

Kremlin gives orders to West's writers

by Luba George

In the middle of October, a number of top Western writers and other "cultural" celebrities held an "extraordinary conference" at the Kremlin with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov. The fact that Gorbachov, barely one week after Reykjavik, made time for such a motley crew, is itself extraordinary. Who were these honored "men of culture"?

They included: Alexander King, president of the Club of Rome; American playwright Arthur Miller; American novelist James Baldwin; Russian-born English actor and writer Peter Ustinov; French writer and Nobel Laureate Claude Simon; Alvin Toffler, author of *Future Shock*; Cuban author Lisandro Otero; Spain's Federico Mayor; Indian composer-musicologist Narayana Menon; and Ethiopian painter Afewerk Tekle.

They arrived in Moscow via Kirghizia, the Central Asian Soviet Republic, where, in the town of Issyk Kul, they held "very private" sessions at the invitation of one of the leading figures of Gorbachov's culture mafia, Kirghiz author Chingiz Aitmatov.

Aitmatov has spearheaded the "ecological" campaign in the U.S.S.R. to stop Central Asian river diversion projects. He has been placed in a leading role, together with his colleague and top GRU (military intelligence) official, Julian Semyonov, to make contact, recruit, and organize Western "men of culture" to act on orders from Moscow.

Aitmatov, in an interview with the Soviet international weekly *New Times* (Nov. 3, 1986), described in outline how this new cultural "Trust" was formed: "We are all friends and we all think alike. We have long known each other and maintain warm, heartfelt relationships. What induced us to get together for the Issyk Kul forum was the urgent need to discuss the problems that surround us, not at an official 'negotiating table,' but by the fireside, as it were. The Issyk Kul forum is a sign of the times . . . an instance of a practical search for a new mode of thinking. . . . The new ideas must penetrate every sphere inclusive of politics, so that a new way of thinking may emerge in every country."

Aitmatov's call is an echo from the past. In the summer of 1932, the first attempt was made by the Soviet Cheka (KGB) to involve the world's "cultural elite" in creating

large-scale radical "peace" movements in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. A call for a "world anti-war congress" by the Bolshevik "masters of culture"—Maxim Gorky, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Alexei "Red Count" Tolstoy—engaged the active support of writers Heinrich Mann of Germany, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland of France, Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair of the United States, "Pugwash"-founder Bertrand Russell of Britain, and many others.

The Soviet literary weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on Nov. 5 gave front-page coverage to the Issyk Kul group's meeting with Gorbachov. The article, entitled "Our Age Demands New Thinking," reveals that Alexander King's association with the Soviet Union goes back to 1933—the year famine was raging through the Ukraine, as a result of Stalin's forced collectivization program. King is a co-founder and current president of the Club of Rome International, the command-center for Malthusian planning. "My first visit to the U.S.S.R.," said King, "was in 1933. Thereafter, my visits have been many. I especially remember my first visit and how greatly impressed I was by the newness of life in the country. But never before have I experienced such hospitality and openness as during my visit now."

According to Tekle, interviewed in *Lit Gaz* on Oct. 22, the group discussed "all aspects concerning the contemporary situation—from ecology to culture, from politics to linguistics. . . . The Issyk Kul brainstorming was the beginning of a new movement."

King's comments in *Lit Gaz*: "It is important that non-governing organizations effectively relate to the tasks facing governments. My experience has shown me that many high-ranking politicians—and I've met with many Presidents and prime ministers—realistically understand today's difficulties and are ready for changes. . . . [Our] ideas have already taken root in the world. . . . The tasks of our group is that . . . with your help [speaking to Gorbachov] and the help of your colleagues, as the vanguard . . . we can achieve a similar assimilation of ideas in the thinking of the public at large."

Cuba's Otero: "We place great hopes in Mikhail Gorbachov's good will. And as intellectuals we must lend a helping hand. By exercising our influence we must work on human hearts and minds. . . . There is no doubt that our movement born on the shores of [Lake] Issyk Kul, will gather momentum. Such prominent personalities in world culture as [Greek Communist poet] Iannis Ritsos, [Italian cinematographer] Federico Fellini, and [Swiss writer] Friedrich Duerrenmatt have already said they are willing to join."

During his three-hour meeting with the group, the Soviet leader declared: "We have reached that critical moment in history where it is clear that the fatal danger [of war] can be removed only by joint efforts."

The Issyk Kul group thereupon resolved upon its first act: writing a letter to President Reagan urging him to abandon the Strategic Defense Initiative.