

New Soviet 'Presidential Council' aims to consolidate Russian core

by Luba George

The U.S.S.R. Presidential Council, the new executive ruling body which replaced the now-defunct Politburo, is now functioning under the Czar of all the Russias, Mikhail Gorbachov, following his election as President on March 15. Its membership list was announced on March 25 by the Soviet news agency TASS.

Reflecting the security requirements of a Russian empire in a survival crisis and the demise of the Bolshevik party as a ruling institution, the majority of the new "Politburo," and above all that part of it which will convene in Moscow every week to deliberate on and make all policy decisions, is drawn from representatives of the military, military-industrial complex, KGB and internal security organs, and extreme Russian nationalists.

Consolidating Russia

The composition of the council also reflects Gorbachov's number-one priority and concern: the holding and consolidation of the empire's Slavic core as the basis for keeping the overall realm intact and to prepare for future expansion. In this regard, the military now will play a far greater and more crucial policymaking role in this process.

Through the vehicle of the Presidential Council, the uniformed military now hold full, voting membership on the new "Politburo." Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov has been appointed to the council, as well as members of the old Politburo, **Yuri Maslyukov**, chairman of State Planning (Gosplan), and Prime Minister **Nikolai Ryzhkov**, the two leading figures overseeing the U.S.S.R.'s vast military-industrial complex. This is the first time under Gorbachov that an Army General is on the "Politburo" as a voting member. Yazov's tenure on the council, however, is transitional. According to high-level defense analysts, Yazov will be replaced before the year is over by the extreme Russian nationalist Gen. Col. **Boris Gromov**, the tough, last commander of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan and currently Kiev Military District Commander, with whom Gorbachov has been recently cultivating close ties.

When the Presidential Council meets every week, the core members who will make the decisions concerning the fate of Mother Russia and the empire and who are drawn from the military and the military-industrial complex, in addition to the above, are:

Anatoli Lukyanov, U.S.S.R. Vice President and KGB

appendage. Lukyanov's major responsibility on the council includes drafting a "new treaty of Union" among the Republics which contains Moscow's present "carrot" of an ostensible five-year independence perspective for any republic choosing to secede from the empire.

In the capacity of foreign policy advisers, Politburo members **Alexander Yakovlev**, Foreign Minister **Eduard Shevardnadze**, and **Valeri Boldin** will serve on the Presidential Council. Boldin is Gorbachov's personal adviser and head of Gorbachov's personal cabinet, a Kremlin version of a "White House chief of staff." Boldin's rising prominence was first evident last December, when he was part of the team of close advisers who accompanied Gorbachov to Rome and the Malta summit.

KGB and Internal Security appointees include the chairman of the KGB **Vladimir Kryuchkov** and U.S.S.R. Interior Minister **Vadim Bakatin**, who oversees the ongoing expansion of the U.S.S.R. Interior Troops—recruited from the *Afgantsy* veterans of the Afghanistan war into Moscow's "Praetorian Guard," used to suppress outbreaks among the captive nations.

The list also contains the names of several non-Russians who fall into the category of liberal globalists. However, these members are window dressing. While they are formally full council members, in reality they will only attend Presidential Council meetings irregularly and on invitation from the Russian members, and thus will exercise no real power. Real power will be strictly in the hands of the all-Russian core group that meets every week. These non-Russian members include: Ukrainian Grigori Revenko, First Secretary of the Kiev regional Communist Party organization; the Kirghiz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov, a radical ecologist and a co-founder of the Soviet branch of the malthusian Club of Rome; the Armenian Vice President of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Yuri Osipyan; and the Latvian liberal agricultural economist Albert Kauls.

Pamyat supporters appointed

Two figures who have been coopted into the inner circle as permanent advisers are: Siberian writer **Valentin Rasputin**, and **Venyamin Yarin**, co-chairman of the United Front of Workers of Russia (UFWR). Gorbachov's appointment of these two extreme Russian chauvinists and Pamyat supporters comes in the context of the deep systemic crisis threaten-

ing the dissolution of the Russian empire along ethnic-national lines and even the possibility of some level of civil war conditions within Russia itself.

Valentin Rasputin's writings have, for decades, instilled Russians with the most raving anti-Western fundamentalism: xenophobia, an anti-technology bias, anti-Semitism, and an extreme love for the *Rodina* (Motherland). It was Valentin Rasputin who launched the eco-fascist campaign in the Russian Federated Republic to stop a Siberian river diversion project vitally needed by the arid Muslim republics of Central Asia, claiming that it would cause an ecological calamity in Russian territory. The Politburo's decision to stop the project has resulted in the deaths of thousands of non-Russian peoples of Central Asia because of severe water shortages and water contamination, and more face the same fate.

Valentin Rasputin's speech at the People's Deputies Congress, televised for millions last May, depicted the hatred many Russians feel towards the pro-Western Lithuanian and other non-Russian captive nations: "The chauvinism and blind arrogance of Russians is the fabrication of those who are playing on your national feelings. . . . Russophobia has spread in the Baltics and Georgia. . . . Anti-Soviet slogans are being combined with anti-Russian ones, and emissaries from Lithuania and Estonia travel with them to Georgia, creating a united front, and from there, local agitators set off Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is not a struggle against the bureaucratic mechanism; it is something else."

Venyamin Yarin, as co-chairman of the United Front of Workers of Russia, joined last September with Russian chauvinist anti-independent movements Yedinstvo (Unity) in Lithuania, Interdvizhenia (Interfront) in Latvia and Estonia, and other Russian populist-fascist groups, to form a new umbrella organization entitled "United Council of Russia," among whose main tasks is to rebuild a Russian Republic and coordinate anti-Popular Front activities in the other republics. Last year they started organizing strikes to protest against new laws aimed at strengthening the sovereignty of non-Russian republics. Today they support the use of military force in the Baltics and are threatening the Baltic states with an economic boycott, hoping to break their will and drive to become fully independent and sovereign nation-states.

Gorbachov draws on military

The institution of the Presidential Council, with leading Russian nationalist extremists on it, something unthinkable several months ago, is proof that the Bolshevik period is drawing to an end and a search for new forms of imperial rule is under way. However, whatever post-Bolshevik path Moscow chooses now cannot succeed unless control in Russia is consolidated.

How strong are Gorbachov's top priorities of consolidating Russia and the core empire, and upgrading the role of the military in these times of grave internal crisis, was demonstrated by his first act after being elected President of the

U.S.S.R.: He met with the entire bloc of over 100 top generals and officers, including the entire leadership of the Armed Forces who are deputies in the Congress of People's Deputies. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the newspaper of the Defense Ministry, prominently displayed Gorbachov together with the officer corps on its front page. Standing next to a beaming Gorbachov was none other than Gen. Boris Gromov, the last commander of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan, and, as noted above, slated soon for big promotions.

The following day, on March 16, the next sign of the military's upgrading was displayed. Soviet television that evening announced that Marshal **Nikolai Ogarkov** had been named chairman of the All-Union Organization of War and Labor Veterans. The appointment is more than symbolic since this post—while he will nominally be in retirement—will give the 72-year-old Ogarkov the platform to make speeches for both military and civilian press.

The new imperial ruling body, the Presidential Council, lost no time in getting into action. Its first lengthy business meeting was held in Moscow on March 27, at the height of the crisis over Lithuania, a mere 48 hours after its membership was made public. Timed with that meeting, Venyamin Yarin, prominently interviewed by *Krasnaya Zvezda*, sounded a call for Russians to stand behind Czar Mikhail. He declared that perestroika must and will represent "the interests of the Army," and that he, "representing the Russian workers . . . stands by . . . President Gorbachov." The new direction of Czar, Army, and Russia could not be clearer.

Russian nationalism: playing with fire

by Herbert Quinde

Sometime in April in Virginia, the Central Intelligence Agency is scheduled to host a high-level seminar on "the future of the Russian Republic." The invited seminar leader is to be Dr. John B. Dunlop, a Sovietologist specializing in "ethnic Russian nationalism." He will lead a broad-ranging discussion, according to one source, examining the policy option of the United States cultivating firmer relations with a bunch of raving anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Semitic, blood-and-soil lunatics, better known as the "Russian party," whose representatives Mikhail Gorbachov recently inducted into his Presidential Council.

Dr. Dunlop is a well-published analyst and advocate of playing the Russian nationalism card. His date with the CIA therefore raises concern, since, with the CIA already suffering from Gorbomania, it is as dangerous as letting children play with matches.

The incompetent thesis now current among intelligence community circles with influence at the White House, State