow, after his four-hour meeting with Gorbachov on April 5, declared that a START agreement was all but ruled out for the May 29-June 2 Reagan-Gorbachov in Moscow. Bahr disclosed that Gorbachov "would like to hope for one. But he fears that, for political reasons, he dare not hope."

The theatrics were in evidence one day after the *Pravda* editorial, when, unannounced, Gorbachov flew to Tashkent, Soviet Central Asia, met with Afghan puppet Najibullah, and on April 7 announced that "the last obstacles have been removed," for the "early signing" of a settlement, adding their joint welcoming of the "readiness of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. to guarantee the agreements." Once again, the "magic" of Gorbachov worked with the Western appeasement lobby. The sellout of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been finalized.

'Great Russian,' slavophile revival

The *Pravda* editorial was no less dramatic. Polemics were employed against *Sovetskaya Rossiya* that in the past were thrown against the Chinese and the Albanians. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* was accused of having published an article that "cannot be characterized otherwise, than as an ideological platform and manifesto of anti-perestroika forces," representing "a position . . . incompatible . . . with socialist morality," and "an attempt . . . to whitewash the past, to justify political deformations and crimes against socialism."

Sovetskaya Rossiya had in fact resurrected the old epithet of "cosmopolitanism," Stalin's code-word in the 1930s for the Bukharinite and Trotskyite "Trust" component of the Bolsheviks, a resurrection that *Pravda* dared not deal with. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* denounced "left-liberal socialists" who form an "open or concealed cosmopolitan tendency." These representatives of "militant cosmopolitanism" were charged with the crime of "tearing themselves away from socialism." Also attacked was the prevailing situation in Russia today where such crimes are treated as "a nearly harmless exchange of words, rather than treason against the [working] class, and against the nation by persons, who in their majority attended higher schools at the cost of the people" i.e., "cosmopolitan traitors and parasites."

Nina Andreyeva's letter in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* went out of its way to defend the new "Great Russian, slavophile period": "I'm convinced that through an underestimation of historical consciousness, not only is a pacifist softening of the will for defense arising, but also that efforts to undertake

even the smallest utterings of national pride by the Great Russians, are branded as Great Power chauvinism."

Nina Andreyeva selected quotes from Winston Churchill to praise Stalin's accomplishments: "Stalin's power was so great, that he had no equal among the leaders of all countries and all times. He took over the Russia of the ploughshare and left it in possession of the atomic bomb." *Sovetskaya Rossiya* blasted the proponents of reform policies as those who have "drifted into petit-bourgeois socialism," and supported "only by Menshevizing idealists."

That the Russian Republic party paper would be the one to throw down the gauntlet comes as no surprise. *EIR* in September 1987 had documented the role of *Sovetskaya Rossiya* in spearheading the opposition to Gorbachov. Beginning in March 1987, attacks were launched on the "excesses" of glasnost, and demands voiced throughout the spring to accentuate the "positive" in Soviet history. In April 1987, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* ran a major feature on the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Treaty, (reprinted in *Neues Deutschland*) praising Lenin, and Stalin as Lenin's main supporter for a separate peace with Germany, and denouncing the two wings of the "Trust," personified by Bukharin and Trotsky, in opposition to Lenin.

In that same week of March 1988, when Gorbachov was off in Yugoslavia, another dramatic signal in the form of a "reader's letter" appeared, this one in the March 17 *Sovetskaya Molodyozh*, the party youth paper in Latvia. The letter was drafted to appear extremely worried over the future of "glasnost" and "democratization," and concluded with the question: "What if something happens to M. Gorbachov, what then?"

Phase change as in 1930s

According to a seasoned observer of the Soviet leadership, what is beginning to happen will be interpreted as a Stalinist revival, but it is not. It is actually a replay of the Stalin-Bukharin struggle of the 1920s and early 1930s, which was not a conflict of personalities. The first stage of Stalin's crushing of Bukharin was the first five-year plan. Russia continued to entertain "joint ventures" with Western financiers, but on a radically different basis from those set up under Nikolai Bukharin, which had been run by the international grain cartel, exactly like the "détente" process from 1972 to the present. Under Bukharin, Russia's economy was strangled by inflated prices for grain in the so-called "scissors crisis." Today the same crisis is hitting especially the East European colonies.

The second stage was the blood purges of 1934-38, slaughtering millions, especially those linked to Bukharin and the Anglo-Soviet "Trust."

The source stressed that the present fight does not flow from an identification with Stalinism, but the conditions will lead it to adopt a qualified defense of Stalinism. The people in the West who have appeased and trade everything away will be sitting with empty pockets politically.