Editorial

Lessons of the Gulf attack

There is little margin to doubt that the May 18 Iraqi air force attack on the U.S. frigate *Stark* was Soviet-directed, and fully intentional (see page 44). The incident fits into an escalating pattern of Soviet strategic provocations launched with the long-prepared, Soviet-directed Berlin riots of May 1.

Following Secretary of State George Shultz's visit to Moscow, the Russian empire made a sudden and profound shift to a policy of bold confrontation with President Ronald Reagan.

The first sign of this shift in Soviet posture was the abrupt postponement of a scheduled state visit to Moscow by West German President Richard von Wiezsäcker. Next came the explosion of well-prepared Berlin riots by Soviet assets, on May 1. Since then, there has been a steady pattern of escalations by Soviet agencies, namely:

• Continued outbreaks of rioting by Soviet assets in West Berlin, accompanied by Soviet and East German threats on the subject of Berlin's status;

• Coordinated, and escalating outbreaks of crippling strikes in each of Yugoslavia's ethnic regions;

• A massive showing of cranking up Moscow's prewar economic mobilization (*perestroika*), featuring, most recently, the stunning Soviet deployment of a key Russian "SDI" capability, its 2,000-ton *Energia* super-rocket;

• A Soviet-directed effort to overthrow the government of Peru, through a combined police strike and general strike;

• Heavy pressure on President Reagan to submit to the Soviet "zero option" agreement, which would virtually assure Soviet conquest of Western Europe were it to be implemented as early as 1990-91;

• A massive campaign to break West Germany, step by step, out of the NATO alliance, and into "Finlandized" status;

• Soviet pressures on the Trilateral Commission, and others, to carve Africa into slices divided between the U.S. and Soviet spheres of influence;

    and various kindred operations.

Moscow views President Reagan as trapped by his own continuing commitment to his "economic agenda," especially the disastrous Gramm-Rudman dogma. Moscow sees this in the context of a major financial collapse erupting during the short-term period ahead. It sees the President as desperately needing arms-reduction agreements with Moscow, to make possible drastic cuts in the U.S. defense budget, and willing to make very large strategic concessions to secure such arms-reduction deals.

If Moscow could trap the President into a "zero option" agreement, and major delays in development and deployment of the SDI, this would almost ensure Soviet ability to launch a general war of world-conquest a few years from now, when the *perestroika* war-mobilization has enabled Moscow to deploy its own global "SDI" and equip its forces with new generations of weapons beyond any presently in the Western arsenals.

Little noticed, but almost as significant as Moscow's "zero option" efforts, are unpublished secret agreements between Moscow and the U.S. State Department, including so-called "regional matters" negotiations. The State Department has already made major strategic concessions to Moscow in the Middle East, and is in the process of new major strategic concessions to Gorbachov on Africa and South America.

Meanwhile, the current Soviet pattern of confrontations, centered, as most such confrontations are, on the Berlin crisis, is expected to continue to the beginning of July. The key dates in this, center around President Reagan's scheduled visit to Berlin, June 12, and the Venice monetary summit that same day.

Moscow is not certain who might be the next President of the United States, and is closing in to extract every possible concession from Mr. Reagan's administration now, while the getting may be good.

If the United States were to suddenly turn tough, Moscow would back off significantly, despite the "eyeballing" fireworks show Moscow would put on, as it always does as a face-saving action in such cases. The time to turn tough is right now, before this deterioration of the strategic situation becomes much more dangerous than it is already.