

Soviet party congress ushers Red Army into political leadership

by Konstantin George

The 27th Soviet Party Congress which crowned Mikhail Gorbachov as the new Czar, ended March 6 by electing a new Central Committee of 307 full and 172 candidate or non-voting members. A look at the new Central Committee's composition documents the control of Soviet policy by the Soviet Military High Command under Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov and the party's "Andropov Mafia" which propelled Gorbachov into power.

The personnel changes introduced at the Party Congress give a picture with the following key elements:

1) *All of the commanders in chief of the secret Wartime High Commands established in late 1984, are now full members of the Central Committee.* In addition, the Congress elected six new generals and admirals to the Central Committee, and no less than nine new generals and admirals to candidate Central Committee status, all but one being commanders of combat forces.

2) A purge of "dead wood" in the party hierarchy, blocking the heightened tempo of the war-economy drive, was completed. Between deaths and purges, at least 139 of the old, 319-member 1981 Central Committee are no longer there.

3) Promotions were accorded to 1) **Yevgenii Primakov**, former head of the Soviet Oriental Studies Institute and now director of the IMEMO intelligence think tank, raised to full Central Committee membership; and 2) **Karen Brutents**, the figure for Third World affairs—read: destabilizations—at the International Department, now elected a candidate member.

4) The chief editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, the KGB's unofficial weekly mouthpiece, **Aleksandr Chakovsky**, the man known for having first launched the rehabilitation of Stalin back in the late 1960s, is now a full member of the Central Committee.

5) There was a strong shift to all-out "Russification" inside the Soviet Union, as the calendar approaches the 1988, 1,000th anniversary of Orthodox Mother Russia. Of the 19 ethnic Muslims elected to the Central Committee in 1981, only 5 remain. With the distinct and important exception of KGB veteran **Geidar Aliyev** of the Soviet Politburo, and his "Muslim Card" subversion machine, the Muslim component

in the Soviet leadership has been obliterated. The "Muslim Card" is for export only, not for the domestic policy of Holy Mother Russia.

The pre-war leadership

Also announced was the creation of a new National Defense Council, consisting of the military high command under Marshal **Nikolai Ogarkov**, and, on the "civilian," or more precisely, economic side, Gorbachov and his inner circle of tough-minded Russian imperial cronies brought for the most part onto the Politburo during the course of 1985: Gorbachov's number-two man and personal hatchet-man, **Yegor Ligachov**, Prime Minister **Nikolai Ryzhkov**, former Leningrad party boss **Lev Zaikov**, in charge of the Soviet arms industry; and, of course, the "Andropov Mafia" KGB boss, **Viktor Chebrikov**.

The military representation

Curiously, with all the words written on the party congress in the Western media, almost zero attention has been devoted to reporting, let alone discussing, the facts concerning the military influx onto the Central Committee, perhaps the most ominous feature of all.

Gorbachov's rise to power was preceded in late 1984 by the formation of four wartime high commands, under the overall direction of former chief of the general staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. Besides having become overall wartime commander, Ogarkov also assumed the command of one of these four: Wartime High Command Strategic Direction West, responsible for both total war against the United States and NATO, and any limited war in central or northern Europe. The other three commands are:

1) Wartime High Command Strategic Direction Southwest, HQ in Kiev, under Army General **Ivan Gerasimov**, responsible for military operations in the Balkans, Turkey, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

2) Wartime High Command Strategic Direction South, HQ in Tashkent, responsible for military operations in Iran, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian subcontinent. Its first commander-in-chief was Army General **Yuri Maksimov**, promoted to command the Soviet Strategic Rocket Force in July

1985, replacing Marshal of Artillery **Vladimir Tolubko**. Maksimov was subsequently replaced in Tashkent by Army General **Mikhail Zaitsev**. Until July 1985, he was the commander in chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, as their forces in East Germany are called.

3) The Far East High Command, HQ in Chita, commanded by Army General **Ivan Tretyak**, with responsibility for all military operations in the Far East/Pacific Ocean region and against China.

With both Army Generals, Gerasimov and Maksimov promoted to full Central Committee membership by the 27th Party Congress, *all the wartime commanders, in addition to the heads of each service branch, the Ground Forces, the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Air Defense Forces, the Air Force, and the Navy, are now full members.*

Two of these service-branch heads are new to the Central Committee membership roster: Air Marshal **Yefimov**, successor to the deceased Air Marshal Pavel Kutakhov as Air Force chief, and **Admiral Vladimir Chernavin**, recently appointed Navy commander in chief, replacing the 76-year-old **Admiral Sergei Gorshkov**, who had directed the Soviet Navy since 1956. The retired service heads, including Gorshkov and Marshal Tolubko of the Strategic Rocket Forces, have retained their rank of full members of the Central Committee.

The new military faces

For 1986, Russia has assigned a big priority to the drive to dominate the Mediterranean and the Near East. The "summit" level of this policy commitment is evidenced by Gorbachov's announcement that he will be visiting Italy later this month, and later this year, Greece. Moreover, of the 9 new generals and admirals made Central Committee candidate members, three were military commanders serving under the Southwest Wartime High Command, HQ in Kiev. They are:

1) Colonel General **V. V. Osipov**. Osipov became the commander of the Kiev Military District in late 1984, having replaced Army General Ivan Gerasimov, when Gerasimov was elevated to head the newly created secret Wartime High Command Southwest Strategic Direction.

2) Army General **V. A. Belikov**. Belikov is the commander of the Carpathian Military District, located in the northwest Ukraine, one of the military districts comprising the ground and air force components of the Southwest wartime high command.

3) Colonel General **V. S. Rodin**. From Rodin was the chief political officer for the Kiev Military District, when Gerasimov ran the district. In late 1984, he moved up with Gerasimov, becoming the chief political officer for the Southwest wartime high command.

These political promotions, along with other recent transfers of top-grade Soviet field commanders into the Southwest command, are evidence of a massive upgrading of combat strength and readiness in this region.

A similar emphasis can be discerned in Northern Europe,

a fact doubly significant since it occurs in the immediate aftermath of the Palme assassination. The 27th Party Congress simultaneously promoted to candidate memberships the commanders of both the largest land forces facing Scandinavia, and the powerful Northern Fleet, headquartered in Murmansk. They are:

1) Colonel **B. V. Snetkov**, commander of the Leningrad Military District, which includes all the ground and air forces facing Finland and those on the Kola Peninsula facing northern Norway.

2) Admiral **Ivan Kapitanets**. The commander of the Baltic Fleet until late spring 1985, he was promoted to command the Soviet Northern Fleet, the most powerful of the four Russian fleets, containing the bulk of the Soviet nuclear ballistic missile and nuclear cruise missile carrying submarines.

The Kremlin's satisfaction over the pace of the Soviet SDI and ABM pre-war programs was proven by the elevation of a key Air Defense commander onto the candidate Central Committee roster. This marks the first time that a senior commander below the level of commander in chief of all Air Defense forces (by definition ABM forces) has ever been named to the Central Committee. It wasn't just any Air Defense commander.

The honor went to Air Marshal **A. Y. Konstantinov**, commander of the Moscow Air Defense District. Konstantinov oversaw the crash program to install the modernized *Galosh* ABM missile system—now reportedly complete—to protect Moscow and the Kremlin from a U.S. retaliatory strike. In the second half of the 1980s, his command is to be allocated top priority for the stationing of the first operational Soviet SDI system.

The others promoted to Central Committee candidates are:

1) Colonel General **N. I. Popov**, commander of the Turkestan Military District since late 1984, who has been playing a key role in directing Soviet combat operations in Afghanistan.

2) Colonel General **V. Shuralev**, appointed in early 1985 to command the Byelorussian Military District, the largest military district in the western U.S.S.R., which contains the Soviet ground and air forces which would constitute the bulk of the Russian second echelon used in any invasion of Central Europe. Shuralev was promoted from first deputy commander when Army General **Ivanovskii** was promoted to commander-in-chief of the Soviet ground forces.

The final promotion sheds light on a crucial branch of the Soviet military, often ignored in writings on the subject—the Rear Services Administration, responsible for all military logistics and the mammoth Soviet pre-war stockpiling programs. The Rear Services have been headed for nearly 15 years by Marshal **Semyon Kurkotkin**, a full member of the Central Committee. Now, one of his top protégés, Colonel General **V. V. Nikitin**, chief of the Fuel Supply Administration, has become a candidate member of the CC.