

# Moscow shapes Asian 'pax sovietica'

by Rachel Douglas

In late September, soon after U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa met in Moscow to discuss Asian affairs, Soviet Russian- and foreign-language publications launched a big campaign on behalf of a Soviet proposal for a "collective security" conference and pact for Asia. These writings reveal that, as a step beyond the superpowers' new Yalta-style division of the world into spheres of influence, Moscow envisions a *pax sovietica* descending over all Asia.

Leonid Brezhnev first put forward the idea of an Asian collective security pact shortly after the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Agreement of 1975. Few in Asia voiced any enthusiasm for the scheme, but at May 1985 talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, Soviet party boss Mikhail Gorbachov revived it. He proposed to convene a forum on the establishment of a "zone of peace" in the Indian Ocean, for starters—"a sphere of vital interest to the states located on its shores and not to any others." Gandhi's response was lukewarm.

Lawfully enough, Gorbachov's bid to codify a Soviet sphere of influence in Asia—the U.S.S.R. has a long Pacific coastline—came the same month as the Soviets agreed to hold bilateral "high-level policy discussions" with the United States, "about specific trouble spots around the world." This is what evolved into the set of bilateral superpower talks on different regions, of which the Wolfowitz-Kapitsa contacts are one case, and the State Department scheme for regional conflicts to be center-stage at President Reagan's Nov. 21 meeting with Gorbachov. (See *EIR*, Nov. 1, 1985: "New Yalta deal: ready to sign.")

## Russia's 'spiritual' claim to Asia

But what is Moscow's ultimate design for Asia? The Soviet weekly *New Times* declared in a September cover story on Asia, that there is only one "superpower" with any business there. "The U.S.S.R., as is generally known, is not only a European but also an Asian power," wrote Dmitrii Volskii. "The Byzantine legacy which ancient Rus drew on was a unique fusion of the spiritual wealth not only of Europe but of a considerable part of Asia." (The same *New Times*, one week earlier, had admonished, "There can be no justifi-

cation for the idea that ancient Russian culture . . . was 'non-European'"!)

"In Moscow's opinion," Volskii reported, "it is high time to give thought to a common comprehensive approach to [the cause of security in Asia] and to pool the efforts of the Asian countries to this end."

Writing on the eve of the latest round of Sino-Soviet talks in Peking and a meeting of the Chinese and Soviet foreign ministers in New York, Volskii pointed to "the normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations" as a development that "would unquestionably promote the positive processes in Asia. . . ."

The main Soviet idea is to drive the United States out of Asia and the Pacific altogether. In *Pravda* of Sept. 26, senior commentator Vsevolod Ovchinnikov enumerated the elements of "a formula for common Asian security," among them: a pledge by the non-nuclear countries of the region not to have or produce nuclear weapons, or allow to be stationed on their territory; complete cessation of nuclear weapons testing in Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans; refusal of Asian and Pacific Basin states to participate in the militarization of space (this is an attack on Japanese collaboration on the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative); liquidation of foreign bases in Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Another September issue of *New Times* gloated that France's nuclear testing program in the Pacific would soon face problems, due to an incipient independence movement in French Polynesia. "It looks as if the winds of the nationalist movement blowing in New Caledonia and Guadeloupe have reached the shores of yet another French possession—Polynesia," said *New Times*. The Soviets have aggressively pursued the expansion of their scope of naval action in the South Pacific, using the foot-in-the-door of fishing-rights agreements with former colonies like Vanuatu and Kiribati.

Moscow backed up its propaganda with diplomatic forays into Southeast Asia. Soviet trade delegations were in Thailand and Indonesia in late September and early October, while the Philippines were the target of intense Soviet courtship: a Russian military delegation went to Manila in September, while Moscow played host to President Marcos' wife, Imelda Marcos, in October. Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet foreign minister, will make an official visit to Japan early next year, a trip long postponed by his predecessor, Andrei Gromyko.

Scarcely concealed behind the scrim of diplomacy is the force of Soviet arms in the Pacific. In late August, the forces of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, which comes under the Soviet military's High Command East, were observed rehearsing large-scale amphibious landings to simulate an attack on Japan's Hokkaido Island. The operation they practiced, to secure total control of the straits through which the Pacific Fleet moves from its base at Vladivostok onto the high seas and of the Sea of Okhotsk as a sanctuary for bastions of Soviet nuclear-missile submarines, points to the importance of dominating Asia for Soviet global strategy.