

Gen. Powell acts like idiot to reservists

by Scott Thompson

General Colin Powell, the Bush administration's political appointee to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cut an absurd figure when he spoke to the Reserve Officers Association on Jan. 22, and told them that the threat from the Soviet Union had diminished and that he would ask the U.S. Congress to reduce the size of American forces. This incredible statement from a person holding the same position once held by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, comes at a time when the economic and social collapse of the Soviet Union has moved the world into a pre-war situation.

Flush with the triumph of deploying 26,000 troops to crush tiny Panama, the general was unequivocal in stating that "the Soviet threat is diminishing." This led him "to the conclusion that something fundamental has changed" in the "geostrategic situation." But Powell confessed that regardless of whether the threat were less, economic conditions would demand reducing forces. "The reality is," Powell said, "that we must plan on our defense budget going down several percentage points every year for the foreseeable future."

On Jan. 8, Powell had been embarrassed at a press conference at Schwäbisch Hall, West Germany when *EIR*'s William Salisbury, the only black reporter present, asked Powell whether the invasion of Panama, a small Third World country, had created a negative international image of the U.S. Armed Forces which itself has a large percentage of blacks and minorities among its ranks.

Rather than fight those in Congress chasing the mirage of a "peace dividend," Powell told the reservists Jan. 22: "My personal strategy for the upcoming budget hearings will be a simple one. I will willingly and gladly admit that the world is changing and the threat is no longer as great. I will also tell Congress where and how and how much I believe we can safely reduce the defense budget."

Powell presumes to do the impossible. He claims that the Pentagon will reduce forces, while not "abandoning a winning strategy." The highest priority will be to maintain some strategic modernization, which will mean cuts in other areas, including, especially numbers of troops and quite likely numbers of troops forward deployed in Asia and Europe. Even though budget cuts are delaying deployment of the Strategic Defense Initiative and other needed modernization

projects, General Powell appears ready to concede the battle.

He either does not know, or is afraid to state, the truth that the internal collapse of the Russian empire dramatically increases the danger of war, especially if the United States does not also increase deterrence. Powell did admit that the Soviet Union is the main enemy of the United States, which, despite political changes and arms control negotiations, which he favors, "will continue to be the only nation with the military capability to destroy us or threaten our position and national interests in the world." Yet, he opined, the changes there might "lead to a system of world peace which the political prophets have spoken of" "where we can devote the minimum resources necessary to our defense."

Bad intelligence

An intelligence assessment supporting General Powell's views was delivered the next day to reservists by one Colonel Tucker, the chief briefing officer of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). Colonel Tucker implicitly conceded that the Soviet General Staff had originally supported perestroika because it wanted to build an "advanced industrial base" by which to create a "leaner, meaner military" that pursued "qualitative, rather than quantitative parameters." He claimed that Mikhail Gorbachov's implementation of perestroika had been an unmitigated disaster, which put off the creation of a modern Soviet military with weapons operating on new physical principles until 15-20 years in the future.

Nonetheless, he argued that Mikhail Gorbachov, whose special relationship with President George Bush for a global power-sharing pact is the key strategic blunder of the United States, is virtually unassailable. Again, either because of ignorance or overt lies, he said there was no coup potential in the Russian military and that hard-line Gorbachov opponents in the party, like Ligachov, had no power base. The question of an emerging Great Russian nationalist reaction to Russian internal collapse apparently did not even enter the DIA equation of what the DIA was either permitted to think or permitted to tell the public.

Stranger still was Tucker's assertion that Soviet forces in Europe had "become more defensive," as Mikhail Gorbachov said they would. This stood in stark contrast to his hour-long presentation showing that even under Gorbachov, the Soviets have modernized every weapons system. Among these new systems were two mobile missile systems, which included the SS-24 Mod 1, whose ten MIRVed warheads could burst any missile silo in the United States, destroying the possibility of a retaliatory strike from land-based ICBMs. Also, the Soviets have replaced all the nuclear firepower targeting Western Europe since allegedly junking their SS-20s under the INF treaty, through a variety of means. If this tremendous modernization of weapons systems means a "diminished threat" such that Powell can call for "reduced forces," the real substance of the DIA analysis does not support the case.