

Ogarkov's men rise to power in Soviet military command

by Konstantin George

On Oct. 30, one week before the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet radio and TV reported that Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov had been awarded the Order of "Hero of the October Revolution," on the occasion of his 70th birthday. On account of advanced age, and on that account alone, in all probability, by the end of this decade, Ogarkov's tenure as the architect of the Soviet military's pre-war mobilization and his functioning as the military commander in chief for Soviet forces in wartime, will draw to a close. Whatever may happen concerning Ogarkov himself in the next 12-36 months, the old marshal has succeeded in assuring that the military command succession question has been decided in his favor.

Ogarkov's 70th year will go down as the year in which he moved his supporters and protégés into the commanding slots of the Moscow defense ministry, and overhauled the nerve center of the Soviet military, the General Staff. While the world's press has focused on the headline-grabbing defense ministry shake-up that occurred in May, when the young West German pilot Matthias Rust flew his Cessna plane past Soviet air defenses and into Red Square, the vital changes, centered in the General Staff, had already occurred in March.

Ogarkov had remolded the General Staff already once, during his tenure as its chief, from 1977 till September 1984. However, for age reasons alone, the top cadre added in the 1970s had to be replaced by the best available men who matured during the 1980s, to become the leadership for the coming crucial pre-war period.

The top of the General Staff's command structure consists of its chief, three first deputy chiefs (from which we can discount the aging Marshal V.G. Kulikov, the Warsaw Pact commander in chief), and five deputy chiefs. In March, the only first deputy chief *not* appointed during Ogarkov's tenure as chief of the General Staff (January 1977-September 1984), **Gen. Col. I.A. Gashkov**, was transferred to become the commander of the Vystrel School for Higher Officer Courses, a massive demotion. Gashkov's replacement was **Gen. Col. V.N. Lobov** (see *EIR* No. 32, 1987 for documentation of Lobov's meteoric rise, under Ogarkov's watchful eye), whose leap upward began in the summer of 1984, when Ogarkov began executing the first phase of the stunning array of Soviet command changes that have occurred in the last

three years. These involved changes at the Military District command level, and Ogarkov's creation of the wartime High Commands.

Also in March, two of the five deputy chiefs of staff (four, not counting GRU boss Ivashutin) were replaced by **General Colonel Krivosheyev** and **General Lieutenant Yevstigneyev**. In 1985, Ogarkov had brought in the outstanding officer **Gen. Col. Mahmoud Gareyev** as a deputy chief of the General Staff. In the Russian-dominated Soviet military, an officer of Muslim background does not make it to a top General Staff post unless he is indeed outstanding professionally. Gareyev has authored the Soviet military's new doctrinal "bible," emphasizing the crucial role of special operations in the European theater to knock out the crucial nuclear missiles, nuclear arms, vital depots, airfields, and other targets in Western Europe *before* the Soviet forces launch the main ground assault.

Completing the picture, the remaining deputy chief, **General of the Army Belov**, the commander of the Signal Troops since 1970, is also an Ogarkov appointee. In one of Ogarkov's first personnel moves as head of the General Staff, in 1977 he upgraded both Belov, and by implication the role of the Signal Troops, by naming Belov a deputy chief of the General Staff.

The Krivosheyev appointment highlights Ogarkov's priority of accelerating war preparations. His function as deputy chief of the General Staff is to head the General Staff's Main Directorate for Organization and Mobilization, i.e., ensuring overall war readiness. The promotion was given him in recognition for his services as chief of staff of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG), where he directed the organizational work that brought these forces (with over 400,000 troops, by far the largest single group of Soviet forces in the Western theater, commanded by Ogarkov) to an alarming—for the West—degree of combat readiness. Krivosheyev led the staff planning for the many GSFG exercises of recent years that focused on upgrading heliborne air assault capabilities, and combined air assault/ground forces high-speed offensive techniques. Krivosheyev, as he has stressed in his writings, transformed training in the GSFG to emphasize night fighting and maneuver techniques, to further perfect the element of surprise in both special operations and offensive operations. In short, Krivosheyev represents a perfect doctrinal match to Gareyev at the General Staff leadership.

The Rust affair was for the Ogarkov group a "godsend," enabling their consolidation at the defense ministry. In its wake, not only were **Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov** and **Air Marshal Aleksandr I. Koldunov**, the Commander in Chief of the Air Defense Forces (who is also one of the 11 deputy defense ministers) sacked, but two other vacant deputy defense minister slots were filled by generals in tune with the pre-war mobilization demands imposed by Ogarkov and the General Staff.

The first giant step which ultimately led to Ogarkov's

1987 revamping of the defense ministry hierarchy, occurred in the summer of 1984 in the Soviet Far East, when Ogarkov placed a new leadership to run the Far East High Command, a wartime High Command created in early 1979. The new Far East commander in chief was **General of the Army Ivan Tretyak**, and Tretyak's former post of commander of the crucial Far East Military District was given to **General of the Army Dmitri Yazov**.

As the world knows, with the Rust affair, Yazov leapfrogged to become defense minister, and Tretyak has become the new commander in chief of the Air Defense Forces. Yazov's associates from the Far East Military District have also enjoyed spectacular advances. The political chief of the Far East Military District, **Gen. Lt. V. Silakov**, has been named the new political chief for the Air Defense Forces. Yazov's former first deputy commander at FEMD, **Gen. Lt. I.S. Morozov**, has been promoted to general colonel and commander of the Odessa Military District. Yazov's chief of staff at FEMD, **Gen. Lt. M.A. Moiseyev**, has succeeded Yazov as FEMD commander.

What of the previous Far East High Command leadership and their sponsors at the Moscow defense ministry? Let's begin with their sponsors, former Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov and **Marshal Vasilii Petrov**. During the Brezhnev years, Sokolov (first deputy defense minister from 1967-84, before becoming defense minister after the death of Dmitri Ustinov) and Petrov were leading members of a clique in the military hierarchy. In early 1979, when the Far East High Command was reactivated, Petrov was assigned as its first commander in chief, and was personally seen off by Brezhnev when he departed for his new assignment. Petrov hand-picked as his first deputy commander in chief, **General of the Army F.F. Krivda**. In the autumn of 1980, at the height of the Polish crisis, Petrov was called to Moscow and made commander in chief of the Soviet Ground Forces. His successor as Far East commander in chief was **General of the Army Vladimir L. Govorov**, another member of the clique.

Then came Ogarkov's Far East "coup," which began in the summer of 1984. Tretyak replaced Govorov, who was summoned to Moscow, and made a deputy defense minister. A year later, Krivda was ousted as first deputy commander in chief in the Far East and demoted to running the lowly Vystrel School for Higher Officer Courses. His whereabouts since mid-1986 are unknown.

Petrov, in January 1985, hanging onto the coattails of the new defense minister, Sokolov, was promoted to become first deputy defense minister, but within 18 months (July 1986) was retired. Soon afterward, Govorov was shunted into the least important of the 11 deputy defense minister slots, that of running Civil Defense, and, as all previous cases have proven, a dead-end post for military careers.

Air Defense reorganization under Tretyak

No one can forget the Sept. 1, 1983 Soviet shooting down of the Korean Airlines jet by forces of the Far East Military

District, then commanded by General Tretyak. Nor can anyone forget the infamous Moscow press conference held at that time by Marshal Ogarkov, with map and pointer, which justified and praised that deed.

The recent shake-up in the Soviet Air Defense Forces has included a now-publicized change in the authority of the commander in chief of Soviet Air Defense Forces. He—meaning Tretyak—now has the full authority to order, without consulting any other military or civilian person, the shooting down of any aerial intruder. This was disclosed in an article written by General Tretyak in the first week of November for the weekly *Nedelya*. Tretyak wrote that Rust's Cessna only succeeded in landing in Moscow because "no high-ranking officer" was in place to make the "appropriate decision." In the future, "the target must be discovered, identified, and destroyed. For executing this, I, as the highest commander, am personally responsible. All soldiers of the Air Defense Forces receive . . . the following order: To terminate any violation of the State air borders by a foreign aircraft."

Note the term "personally responsible." That means that Tretyak can order the shooting down of any foreign aircraft crossing over Soviet air space, whether Cessna, Boeing airliner, or military. As Sept. 1, 1983 showed, he will do exactly that.

Another aspect of the sweeping changes since the Rust affair, which bears Ogarkov's stamp, has been the naming of two new deputy defense ministers. They are **Generals of the Army M.I. Sorokin** (now Chief of the Main Inspectorate) and **D.S. Sukhorukov** (Chief of Cadres). Both held command positions in the elite Soviet Airborne Forces. Sorokin was deputy commander of the Airborne Forces from 1964-69 and was a key figure in the development of the Soviet *spetsnaz* commando forces, who have the mission of taking out NATO's vital nuclear and other targets directly prior to the invasion of Western Europe by Soviet ground forces.

Sukhorukov, whose career has been with the Airborne Forces, succeeded Sorokin in 1969 as deputy commander, and in 1979 became the commander of the Airborne Forces, a post he held until his June 1987 promotion to deputy defense minister. Never before has such a number of Airborne Forces commanders been brought to the center of the defense ministry.

The case of Sorokin provides the counterpoint to that of the aforementioned Krivda, who fell from being the first deputy commander in chief of a wartime High Command. In September 1984, Ogarkov chose Sorokin to become his first deputy commander in chief for the Western theater wartime High Command. After three years as Ogarkov's right-hand man, Sorokin became deputy defense minister.

Whatever the outcome of the Soviet civilian leadership struggles, the personnel and doctrinal trend lines in the emerging military hierarchy of the late 1980s has moved in a singular direction. The military "children of Ogarkov" are in place.