

East bloc drafted for Soviet SDI program

by Tadeusz Rejtan

Less than a week after the 42nd annual meeting in Bucharest of the prime ministers of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance ("Comecon," the institution linking the economies of Soviet bloc countries), the 10 leaders of those countries' Communist Parties met unexpectedly in Moscow Nov. 10-11. In an empire where everything is planned far ahead, the hurry implies that the Kremlin had some dramatic instructions to deliver to its satraps.

The brief final communiqué gives a hint of what was up. It reports that two themes were discussed: "new forms of economic cooperation" and support for Mikhail Gorbachov's position at the Reykjavik summit. But the first had been thoroughly discussed a few days earlier in Bucharest, and the support of Gorbachov's "yes" men for his policy is no reason to call an extraordinary summit.

It is the link between the two themes that is significant. While the Bucharest meeting was held in a business-as-usual atmosphere, a new tone of urgency was set by the Moscow summit. The necessity of accelerating scientific and technological progress, through an outright integration of the Comecon's economies under Soviet control, was hammered down within a very specific context: Gorbachov's failure to force President Reagan to give up the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in Reykjavik. This was immediately reflected in the Polish media.

Stanislaw Dlugosz, vice-president of the Polish Planning Commission, declared in an interview that it was necessary to match "the technical and technological acceleration in the West, exemplified by the Eureka project and by the mobilization of the international military-industrial complex linked with the ominous Star Wars program." Zygmunt Szeliga, deputy editor-in-chief of the semi-official weekly *Polityka*, wrote in a front-page article that "should the U.S. administration continue trying to impose its strategy, the socialist side must draw the necessary conclusions—in the sphere of defense as well as in the sphere of the economy" (emphasis added). Reflecting Russian fear of the SDI, he added: "The arms race . . . in the capitalist economy, especially in the American one, still plays the role of the main driving motor

. . . of technical and technological progress."

The Bucharest meeting of the Comecon had on its agenda the furthering of "socialist economic integration." The prime ministers decided to coordinate their respective five-year plans, to increase the number of bilateral and multilateral agreements at all levels, and to emphasize the division of labor among member countries: an acceleration of the "sovietization" of the East bloc nations, in keeping with what had already been decided at the 1984 Moscow Comecon summit.

Since Gorbachov's accession to power, a multiplication of contacts and meetings has been noted. The Soviet leadership has imposed upon its "allies" a whole spectrum of measures: joint ventures, cooperation down to the plant level, and joint R&D teams. Formal agreements to this effect were signed in Bucharest between the U.S.S.R. on the one side, and Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary on the other. A similar comprehensive agreement between the Kremlin and Warsaw had been signed earlier, during the visit of Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov to the Polish capital in mid-October, confirming the pilot role that Jaruzelski's Poland plays in Gorbachov's design.

'Joint ventures' for Polish serfdom

On the eve of Ryzhkov's visit, the Polish Politburo met and set the tone for the period ahead. Speaking of its relation to the Soviet Union, it announced, "The exchange of experience and the practice of international cooperation between the two brother parties has reached a new quality and a new dimension." It committed the country to the task of hailing the "achievements" of "Polish-Soviet friendship." What this means can be seen in the pledge to multiply joint ventures of all sorts and in the plan to increase the Soviet Union's share in Poland's foreign trade from 37% in 1985 to 43% in 1990.

In an interview with Teresa Toranska, a Polish independent investigative journalist, published in a book put out by the underground *Przedswit* publishing house, Jakub Berman, number-two Communist Party leader during the bloodiest years of the Stalinist terror in Poland, stated in defense of his policy of the late '40s and early '50s:

"True, we shipped them 'Russia' coal for free, or almost for free, but we chose this solution to avoid entering into joint venture agreements, which is what they were proposing. . . . If we had agreed to enter into joint venture agreements with them *we would have lost control over the whole of the Polish mining industry*" (emphasis added). And concerning foreign trade, Berman adds: "We tried to maintain trade with the Soviet Union under 30% for, had it been higher, up to 40% . . . this would have led to *economic dependence, which in turn would have led to political dependence*" (emphasis added). The most patriotic Polish oppositionist could not have passed a more severe judgment on the implication of Jaruzelski's policy of "joint ventures" and 45% trade dependence on Moscow for the future of Poland.