

The beginning of the end for the Khomeiniacs?

by Criton Zoakos

In the aftermath of the disastrous, Munich-like capitulation of the Reagan administration to Moscow at the Sept. 17 Shultz-Shevardnadze "agreement-in-principle" on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF), relations between the United States and the Soviet Union appear to be hitting a "snag," to Moscow's great discomfiture. The "snag" is Caspar Weinberger's Gulf policy which, as of Sept. 24, has the full, official, and explicit backing of President Reagan. As is well known, the American Secretary of Defense has parked some 46 American warships in and around the Gulf, with over 20,000 combat troops and all sorts of yet-to-be-revealed war-making capabilities.

According to a letter that the White House sent to the congressional leadership on Sept. 24, following the successful American attack against the Iranian Navy minelaying ship *Iran Ajr*, President Reagan defined quite clearly what United States policy in the Gulf is. His little-noticed statement is remarkable for its uncharacteristic clarity and directness—also, for the fact that no "Establishment" newspaper published it. In it, Reagan stressed:

"We must continue steadily to pursue our established, three-part policy in the Gulf:

"1) Bringing ever-increasing international pressure to bear for a negotiated end to the war and to stop its spillover.

"2) Steadfastly continuing to help our friends, the non-belligerent nations of the Gulf, to defend themselves against Iranian threats; and

"3) Prudently pursuing cooperative efforts with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and other friends to protect U.S.-flag ships and to prevent Iran from seriously jeopardizing freedom of non-belligerent navigation. . . .

"The success of our policy will depend to a great extent on the consistency and care with which we carry it out. Our resolve to date has begun to pay off—through increased

European naval contributions to protect freedom of navigation in the Gulf, through quiet but essential and effective GCC support for our naval efforts and those of other nations, through diplomatic progress in the U.N. Security Council, and through deterrence of even more reckless Iranian actions. We must continue to do our best to protect our interests and to reassure our friends—as well as our adversaries—of the continued resolve and leadership of the United States as we move ahead."

Weinberger's policy

It can fairly be said that this has been the months-long policy of Defense Secretary Weinberger, which, finally, received the public imprimatur of the President. The fact that President Reagan did, officially and formally, in a statement to Congress, articulate it, on Sept. 24, seven days after the INF "agreement in principle," is very remarkable. Some say that it is as remarkable as the fact that Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov has not been seen in public since Aug. 7—remarkable in the following way: There is something fundamentally incompatible in President Reagan's agreeing on Sept. 17 to remove U.S. intermediate nuclear weapons from Europe, and, seven days later, presenting the contents of a "tough-as-nails" policy which lies behind the greatest concentration, since World War II, of naval war-making power in the Gulf.

The New Yalta scheme

These developments are evaluated from the standpoint of whether or not they are compatible with a "New Yalta" agreement between the two superpowers. The standard reference, the "roadmap" of sorts for this New Yalta, is an interview that the late Yuri Andropov gave to *Der Spiegel* magazine in April 1983. In it, Gorbachov's predecessor suggested to

President Reagan that a new division of the world should be based on Moscow acquiring the entire "Eurasian landmass" as its "sphere of influence," whereas the U.S.A. would be recognized as a "maritime power," in possession of a "sphere of influence" in the Western hemisphere.

Therefore, whereas the INF agreement in principle, as worked out by Shultz, would be consistent with Andropov's suggested New Yalta scheme, the U.S. and allied military deployment in the Gulf, as executed by Weinberger, is most emphatically against the New Yalta scheme. Weinberger's Gulf deployment, in the last two months, together with U.S.-French cooperation in Chad, has been causing massive losses to Moscow's strategic deployments.

Its most immediate effect has been the rallying of all the so-called "moderate Arab" nations, behind the lead of the United States, as exemplified by the close military cooperation among the U.S.A., the Gulf Cooperation Council, and Egypt. Though most of the information in this area is still politically very sensitive, in its broad outline, the form of this cooperation is as follows:

Numerous members of the Gulf Cooperation Council are providing military, naval and air facilities for U.S., French, and British combat forces, with provisions rapidly progressing toward a major permanent U.S. military presence there. When Secretary Weinberger arrived in the Gulf on Sept. 25, the defense ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council took the unprecedented step of asking Egypt, not a member of the GCC, but the greatest and most populous Arab military power, to draft a Joint Gulf Defense War Plan.

With French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and Cap Weinberger converging for consultations in Cairo at the same time, the broad outline of Weinberger's Gulf policy emerges: a defense system of the Arab world based on U.S., French, British naval power, military technologies purchased by oil-producers' wealth, and military manpower from Egypt. Ostensibly a defense system to defend moderate Arabs from the Khomeinians in Iran, it has all the characteristics of a Western, U.S.-dominated Defense Pact, a de facto "Treaty Organization."

At least, this is the way these developments in the Gulf are read on any military map which is read by the Soviet Armed Forces' General Staff. The military "bottom line" shows that, despite Soviet diplomatic and political propaganda triumphs in the arms-control arena, there is a massive net growth of Western military assets in the Gulf; in Europe, the Soviet military maps show that there is 1) an increase of the number of nuclear weapons produced by France and Great Britain; 2) an increased military coordination between France and Great Britain; 3) a dramatic increase in military cooperation between France and the Federal Republic of Germany; 4) an increase in the number of sea-launched and air-launched cruise missiles to compensate for the possible future removal of land-based INF systems; and 5) an announcement by the NATO command in Brussels, that, despite the INF "agree-

ment in principle," the deployment of American ground-launched cruise missiles will continue until such time as the full-fledged INF treaty is signed and sealed.

In short, even if an INF treaty were to be signed by the end of this year, as far as Soviet military map-readers are concerned, primarily because of the U.S.-French-British cooperation around the Gulf deployment, between now and then, there will continue to be a net increase of Western strategic and theater-tactical military assets.

Does this have anything to do with the fact that Mikhail Gorbachov has not been seen in public since Aug. 7 of this year?

A highly speculative question, which, however, merely by being asked, raises another question: Why have the Soviets not opposed in any militarily significant way, the Western military buildup in the Gulf? Why did the Soviets not come to the defense of Iran when the United States attacked the *Iran Ajr*? Why are the Soviets not doing anything to reverse the growing American influence among the Arabs, and the growing U.S.-Arab military cooperation?

Soviet policy options

During the spring and summer months of 1987, at the height of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Moscow became involved in an elaborate game of displaying sweet reasonableness and mature responsibility in international affairs, as part of its overbearing courtship to persuade the West to accept an INF deal by means of which the U.S. nuclear umbrella over Europe would be removed. The Gulf War was the stage on which this "sweet reasonableness" was to be displayed. Moscow, hoping to encourage the New Yalta, sellout tendencies in the State Department, agreed to a Gulf War ceasefire resolution. Soviet commitment to that resolution prevented Moscow from pursuing a more vigorous opposition to Weinberger's Gulf deployments. During August, Moscow was signaling that it would be willing to suffer a major military setback in the Gulf in order to secure an American withdrawal from Europe. Gorbachov, at least, appeared to be willing to pay such a price.

Will the Soviet military command be amenable to paying this price? It is not so certain. Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov is not getting the results he wants in Europe as fast as he wants them, but, in the Gulf, he is getting what he does not want, much faster than he would like.

This does not, by any means, suggest that Moscow is running out of options. Quite the contrary, it means that Moscow now is preparing to employ new flanks. Moscow and her factional friends among Swiss, German, and British banking interests, are in a position to trigger a financial collapse of U.S. banking of such proportions that, given the ongoing confrontation between White House and Congress over the defense budget and over application of the War Powers Resolution in the Gulf, might very well succeed in rolling back the entire Weinberger deployment.