

Aspin report, Dukakis defense stance sound like Gorbachov snow job

by Nicholas F. Benton

On Sunday, Sept. 11, Democratic presidential hopeful Gov. Michael Dukakis kicked off the big week of his campaign in which he was to carve out a strong image as "pro-defense." The main points of the Dukakis "defense policy" all appeared to be based on the assumption that Moscow is about to give up its military build-up in an orgy of *glasnost*, and stockpile the equivalent of crossbows and slingshots in the era of lasers, airborne defense, and radio-frequency weapons:

- Dukakis proclaimed his continued opposition to both the MX and Midgetman missile programs and the B-1 bomber, without proposing any alternative strategic weapons modernization.

- He vowed to abide by the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty of 1972, refusing to mention the Soviet ABM program (except to mention the Krasnoyarsk radar installation, which is not surprising, since the Soviets acknowledge it as a violation of the treaty even though they refuse to dismantle it).

- On the Strategic Defense Initiative, Dukakis insisted he would restrict it only to a small research effort, and would generally, parroting Soviet language on the subject, "avoid escalating the arms race to outer space."

- Dukakis said he would more aggressively pursue arms control than his rival, George Bush, has indicated he will, including a rapid completion of a strategic arms reduction (START) treaty.

Wishful thinking?

Every one of Dukakis's ideas of a defense policy coincides with an argument in a report issued on Sept. 12, by Congressman Les Aspin (D-Wis.) on Soviet military intentions. Aspin and Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) were in fact at Dukakis's side at the big kick-off of the "defense week" on Sept. 11. The same pair flanked Dukakis when he appeared at Georgetown University in Washington to give his first major address detailing his "defense policy" on Sept. 14.

The Aspin report claims that "likely" (although as yet nonexistent) shifts in Soviet military doctrine under Mikhail Gorbachov are an "opportunity" which the United States must not lose, to make "bold" new proposals for disarmament. The document was produced by the so-called Defense

Policy Panel of the House Armed Services Committee, which Aspin chairs. Entitled "General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov and the Soviet Military: Assessing His Impact and the Potential for Future Changes," the report claims to be based on testimony from a wide variety of experts on Soviet military doctrine conducted before the committee on July 12-14, 1988.

While admitting that there is no evidence to date to show that Soviet military doctrine has changed under Gorbachov, the Aspin report concludes that such reforms—including significant force reductions and a shift to a defensive posture—are "likely." At the press conference where he released the report, Aspin said, "We must not allow this opportunity to slip by. We must be prepared to make bold new proposals, especially in the area of conventional arms control in order to make the world a safer place."

The fundamental fallacy of the report is contained in its first conclusion, which states, "Secretary General Gorbachov's reform agenda for the Soviet military appears genuine and has potentially significant implications for the security of the United States and its Allies. Economic concerns, namely the need to shift resources from defensive to civilian use, appear to be driving Gorbachov's efforts to move the Soviet military towards smaller, more defensively oriented force structure."

In reality, as *EIR* proved in the two editions of its *Global Showdown* report (1985 and 1987), the situation is exactly the reverse. Rather than economic concerns driving military reform, it is military concerns that are driving economic reform in Gorbachov's Soviet Union today. Further, the Aspin report concedes that there is no concrete evidence of the "indications" the report's conclusions refer to.

It says that, although there are currently no signs that Gorbachov's reforms have reduced the Soviet military threat, there are three "reliable indicators," it says, "that the Soviet Union has put into effect Gorbachov's injunction to deploy only those forces sufficient to mount an effective defense."

These are: conventional arms control, unilateral force reductions, and force "restructuring."

Ironically, these same three indicators are clear signals that the Soviets are deploying the "Ogarkov Doctrine," developed by Soviet Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, which is based

on shifting the burden of Soviet war-winning capabilities away from traditional conventional forces toward exotic, new weapons based on lasers, radio-frequency and microwave weapons, and other weapons utilizing “new physical principles,” the same physical principles the Soviets are using to perfect a nationwide anti-ballistic missile defense. Therefore, the very developments which would signal an ominous Soviet shift toward deadly new offensive capabilities, are what the Aspin report insists are the basis for relaxing NATO vigilance against the Soviet threat.

The report lies that Ogarkov was a product of the Brezhnev era who was demoted by Gorbachov, because he complained that not enough was being spent on the military.

ABM cover-up

The biggest single indicator of the fraudulent nature of the Aspin report, is its failure to make any mention of aggressive, ongoing Soviet efforts to develop a nationwide ABM system. This is despite the fact that CIA Deputy Director Robert M. Gates was among those whose testimony was allegedly taken into account in preparing the report. Gates was the author of a report declassified in December 1986 which was one of the CIA’s most alarmist evaluations of Soviet ABM intentions, noting their ongoing construction of the giant Krasnoyarsk phased-array radar facility and other radar components of a full ABM system.

When *EIR* asked Aspin at his press conference whether he shared the CIA assessment of Soviet ABM intentions, Aspin answered only, “I don’t know.” When *EIR* then asked him, “If what you say about Gorbachov’s intentions to shift to a defensive posture is true, then how do you account for the refusal of the Soviets to dismantle the Krasnoyarsk radar, even though they concede it is a clear violation of the ABM treaty?”

Again, Aspin could only answer, “I don’t know.”

Aspin insisted that the Soviet military initially supported Gorbachov’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* reforms, because it realized the need to have a strong domestic economy to back up the military. But, as the report says, “There were indications that the military might have thought it was exempt from the reform campaign,” and has been disillusioned since.

Some of the fantasies in the report were pointed out in a short appendix, drafted by dissenting Republicans. They noted that “the existing START framework would allow the Soviets to modernize their entire nuclear arsenal into the next century and will not prohibit or inhibit significant preemptive counterforce capability. START may well permit the Soviets to maintain or enhance a nuclear warfighting capability at lower aggregate force levels. The number of Soviet nuclear systems may change under START, but Soviet nuclear warfighting doctrine need not.”

Ironically, both Aspin and the other drafters of the report, and its dissenters on the House Armed Services Committee (including Reps. Dickenson, Spence, Badham, Stump, D.

Martin, Kasich, Bateman, Sweeney, Rowland, Weldon, and J. Davis), agree that, in the report’s terms, “There have been no significant, identifiable changes traceable to Gorbachov’s drive to scale back military spending.” In fact, the report even concedes that military spending has actually increased under Gorbachov by about 3% annually.

Nonetheless, the report dares to assert that Gorbachov’s plans to shift to a defensive posture put a burden on the United States to be ready with serious arms control proposals: “Gorbachov’s recent statements suggest that he is likely to intensify his public campaign on the arms control front. An inadequate or ill-prepared response from the West runs the risk of either reaching a poor agreement or missing the opportunity to conclude a good agreement.”

While Dukakis was stressing conventional forces, the dissenters to the Aspin report said, “Recognizing the necessary linkage between Soviet nuclear and conventional doctrine, and the fact that Soviet nuclear doctrine continues to be offensively-oriented, discussion in the West over the likelihood or significance of changes in Soviet conventional doctrine may be moot.” In fact, the Soviets tested their modern mobile SS-25 ICBM the same day that Dukakis gave his big defense speech at Georgetown.

While the Aspin report claimed to draw from testimony provided before the House Armed Services Committee from experts ranging from CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency to the RAND Corporation, it quoted most heavily from MIT professor Stephen Meyer, who made the strongest case for the intended—not evidenced—reforms of the military by Gorbachov.

Meyer is quoted saying, “Gorbachov’s new thinking [on security issues]—including two of its core principles: reasonable sufficiency and non-provocative defense—is most certainly not a framework of force analysis concepts or operational criteria. It is not an explicit blueprint for force development. Rather, it is a political tool that is intended to enable the Soviet leader to recapture the Soviet defense agenda.”

Meyer is quoted again on Gorbachov’s approach to arms control: “Far from being fully implemented, the new thinking is undergoing a trial by fire in a tentative, piecemeal fashion. While the new thinking is supposed to validate Gorbachov’s arms control policy (i.e., resort to political means to enhance security rather than military-technical means), he is simultaneously using his arms control accomplishments to validate the new thinking (by demonstrating its ability to reduce ‘the threat’).”

The report concludes with Meyer’s remark that “Gorbachov is trying to create a new reality—that is, a reduced threat environment—through a self-fulfilling policy, namely negotiated arms treaties.” The report omits the obvious point: The “reduced threat environment” Gorbachov seeks, is one in which any threat to Soviet strategic global domination will no longer exist.