

## Gulf war buildup feeds Stalinist turn in Moscow

by Konstantin George

Should President Bush cross the point of no return and launch war in the Persian Gulf after Jan. 15, much more than blood in the Middle East will be on his hands. The Bush administration's total fixation on the Gulf has caused it to ignore the fatal consequences of its policy on developments in the Soviet Union. Our recent issues have documented the coming to power in the U.S.S.R. of a new "post-Bolshevik presidential dictatorship" run by a power triad of the Army, KGB, and Russian political, ecclesiastical, and cultural elite. This triad is now on a confrontation course against the independence-seeking non-Russian republics. This offensive will continue and expand, regardless of what happens in the Gulf.

However, for the very reason that the Russian Empire is struggling to break out of its internal crisis, for Moscow the outcome of the Gulf crisis has assumed an extraordinary dual importance, not only internationally, but domestically as well. A war in the Gulf would remove whatever constraints remain in Moscow against using bloody repression on a large scale against the republics. Moscow would prefer to contain the empire's dissolution process through a phased escalation of intimidation, confrontation, and divide-and-conquer games against the republics, but to avoid crossing the line to mass bloodshed, which would have incalculable and uncontrollable consequences. The very "quick suppression" that might "work" in one place, say in Latvia, could trigger a lengthy armed insurrection in, say, the Transcaucasus or Central Asia.

In short, bloody repression may unleash the very chaos and civil war conditions that the Kremlin wishes to avoid

at all costs. These life-and-death internal considerations are dictating Moscow's stand against a war in the Gulf, which is becoming more and more adamant as the Jan. 15 deadline approaches.

*EIR* has insisted, contrary to the foolish delusions in Washington, that this would happen: that the Soviet Union would not accept the Anglo-American plan for a Gulf war, and that war would accelerate the neo-Stalinist turn which was under way. Quite possibly, this would lead to World War III. In our Sept. 14, 1990 issue, for example, we wrote that "the arrogant U.S. deployment, staged under the pretense that 'we are the only power,' threatens Soviet strategic interests. Whether the Establishment realizes it or not, the first casualty of their 'flight forward' in the Gulf has been the Anglo-American-Soviet condominium." In our Sept. 21, 1990 issue, we published an analysis by Lyndon LaRouche, who underlined that the Sept. 9 Bush-Gorbachev summit in Helsinki had utterly failed to yield Soviet backing for the U.S. Gulf deployment. "Therefore," LaRouche said, "the condominium, for which Bush and his predecessor Reagan had worked so hard, under Henry Kissinger's direction, fell apart at George's feet, during that televised/radio broadcast press conference in Helsinki."

### **Baltic republics under the gun**

We now turn our attention to the confrontation against the Baltic and other republics.

*EIR* has been the journal of record, calling the shots, in advance, of Moscow's offensive against the republics. In our issue of Dec. 21, 1990, for example, we wrote: "The

Soviet leadership, in an agreement worked out between President Gorbachov, the Army, and KGB, is preparing a potentially bloody confrontation against the three Baltic republics and Ukraine. The confrontation is expected to peak in January, timed with the Gulf crisis coming to a head." January has now arrived.

On Jan. 7, Moscow made two singular moves which marked the ignition of the confrontation.

First, Moscow began a large redeployment of elite airborne forces into the Baltic republics, Moldavia, western Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian republics of Georgia and Armenia, in tandem with the dispatch of elite units of the U.S.S.R. Interior Troops into the Baltic republics and the Georgian region of South Ossetia, along Georgia's border with the Russian Federation. The redeployment, involving up to three airborne divisions, was ordered in a decree signed by Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov.

The pretext given publicly for this move—to round up the many thousands of draft evaders in these republics—was for the most part a cover story for the much larger motives behind the redeployment. Moscow indeed intends to round up and make examples of the draft evaders. But beyond that, the true purpose of the redeployment is to have enough elite units in place for armed suppression of the independence forces and governments in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia, while simultaneously, with a very nervous eye on the fast approaching Gulf showdown, effecting an additional buildup of elite troops in the strategically crucial Transcaucasian region, bordering on Turkey and the Middle East.

Within hours of this redeployment decree, the Soviet military's second move occurred. Its military delivered an ultimatum to the three Baltic republics to submit to the command of the Baltic Military District a detailed list of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian draft evaders by Jan. 13 in Latvia, and Jan. 15 in Estonia and Lithuania, or else the Red Army would begin using force to seize and arrest draft evaders and "deserters." The ultimatum was issued by Gen. Col. Fyodor Kuzmin, commander of the Baltic Military District, from his headquarters in the Latvian capital of Riga, by telephone to the leaders of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. According to Baltic leaders, Kuzmin stressed that his orders had come directly from President Gorbachov.

Immediately afterward, the situation in the Baltic republics began exploding, as Moscow activated both the forces it controls among the Russian and other non-Baltic ethnic minorities in the Baltic republics, and the Muscovite "Trojan Horse" component of the Baltic governments, to launch political destabilizations.

On Jan. 8, a well-organized mob of 5,000 ethnic Russians and Poles, mostly brought in by bus to the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, stormed the parliament building of independent Lithuania. The pretext for the assault had been pro-

vided by the government of Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene, herself a former Communist Party member and head of a government filled with Moscow agents. The government—behind the backs of President Vytautas Landsbergis and the pro-Landsbergis majority in the parliament—had declared an unlimited price hike on all basic necessities, a move which drove the price of food and other consumer basics up by a staggering 500% overnight, in a replica of the radical free market policy which is destroying neighboring Poland.

The Moscow-staged protest and storming of the parliament was perfectly timed with the arrival of fresh Soviet troops in Lithuania. Soon before the crowd arrived at the parliament building, a convoy of over 100 Soviet Army vehicles had passed through the center of Vilnius, en route to a nearby military camp. On the same day, from eyewitness Lithuanian accounts, 20 Soviet tanks and 15 vehicles carrying troops crossed from Belorussia into Lithuania.

The immediate political destabilization was defused when Prime Minister Prunskiene resigned, and then President Landsbergis appeared at a window of the parliament and announced to the crowd that the price increases had been revoked.

More trouble, and much worse, can be expected in the Baltic well before January ends.

### **'Restoring order' in Georgia**

Only one main thrust of Moscow's offensive against the republics is directed against the Baltic. The other thrust is against the strategically located republic of Georgia, whose importance becomes greater in light of the Gulf showdown. Timed with the Defense Ministry decree on the redeployment of airborne forces, President Gorbachov issued a decree on Jan. 7 to "restore order" in the Georgian region of South Ossetia. The region gets its name from the Ossetians, a Muslim mountain tribe that resides in the Georgian "autonomous republic" of South Ossetia (with an Ossetian population of 98,000), and in neighboring North Ossetia, an "autonomous republic" of the Russian Federation.

The Ossetian story is a case study in how Moscow has manipulated tribal minorities as against independence-seeking non-Russian republics, in the classical imperial mode of "divide and conquer." In South Ossetia, an Ossetian movement has been active, spawned by Moscow with the demand that South Ossetia leave Georgia and join the Russian Federation. Leaders of this movement were guests of honor at a mid-December Moscow officers' club event, which was addressed by Colonels Viktor Alksnis and Nikolai Petrusenko, the two military leaders of the powerful "save the empire, law and order" Armed Forces lobbying group, the Soyuz group of deputies in the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies, and by Dmitri Vasilyev, leader of the Russian fascist movement, Pamyat.

The Gorbachov decree, ordering "all armed groups" out

of South Ossetia, except for U.S.S.R. Interior Troops and Army, and establishing the region as a military "special zone" under Soviet military rule, is a precedent-setting step short of annexing to Russia a piece of another republic's territory, as blackmail and punishment for that republic striving for independence. What is today being employed against Georgia in South Ossetia can tomorrow be employed against any of the Baltic republics, Moldavia, or Ukraine. Beyond that, the main "armed group" which now has an ultimatum to leave South Ossetia are the 3,000-4,000 Georgian Interior Ministry forces sent in to prevent secession. Should they refuse to leave, and especially if war erupts in the Gulf, a very bloody battle between the Red Army and Georgian forces is all but definite before January has ended.

### Tougher stance to forestall war

As the mid-January deadline nears for the combined explosion in the Gulf and in the decisive internal Soviet crisis, a much tougher Soviet public stance against the U.S. Gulf policy has emerged, as Moscow, acting in its own strategic interest, pulls out all the stops to halt the Gulf conflagration. As rumblings from Soviet military spokesmen suggest, it is by no means assured that, if war breaks out, the U.S.S.R. will fight on the side of the Anglo-Americans—more likely the opposite.

The first sign of a stiffening in the Soviet public stance was signaled in an article published in the Jan. 3 issue of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the daily of the Russian Communist Party, the paper that on Dec. 22 had printed the "Letter of the 53," signed by leading figures from the Army, Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian political and cultural elites, calling for Gorbachov to declare a "state of emergency" and crack down on the republics.

The article was titled "Hiroshima in Mesopotamia," the first of its kind in the Soviet media, warning of the "possible use by the U.S.A. of nuclear weapons" against Iraq. The article stressed that the "possibility of using nuclear weapons" is being "openly discussed" in the United States, as well as trying out "other types of super-modern weapons." The article concluded by saying that "it is the duty of the Soviet public to protest" such American plans to use nuclear weapons. Leading Soviet experts have pointed to this article as the first key sign of a much tougher position in Moscow.

That did not take long in coming. On Jan. 8, the Soviet Union broke its condominium "pact of silence" with Washington and made public in a strong governmental protest the U.S. Navy boarding and search of two Soviet merchant ships in the Red Sea, where the latest of the incidents, involving the ship *Dmitri Furmanov*, had occurred on Jan. 4. The protest was issued by the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and was distributed by the Foreign Ministry.

The statement stressed that the boarding party had found

"no undeclared cargo" on board the ship, which was carrying "106 tons of military spare parts and components for delivery to the Kingdom of Jordan under an inter-governmental agreement between the Soviet Union and Jordan." The Soviet statement pointed out that this was the second such incident to occur in the Red Sea. "During the search," it said, "the crew were held for 10 hours in the officers' mess under the guard of Spanish sailors. The inspection was conducted without the participation of the ship's officers. . . . Even though the American side recently acknowledged that its action in relation to the Soviet ship *Nikolai Savitsky* [the first, previously secret, incident] was unjustified, it has made another attempt to cast aspersions on Soviet compliance with U.N. Resolution Number 661. The Soviet side is authorized to state again that neither the cargo on board nor the ship's route violate the resolution, and it regards this incident as action directed against the commercial activities of the Soviet merchant navy."

The next day, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* published an article warning that a Gulf war will create "an explosion that will shake the world." "Hopes for peace are fading," it said, adding that one of the war's most serious consequences would be the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil fields, producing "fires lasting up to one year," and regional environmental damage in which "Iraq will suffer the most."

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