

## Sino-Soviet summit to open 'new order' in Asia?

by Linda de Hoyos

The announcement in early February that after a year and a half of overtures coming from the Soviet Union, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov will visit Beijing, the People's Republic of China, in mid-May, has already opened a new framework of alignments in the Asian theatre. Aside from the momentous news that finally Beijing would accede to the summit, seen as the official prelude to the full normalization of relations between the two Asian giants, the Asian nations are being faced with a concomitant reality: the increasing withdrawal and irrelevance of the United States in the region, a deteriorating position worsened by the appointment in the new Bush administration of associates of Henry Kissinger, a man whose name is synonymous with betrayal among America's allies.

Plans for the summit with Gorbachov were announced Feb. 4 from Beijing, by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze's own visit reciprocated that of Beijing's Moscow-trained Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in December. The normalization of relations between the U.S.S.R. and the P.R.C., said Shevardnadze, will result in a reduction of the scale and number of military exercises and a guarantee not to increase troop levels in certain regions, he said. As reported by the London *Financial Times*, Shevardnadze pledged that the renewed relations and a "high level of cooperation" between the Communist superpowers would not harm any third country, but "create a new world order."

Shevardnadze was seconded by Deng Xiaoping, who stated, as reported in the New China News Agency, that the normalization of relations with the U.S.S.R. would begin with the summit. Beijing had formerly demanded that before normalization could occur, Moscow must remove "three obstacles" for a full rapprochement: the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and Mongolia, and Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea.

A month after Shevardnadze's visit, on March 8, in a

gesture of "good faith," the Russians announced that they will withdraw three-quarters of their troops from Mongolia. Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov was also announced on March 16, that Mongolian Foreign Minister Mangalyn Dugersuren will visit Beijing March 30, the highest-level contact between the P.R.C. and its Soviet-dominated neighbor since 1959.

"Well-informed and well-placed sources" have told the Moscow correspondent for the Indian daily *The Patriot*, that the P.R.C. is likely to receive "top priority treatment" in Soviet foreign policy. Although both sides say that a rapprochement will never return bilateral relations to their pre-1959 status, the Soviets are looking to insert themselves into the Chinese economy. Chinese Vice Minister of Agriculture Xiang Chongyang announced plans March 16 for "massive cooperation" with Russia on agricultural joint projects, "which aim to use China's low-cost labor and resources but Soviet funds and technology." The plans, he said, will include breeding chickens, repairing Soviet fishing ships, processing fish, and planting soybeans in the northeast and coffee on the southern island of Hainan.

Even more important economically, Moscow has contracted to sell two nuclear plants to the Chinese northern province of Liaoning, and hopes to sell many more. A team of Soviet nuclear experts is visiting the P.R.C. in March "to exchange technology," reported the *Hong Kong Standard* March 7. The Soviets are also renovating 17 major construction projects that they built before the split—this just as Beijing is canceling joint ventures with Western countries and putting a hold on most capital construction projects.

Despite renewed economic relations, the heart of the Sino-Soviet relation will be the coordination of the powers' policies toward third parties. According to the London *Guardian*, when Shevardnadze visited Beijing, he proposed that the final communiqué for Gorbachov's visit be based on

the "Yugoslav model," cementing a "special relationship" between the two countries. This was rejected by Beijing, according to the *Guardian*, with the statement reporting on Shevardnadze's visit stating that the bilateral relations between Moscow and Beijing will focus on "mutual co-existence, Pacific security, and world peace," sources told the *Guardian*.

That is a far more ominous signal of intent for the American allies in Asia, and such coordination has already begun. TASS reported from Moscow March 16, "Between March 9 and March 16, Soviet-Chinese consultations were held here on several urgent international problems." The talks, the news agency said, would continue in Beijing at the end of March. The Soviet delegation is led by Lev Mendelevich, member of the collegium of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, while the Chinese side is led by Xia Daosheng, head of the Foreign Ministry's political research department.

Presumably, the outline of Shevardnadze's "new order" was the point on the agenda in this series of talks.

Already processes are under way toward new alignments:

- The corollary of its upgrading of relations with the Soviet Union, is the P.R.C.'s downgrading of relations with Japan.

- Japan is being urged by Henry Kissinger, in Tokyo March 18 simultaneous with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev, to negotiate with the Soviet Union.

- Through Japanese Socialist Party intermediaries, Japan is seeking direct contact with North Korea.

- The Republic of Korea has opened business relations with the Soviet Union and the P.R.C., and is looking for recognition by both powers.

- The ASEAN countries are "adjusting" to the downturn of U.S. involvement in the region. Thai foreign policy is increasingly orienting to the P.R.C. and its Indochina and Burmese neighbors, away from its traditional ties to ASEAN. Indonesia has announced it will reestablish diplomatic relations with Beijing.

## **Imprimatur from the U.S.**

Despite the warning signs that the Sino-Soviet relationship may not be so benign, the United States has publicly handed its erstwhile partner Beijing full approval to restore relations with Moscow. China and the United States reached a "secret understanding on the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations" when Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci visited Beijing in September, reported the *Guardian* Feb. 22. The story is likely true, since Carlucci emerged from meetings in Beijing at the time, to state that Washington believed that a Sino-Soviet rapprochement would aid world peace. Carlucci also emerged from the meetings saying that he believed Chinese assurances that Beijing would stop selling missiles to other countries—assurances Beijing has flouted.

Approval of renewed Sino-Soviet relations was also a major point of discussion during President George Bush's

late-February trip to Beijing. According to White House press spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, the discussion between Bush and Deng Xiaoping was almost entirely dedicated to Moscow-Beijing relations. "This visit next spring [of Gorbachov to Beijing] is a good thing and it's nothing detrimental to the interests of the United States in that regard," Bush said. Toasting the "new order," Bush declared in his speech at a state banquet in Beijing, "The prospects of improved relations between China and the Soviet Union inspires hope for new progress in the search for self-determination and peace for the Cambodian people and stability for Korea."

It will be interesting to see if Mikhail Gorbachov is forced to suffer the same embarrassments at the hands of his Chinese hosts as Bush did, when the Chinese police physically prohibited invited guest Fang Li Zhi from attending a reception at the U.S. embassy.

The only warnings of U.S. gullibility so far have come from Taiwan. The Taipei publication *Ching Yang Lih Pao* warned that the reason for Beijing's "coldness" toward Bush was that the United States has refused to do Beijing's bidding and mediate Beijing's "one-nation—two systems" diplomatic approach toward the Republic of China, i.e., Taiwan. "Whether the Bush administration realizes it or not, the Peking regime is playing the Russian card to the disadvantage of the United States," stated Leng Jo-shui, bureau chief for the Taiwan news agency in Washington. Beijing's ability to "play" the U.S., he asserted, is reinforced "by the appointment of [Kissinger Associates' Lawrence] Eagleburger and [Brent] Scowcroft, who once worked for . . . Henry Kissinger and subscribe to Kissinger's view of geopolitics and balance of power."

Taiwan's fears are corroborated by the Soviet Union's coverage of the Bush trip. TASS, *Pravda*, and *New Times* all trumpeted the "new climate being formed in relations between the U.S.S.R., the U.S., and China. . . . A course of cooperation has been proclaimed." Bush is quoted as "welcoming the improvement in U.S.S.R.-P.R.C. relations."

But it is *Pravda* that lets the cat out of the bag, noting that both the Soviet Union and the P.R.C. can now redeploy thousands of troops to "other areas," a fact which the Soviet paper asserts is causing some "concern" in the Pentagon. And, given its renewed ties with the Soviet Union, China, *Pravda* claims, is also developing a new view of the U.S. bases in the Asia-Pacific region."

The bottom line of the "new order," *Pravda* indicates, is as follows: "It will no longer be possible for the United States to count on Beijing's support in the event of an outbreak of Soviet-U.S. confrontation. The future policies of Japan, South Korea, the ASEAN countries, Australia, and New Zealand, in the light of the U.S.S.R.-P.R.C. reconciliation, are provoking unpleasant thoughts in Washington. Will the U.S. allies and friends in Asia and the Pacific reassess their values?"