

Kremlin: a missing propaganda czar

by Konstantin George

For whatever reason, the Soviet Union's "Propaganda Czar," Aleksandr Yakovlev, one of the co-initiators in August of Raisa Gorbachova's Soviet Cultural Fund, and one of the top Kremlin insiders who accompanied Mikhail Gorbachov to Reykjavik, was absent from the Nov. 17 opening of the Supreme Soviet, as the rubber-stamp parliament of the Soviet Union is called.

The opening of the Supreme Soviet is one of those Moscow "must" occasions for the appearance of all top leaders from two groupings; the Politburo membership, both full and candidate members, and the Central Committee Secretaries (the Secretariat). Yakovlev's attendance, as Central Committee secretary for propaganda, was mandatory. He was the only member from either the Politburo or Secretariat missing for the occasion.

As *EIR* has documented, Yakovlev has functioned as one of the ringleaders of the Soviet media slanders from August through October which egged on the Justice Department witchhunt against Lyndon LaRouche.

Alexander Yakovlev's disappearance did not begin on Nov. 17. He was conspicuously absent also from the Nov. 7 Bolshevik Revolution anniversary celebration—both the Red Square Parade and the ensuing Kremlin reception, as well as from the previous evening's Kremlin festivities.

The Nov. 6 disappearance is even more striking than the absence on Nov. 7. That evening, Gorbachov's chief ideologue and right-hand man, Yegor Ligachov, delivered the keynote speech. A substantial portion of it was devoted to the theme of combating and countering "propaganda hostile to the Soviet Union"—Yakovlev's bailiwick. Since Yakovlev has never been reported as being outside Moscow during November, his absence on all three occasions—Nov. 6, Nov. 7, and Nov. 17—can only be accounted for by a grave illness or disgrace.

One can compare his case with that of gravely ill Marshal Sergei Sokolov, the 75-year-old Soviet defense minister and candidate Politburo member. Sokolov had disappeared from public view since Oct. 10, when he accompanied Gorbachov to the airport to see him off to Reykjavik, and was also absent from the Nov. 6 and Nov. 7 celebrations. But unlike Yakovlev, Sokolov's absence from the Nov. 7 celebrations was officially announced in the military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* on Nov. 5. Afterward, a Soviet Foreign Ministry

spokesman told Western journalists that Sokolov had been ill. Finally, a very sick and decrepit looking Sokolov was trotted out for public view on Nov. 17, when he attended the opening of the Supreme Soviet.

The new acting defense minister

Sokolov, however, is defense minister in name only. His replacement in all but name is Pyotr Lushev. Lushev, 63, General of the Army since 1981, when he was also placed on the Central Committee as a full member, was appointed first deputy defense minister in July of this year, after having served for one year as commander in chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, GFSG, as the Soviet forces in East Germany are called. In this capacity, Lushev was the most important combat forces commander under Soviet Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, the wartime commander in chief for all Soviet forces deployed against the United States and NATO.

During November, Lushev assumed all the duties normally undertaken by Sokolov. At the beginning of the month, Lushev led the talks at the defense ministry with the visiting Indian defense minister—extremely important talks which were part of the intense preparations under way for Gorbachov's visit to New Delhi, which begins on Nov. 25. Following that, Lushev delivered the traditional defense minister's speech at Red Square on Nov. 7, stressing that everything necessary would be allocated to meet the Soviet Union's military needs.

Lushev's case parallels a meteoric rise one year earlier, in July 1985, where Army General Lizichev, then political commander for the Soviet forces in East Germany, was called to Moscow to become the new boss of the entire Soviet Main Political Administration.

Lushev in 1985 was no newcomer to the GSFG. He had spent seven years with the GSFG, from 1969-75, beginning as the first deputy commander of an army (1969-71), then Army commander (1971-73), and ending his service with the GSFG as first deputy commander in chief of the GSFG (1973-75), serving then under General of the Army Yevgeni Ivanovsky (commander in chief of the GSFG, 1972-80). Today, Lushev outranks his former boss, Ivanovsky, who is only a deputy defense minister and commander in chief of the Soviet ground forces. Lushev was commander of the Volga Military District (1975-77); commander of the Central Asian Military District (1977-80); and, from December 1980 till July 1985, commander of the key Moscow Military District.

Added to the Yakovlev disappearance and Lushev's leapfrog to the top, is the fact that the Supreme Soviet opened with a Central Committee Plenum never having been held. The non-existence of the traditional Fall Plenum is striking. In early October, Ligachov announced the urgent necessity of a Plenum to discuss "cadre questions"—Soviet jargon for a new round of mass purges. As one source commented: "Obviously, many party leaders are in no hurry to discuss personnel questions."