

FOREIGN POLICY

Party spokesmen defend Brezhnev

by Rachel Douglas

On June 24, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union met in plenary session. Its two items of business were to confirm the schedule for the party's 26th Congress in February 1981 and to hear a report on foreign policy prospects from Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

Gromyko's report as such was not published, but the plenum debated it and then adopted a resolution highlighted by the characterization of China's rapprochement with the United States as "a new, dangerous phenomenon" and by the conspicuous statement, clearly referring to continental Western Europe, that some Western leaders do espouse "the objective possibilities . . . of preventing a slide back into Cold War and . . . averting the threat of world thermonuclear conflict."

Listed among the participants in the discussion of Gromyko's report was the Georgian Communist Party leader, E. A. Shevardnadze.

Two weeks later, Shevardnadze spoke in Tbilisi to a meeting of Georgian party activists. His speech combined unusually effusive personal praise for party chief and U.S.S.R. President Leonid Brezhnev with a biting attack on "the incompetence of party members in understanding or explaining foreign-policy issues." It is unlikely, given that Shevardnadze was reporting back from a national meeting at which he had spoken out, that he had in mind only some foreign policy militants from Stalin's home republic of Georgia.

Here is what Shevardnadze said:

The plenum expressed confidence that the party's international activity would also be examined in the course of the report and election campaign. . . .

This is a crucial matter, and amateurishness, incompetence and a primitive approach are inadmissible when elucidating the international situation. . . . We must constantly explain to communists and all working people that, at the present stage, the international situation is complex and contradictory in nature.

Continuing, Shevardnadze virtually said that only Brezhnev's approach stands between the present crisis and world war.

We said at the . . . plenum that the struggle for easing tensions is a difficult one. To win the peace under such conditions is no easier than to win a war. And if peace is, nevertheless, maintained, then this is decisively to the credit of the socialist community, our country, the party, the Central Committee's Politburo and Comrade L.I. Brezhnev. We are convinced that were it not for this main factor and were it not for the daily growth in our state's defense capability, the conflagration of thermonuclear war would be unavoidable.

Lenin invoked on Brezhnev's behalf

In the issue of the party theoretical journal *Kommunist* published shortly after the Central Committee plenum, there appeared another defense of Brezhnev's foreign policy.

This one, by journalist A. Bovin, used a historical account of how Lenin shaped Soviet foreign policy to uphold Brezhnev's principles. Point by point, Bovin appeared to be answering criticisms applicable to current issues:

- 1) Gradually . . . Lenin's conviction grew that coexistence was inevitable and would be lasting. From this came his policy of advocating firm, stable relations with the capitalist world, above all economic relations.
- 2) "Handing out ultimata," argued [Lenin], "can be ruinous for our cause." . . . We ask ourselves: wasn't [Lenin's] flexibility forced on him and explainable by the weakness of the international position of the newborn state? . . . There is a grain of truth in this. . . . But only a grain. Lenin's idea was not just due to the difficult times. It is more general: handing out ultimata enfetters. Handing out ultimata narrows the space for political maneuvering.
- 3) Lenin expresses thoughts which, in their significance, go far beyond the limits of the concrete situation in those days. He teaches us to see that there are different layers, groups and factions of the bourgeoisie, differing from one another, and different attitudes towards contacts with Soviet Russia.

A war party in Moscow?

Who is the unnamed partner to the discussion launched by Bovin and Shevardnadze? Someone who

doubts the efficacy of Brezhnev's dialogue with the "different layer" of leaders now heading Western European nations; someone who thinks that East-West European economic deals are insufficient foundation for a lasting détente, and is arguing that the Brezhnev leadership has made too many concessions to revive détente with the Europeans; individuals or groups who hold that the time has come for a more "ultimative" line from Moscow.

We presume that some Soviet military men, with party posts of their own and allies in the party, are making these arguments, pressuring to jettison the Brezhnev détente policy.

The debate has not yet surfaced explicitly in the major Soviet press, but there are harbingers. On Aug. 14, the military newspaper *Red Star* published an assertive appeal for allocation of more funds to the military in a lengthy feature article titled "The Economy and the Defense of the Country."

Red Star stated that while the military was not asking for "more than we need," it has to be understood that a degree of flexibility in deployable resources was critical in military production and was not a "deviation" from the principles of balanced economic development.

Kremlin deliberation on the value of Brezhnev's détente overtures to Schmidt and Giscard became more heated after the West German Chancellor's visit at the beginning of July and the subsequent Giscard state visit to West Germany.

At the point when the Soviet Union withdrew the first contingent of a 20,000 troop and 1,000 tank reduction from East Germany—a reduction that had been declared unilaterally by Brezhnev on the eve of the NATO missile production and deployment decision last year—East German Defense Minister General Heinz Hoffmann made a pointed statement that there could be no more unilateral moves by the Warsaw Pact until NATO reciprocated.

Since then, the Soviets have drafted a proposal at the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna, providing for further Soviet pullbacks of 20,000 men in return for a withdrawal of 13,000 American troops from Central Europe. More serious from the standpoint of the Soviet military, Brezhnev reneged on the *ultimatum* that the NATO decision would make negotiations on medium-range missiles "impossible." However, he offered through Schmidt to begin talks on that class of weapons without prior abrogation of NATO's resolution.

Public lines on West German policy

Soviet press treatment of Schmidt and his government has varied from newspaper to newspaper and

week to week since he was in Moscow. After the British government adopted its Trident missile program in July, and one Soviet commentary criticized Bonn for doing nothing to block it, the weekly supplement to *Izvestia*, *Nedelya*, printed the extreme evaluation that West Germany was "skidding off the highway of détente."

In *Pravda*, however, Bonn correspondent Mikhailov adopted the more cautious line that West Germany could be using its international prestige more effectively to influence the United States and stem the tide toward international confrontation.

The same point was made in the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* right after the Schmidt visit by journalist N. Portugalov, who has had a long career working on the staff of Brezhnev's "Bonn hands" in the Soviet diplomatic community. He is also known as a mouth-piece for tough-line opinions.

New attacks against Europe's emerging role

On Aug. 6, however, Portugalov lowered the boom. He wrote in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (whose editor, A. B. Chakovskii, is famous for his novels lauding Stalin's foreign policy and was also a speaker at the June 24 Central Committee plenum) on Franco-German military ties, a feature of the Giscard-Schmidt talks that the Soviet press had benevolently passed over.

"The plans for creating an 'independent Europe' on a Franco-West German nuclear foundation cannot, in the view of Soviet political commentators, promote the cause of détente," said Portugalov. While the Schmidt-Giscard *political* axis was to be welcomed, their military cooperation would "ultimately supplement and, as it were, duplicate NATO . . . and culminate in the creation of so-called 'European nuclear forces' on a French or, if possible, Franco-British basis."

This is the very argument which Anglophile elements in the Soviet Union used to squelch potential Soviet support for the de Gaulle-Adenauer effort to buck Anglo-American control of the continent in the 1960s. Its application to the different case of Helmut Schmidt augurs poorly for the Franco-West German-Soviet linchpin of European détente.

We conclude by noting a coincidence. In July, as Moscow's debate over Eurocentric détente intensified, the most important agent of British influence in the Soviet Union, KGB General Harold "Kim" Philby, was treated to a public relations tour de force in *Izvestia* and *Nedelya*: his autobiographical cover story *My Secret War* has been published in Russian, and Philby was interviewed, photographed for the first time ever in a Soviet newspaper, and hailed as a heroic contributor to the U.S.S.R.'s strength.