

# The first year of the Gorbachov era: Global Showdown 1985

by Konstantin George

1985 marked the beginning of the Gorbachov era in the history of the Russian Muscovite Imperium. Mikhail Gorbachov was officially enthroned in March, entrusted with seeing through Moscow's historic "mission" of achieving world domination, preferably by the end of this decade and at the latest, well before the end of the century.

Concerning the imperialist mindset of Mr. Gorbachov and the Kremlin leadership, we are indebted to Gorbachov himself for having candidly admitted this at his press conference in Geneva, directly following the summit with President Reagan. Gorbachov stated that he models his policies and political behavior on the 19th-century British prime minister, Lord Palmerston, a name synonymous with the creation of an empire upon which "the sun never sets." Gorbachov related how, during his December 1984 visit to London, he had listened to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher repeat Palmerston's dictum, "Britain has neither eternal friends nor eternal enemies, only interests." Gorbachov told Mrs. Thatcher, "I fully agree with that."

Gorbachov's first year has moved Moscow to within a few years of absolute strategic superiority. The critical developments can be first summarized here:

1) Following the creation of the Soviet wartime High Commands in late 1984, 1985 marks the first year in which the entire Soviet military has functioned operationally under a wartime military High Command. Beginning in late 1984, and now nearly completed under Gorbachov, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov installed a new generation of military commanders to oversee the various branches of the Soviet Armed Forces, all the front-line Groups of Forces deployed in Eastern Europe, and all three fleets facing NATO. The training and the maneuvers—conducted by an Army and Air Force increasingly filled with combat veterans rotated through Afghanistan—is made as realistic as possible, with the special feature of mounting a surprise first strike against NATO and offensive *Blitzkrieg* through Western Europe.

2) In missile hardware, the corner has been turned toward achieving both strategic and theater nuclear superiority. The decisions made under the Ogarkov Plan during 1975-77, to

produce and deploy a new generation of super-accurate mobile missiles, is now operational reality. On the intercontinental level, the mobile SS-24s and SS-25s are deployed, or nearing completion in deployment. The full complement of the SS-20s (450-plus launchers) are deployed. The full complement of SS-21, -22, -23, short- and medium-range missiles is operational in Central and Eastern Europe—with full stocks of nuclear and chemical warheads. Many other alarming military developments have occurred, as we shall see below.

3) Gorbachov has declared war on the millstone hanging around Imperial Russia's neck—the backwardness and inefficiency of the civilian economy—launching a policy of enforced rapid expansion in scientific and technological progress, and a "forced-march" rate of incorporating the latest technologies into all sectors of the industrial economy. This means, first and foremost, assigning as top priority the earliest possible deployment of a laser-based ABM system, giving Russia an ABM monopoly and thus the ability to dictate terms of capitulation to the West.

4) To ensure that the guidelines emphasizing science, technology, and labor productivity are actually realized, Gorbachov has launched the widest-ranging purges seen in the Soviet Union since the days of Stalin, removing systematically from the Party, government, and industrial enterprises, the mass of bureaucratic "dead wood" accumulated during the 20 years of the Brezhnev era.

## A year of unpleasant surprises

Here we shall review the dramatic gains made in Soviet military capabilities during the latter half of 1984 and in 1985. This was a period replete with Russian military surprises, followed by a temporary state of shock and alarm registered in NATO, and then a return to slumber in the West, the result of the domination of foreign policy by the appeasement policies of a majority of the West's ruling elite.

Before 1985, there was no deployment of the new generation of mobile intercontinental missiles, the SS-24s and the SS-25s. Soon, the full complement of 460 SS-25 launchers and some 100 SS-24 launchers (each SS-24 can carry up

to 30 warheads) will be operational. While Russia was adding hundreds of modern intercontinental missiles to its inventory, as part of completing the hardware side of preparations for a crippling first strike, the U.S. Congress was wrecking the MX program. Instead of the planned 200 MX missiles— itself a totally inadequate figure—only 50 will be produced. The United States has unilaterally effected “deep cuts” in its strategic offensive missiles. With the passage of the Gramm-Rudman “balanced budget” legislation in December, this will continue in an even more brutal manner.

Before 1985, there was no large-scale Soviet deployment of nuclear attack submarines refitted with 3,000-km range nuclear cruise missiles, and no full complement of Russian nuclear submarines patrolling at all times off the American coastline. There are now at least 25 such submarines in service, each with 20 cruise missiles, and a number of them in continuous patrol off the U.S. coast. In June 1985, these submarines for the first time, together with nuclear ballistic-missile submarines also stationed off the U.S. coast, simulated their specific assignment under the Ogarkov War Plan: They mounted a barrage to “pin down” land-based U.S. ICBMs in their silos, until the Russian land-based “silobusters” arrive to cripple the U.S. retaliatory strike.

Before 1985, Russia did not yet have the capability to mount a surprise attack upon Western Europe, without giving “tell-tale” advance indications. In 1985, Russia began a round of late spring and summer exercises with its Groups of Forces stationed in East Germany and Eastern Europe, and its Air Force and Naval Aviation, each of which was characterized by a sudden launching of divisions and aircraft into an offensive action westward, near the borders of West Germany and Austria, with no prior detectable signs or preparations.

Hardly had NATO had the chance to absorb one such surprise, than the next shock was delivered:

**Surprise No. 1:** On May 26, Russia began a six-day exercise of its forces in Czechoslovakia; without notice, the troops simulated a surprise attack on West Germany. This was followed in rapid succession by parallel maneuvers in June in Hungary, along the Austrian border, and in July in East Germany, near the West German border.

**Surprise No. 2:** On June 4, hundreds of Soviet long-range bombers suddenly took off and flew west across the Baltic, simulating a surprise attack on West Germany and Scandinavia.

**Surprise No. 3:** The June rehearsal by 24 nuclear submarines stationed off the U.S. coast, of their role in a nuclear first strike against the United States.

**Surprise No. 4:** In July, the Murmansk-based Northern Fleet conducted the largest naval maneuvers ever held by Russia in the North Atlantic, with more than 100 ships and submarines participating, along with hundreds of aircraft. Moscow proved beyond any doubt that it can control the

North Atlantic, seize Norway, and sever NATO's North Atlantic supply lines at the onset of war.

To these most dramatic military developments, we must add the relentless build-up of offensive and military-logistic capability of Soviet forces in East Germany, where quietly over the past two years, some 100,000 troops, some 2,500-3,000 tanks, and hundreds of artillery pieces have been added to these invasion spearhead forces. In one of the latest moves, for example, right before the Geneva summit, an entire armored division was added to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany.

The same pre-war build-up of invasion forces and stockpiles has also been witnessed in such key strategic areas as the Kola Peninsula, facing northern Norway, and the Soviet Far East Military District, including Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, opposite Japan.

Most important, however, is the ongoing Soviet crash program to develop and deploy a first-generation laser-based ABM defense system. Tens of thousands of Soviet scientists and engineers are working at breakneck pace to achieve an ABM “breakout” in the next few years.

### **The High Command reorganization**

Beginning in the spring of 1984, then Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov began what has since become the greatest reorganization of the Soviet military command since the Second World War. The centerpiece of the reorganization was the creation of four wartime High Commands: High Command Strategic Direction West, the most important of the four, and personally commanded by Marshal Ogarkov, with headquarters in Minsk, responsible for both total war against the United States and NATO, and for “limited” war options against Western and Northern Europe; High Command Strategic Direction Southwest, headquartered in Kiev, commanded by General of the Army Ivan Gerasimov, with responsibility for limited war options in the Balkans and Turkey; High Command Strategic Direction South, commanded until recently by General of the Army Yuri Maksimov, and headquartered in Tashkent, responsible for the war in Afghanistan, and any future operations in the area of Iran, the Persian Gulf, Pakistan and the Indian subcontinent; and the already existing Far East High Command, commanded by General of the Army Ivan Tretyak.

The scope of the reorganization is breathtaking. During 1984 and 1985, nearly every one of the commanders of the 16 military districts in the Soviet Union was shifted to another post. Every one of the commanders of the four Soviet Groups of Forces in Central and Eastern Europe (in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary), was transferred to other duties, and every branch of the Soviet Armed Forces, with the exception of the Air Defense Forces, received a new commander in chief, with most of the changes having occurred under Gorbachov.

## The scientific-technological revolution

Even more dramatic than the military developments we have described, however, is that Gorbachov, in year one of his regime, has declared all-out war on the traditional Russian way of bringing the war economy to a production peak, while the civilian industrial economy flounders in waste, inefficiency, poor labor productivity, and relative technological backwardness.

Gorbachov was placed in power by Ogarkov and the Suslov-Andropov "mafia" in the Communist Party and KGB, with a mandate to do everything necessary to remove economic bottlenecks that would slow down or jeopardize the capability of the Soviet Empire to achieve absolute strategic superiority by 1988. Gorbachov wasted no time. In his 10 months in office, he has already conducted the greatest party and government purge since Stalin's of the 1930s. Two Politburo members, dozens of Central Committee members, and more than 20 government cabinet ministers have been dumped, along with scores of regional and local party chiefs, the party heads of two of the Central Asian Moslem Republics, Tadzhikistan and Kirghizia, and thousands of managers and heads of enterprises.

At the April Central Committee Plenum, Gorbachov began stacking the Politburo with handpicked appointees, each having not only the pedigree of belonging to the Suslov-Andropov mafia, but also known as champions of the accelerated introduction of new technologies.

The April Plenum set up the new bosses of the purge apparatus, by naming KGB boss Vitalii Chebrikov and Yegor Ligachov to the Politburo. The same Plenum appointed Nikolai Ryzhkov, with a background as a Party regional boss of a crucial industrial region, thoroughly committed to imposing a high technology economy throughout the Soviet Union. The drive to effect a transformation in Russian society was dramatically accelerated just two months later, in June, when Gorbachov convened an extraordinary conference of the Central Committee on the theme of introducing scientific and technological progress into the Soviet economy.

That the driving force behind these policies was preparation for a military showdown and possibly war, was candidly revealed by Gorbachov himself in a speech to members of the Leningrad Party organization on May 17: "Our prewar generation was faced with the task of having to accomplish in just a few decades what it took other countries 100 years to do, because our country was in a critical situation. Even then, we had the sense that the threat to our socialist country was the top priority. We didn't manage to get everything done that time, but we basically succeeded, and that was the foundation of the Victory of '45. Well, today we again have a long road to travel, but we have to do it in a short time."

With this backdrop, Gorbachov called the extraordinary Central Committee Conference. His speech at that conference is a landmark in Soviet policy documents. Calling for "urgent measures to accelerate the country's scientific-technological progress," he made it clear that he was not talking

simply about linear economic growth, but a technological revolution: "What is at issue, is a new quality of our development, rapid progress in the strategically important directions, a structural rebuilding of production, a transition to intensive methods and effective forms of management, and a more comprehensive solution to social problems."

A growth rate in machine-tool production of 50-100% was stipulated for the 1986-90 Five Year Plan, while capital investments in machine building are to increase by 80% over the same period. "The development of fundamental science should be given priority importance," said Gorbachov. "It is this science which acts as a generator of ideas, makes possible breakthroughs into new fields, and shows ways of reaching new levels of efficiency . . . . We must sharply turn the Academy's Institutes toward expanding research of a technical directedness and enhance their role in and responsibility for creating the theoretical bases of fundamentally new types of machinery and technology. . . . According to existing estimates, institutions of higher education are capable of increasing the volume of research they conduct by 100-150%."

Gorbachov did something at the June conference, which no Kremlin ruler except for Stalin had ever done before: He publicly rejected as "inadequate" the 1986-90 Five Year Plan drafted by the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), then headed by Nikolai Baibakov, demanding a thoroughly rewritten document.

At the end of September, Gorbachov appointed Nikolai Ryzhkov as his prime minister, replacing the octogenarian Brezhnevite Nikolai Tikhonov. Ryzhkov was given *carte blanche* to overhaul the Soviet government and economy. At the October Central Committee Plenum, Ryzhkov was appointed to the Politburo, and the Gosplan got a new boss, Nikolai Talyzin, a veteran of 25 years service to the Soviet war economy, in the electronics and telecommunications sectors.

In December, Ryzhkov presided at an extraordinary session of Comecon prime ministers, ordered by Gorbachov, six months ahead of the next regularly scheduled session in June 1986. Ryzhkov, in his speech to the group, stressed that the economy must be brought into "the most advanced state of science and technology." The meeting mapped out the implementation of the new Gorbachov economic policy guidelines, with emphasis to be placed on five principal areas: 1) micro-electronics, 2) automation and robotics, 3) nuclear energy, 4) new materials, 5) biotechnology.

The contrast between the Soviet Union and the United States could not be greater, as the U.S.S.R. enters the opening phase of a massive economic transformation, with all emphasis on the latest technological developments being incorporated into the economy, combined with a relentless military build-up. The United States, on the contrary, confronts a devolving economy and massive slashing of its own defense capabilities.

1985 was a turning point year for the Russian Empire—perhaps the last turning point that the West can afford.

# Global Showdown 1985

**Jan. 25:** Assassination of Gen. René Audran of the French defense ministry, who had particularly close ties to West German and U.S. military officials.

**Feb. 1:** Assassination of Ernst Zimmermann, head of the West German Defense Contractors' Association and a manufacturer of jet and tank engines.

**Feb. 2-10:** Warsaw Pact maneuvers in East Germany rehearse the function of an Operational Maneuver Group (OMG), a *blitzkrieg* offensive task force.

**Feb. 5:** New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange states that his country will no longer permit the porting of the U.S.S. *Buchanan*, given its policy of refusing visits of nuclear-carrying and/or nuclear-fueled ships.

**March 4:** Australian Prime Minister Robert Hawke announces that the annual meeting of the Anzus Treaty partners—the United States, New Zealand, and Australia—is “indefinitely postponed.” He called the treaty a “dead letter.”

**March 12:** Mikhail Gorbachov is named successor to Soviet party chief Konstantin Chernenko, just hours after the latter's death.

**March 24:** Murder by Soviet soldiers of Major Arthur D. Nicholson, an American officer attached to the U.S. Military Mission in Potsdam, East Germany. Nicholson was conducting a reconnaissance operation, as permitted by the Four-Power Agreements governing postwar Germany.

**March 28:** U.S. House of Representatives votes \$1.5 billion to produce 21 MX missiles. The Reagan administration had requested funds for 48 missiles.

**March 29:** Greek President Constantine Caramanlis is replaced by Christos Sartzetakis, in a legal coup d'état carried out by Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou.

**April 6:** Military coup in Sudan overthrows Gaafar Numeiry, replacing him with Gen. Abdel Rahman Siwar Ad Dahab.

**April 7:** Soviet General-Secretary Gorbachov declares a “moratorium” on stationing of intermediate-range mobile missiles, and freezes deployments of short- and medium-range missiles in Eastern Europe. The United States rejects reciprocity, saying that it would only “freeze” “Soviet superiority.”

**April 11:** Terrorist bombing of restaurant outside Madrid frequented by U.S. military personnel. Eighteen Spaniards and 15 Americans are killed.

**April 23-24:** Soviet Communist Party meets for the first

plenum of the Gorbachov era, brings three “hardline” and military figures onto the Politburo: KGB Chief Victor Chebrikov, Yegor Ligachov, and Nikolai Ryzhkov. Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov is promoted to candidate member of the Politburo.

**May 25-30:** Warsaw Pact maneuvers in Czechoslovakia open a series which will continue through September. These are commanded by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

**May 26:** West German Social Democratic Party chairman Willy Brandt arrives in Moscow for meetings with Gorbachov and other top officials.

**June 2:** Elections in Greece consolidate power of Prime Minister Papandreou, who promises to pull Greece out of NATO.

**June 11:** Gorbachov speech to Central Committee conference vows economic buildup for war mobilization and rejects draft 1986-90 Five Year Plan.

**June 14:** Hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in Athens by Shi'ite terrorists.

**Last week of June:** Soviet submarines off the U.S. coast simulate a thermonuclear “pin down” and strategic barrage.

**July 2:** Andrei Gromyko resigns as Soviet foreign minister, is named President. Georgian party boss Eduard Shevardnadze replaces him.

**July 8:** President Reagan speech denounces the terrorist “acts of war” which have been committed against the United States by “radical and totalitarian governments.”

**July 10:** Sinking of the Greenpeace anti-nuclear protest ship “Rainbow Warrior,” with broad ramifications in France's political life. Defense Minister Charles Hernu and intelligence chief Adm. Pierre Lacoste eventually resign.

**July 16:** Confirmation of Richard Burt as the new U.S. ambassador to West Germany.

**July 20-22:** Soviet naval maneuvers in the North Atlantic, the largest in history. Maneuvers were preceded by a reorganization of three of the four naval fleets.

**Aug. 7:** Eight nations of the South Pacific Forum sign a treaty to create a nuclear-free zone.

**Aug. 8:** Terrorist bombing of American air base in Frankfurt, West Germany.

**Sept. 9:** Attempted coup in Thailand.

**Sept. 27:** Nikolai Tikhonov replaced as Soviet prime minister by Nikolai Ryzhkov, a protégé of Yuri Andropov.

**Oct. 1:** Israel bombs PLO headquarters in Tunisia; United States initially supports the raid, later has a more cautious position.

**Oct. 2:** Gorbachov goes to France for a state visit.

**Oct. 15:** Soviet Central Committee Plenum dumps State Planning Commission (Gosplan) head Nikolai Baibakov, replacing him with Nikolai Talyzin, a Gorbachov man.

**Nov. 6-7:** M-19 terrorists lay siege to the Colombian Palace of Justice; nearly 100 people die when the Colombian military is deployed to retake the building.

**Nov. 19-20:** Geneva summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov.