

Moscow tries dual tactic to smother ethnic crisis

by Konstantin George

Moscow is implementing a “divide and conquer” tactic to deal with the rapidly escalating national unrest in the Soviet bloc. The components are:

1) A total crackdown within the U.S.S.R. against nationalist forces. This includes the Baltic, the Ukraine, Moldavia, and the Transcaucasus.

2) In Poland and Hungary, a reversion to the original post-Yalta 1945-48 formula of “multi-party” systems, in which a coopted opposition will provide a political buffer to the ruling Communist party, enabling the authorities to continue for a time to impose savage austerity.

In Poland, Moscow’s experiment of reverting to the 1945-48 rules of the game for the part of its empire located in Central and Eastern Europe, began with the ongoing “Round Table” talks between the regime and the Solidarity opposition. In Hungary, the same Moscow-dictated operation took the form of an emergency Central Committee plenum Feb. 10-11, which resolved to draft a new constitution, in which the framework for a “multi-party system” will be created, to take effect before Aug. 1. Regarding Poland and Hungary, as in the 1945-48 period, “everything” is negotiable—except control of the police, military, and the main levers of the economy, which stay in the hands of Moscow’s puppets. Of course, membership in the Warsaw Pact is non-negotiable.

Moscow’s reasons for adopting the present tactic are not hard to fathom, and have nothing to do with any “liberalization,” as the Western press would like one to believe. Elementary strategic and crisis-management considerations dictate no other course. As a result of the cumulative effects of savage cuts in living standards over the last two years, both Poland and Hungary are very close to exploding. In the first two weeks of February, not a day has passed without a strike being called in one or more Polish factories or mines. Hungary has been, as the party leadership has openly admitted,

moving rapidly toward a new outbreak along the lines of 1956. The requirements of the Soviet war buildup, with its included looting of Eastern Europe, permit no economic concessions, no raising of living standards. Living standards will continue to worsen in Poland and Hungary, and austerity will be stepped up. All that Moscow can offer are apparent political concessions, and they only amount to recruiting the opposition to co-managing more austerity.

Moscow cannot allow near-term explosions in Poland and Hungary for two primary reasons: 1) Any new “1956” would disrupt the very advanced global superpower condominium being worked out between the Anglo-American Liberal Establishment and Moscow; 2) Moscow dare not risk eruptions in Poland and Hungary *before* it has at least brought a semblance of order to the seething Captive Nations inside the Soviet Union. Hence, the current dual tactic: Use the time being bought by the Round Table talks in Poland and the “multi-party system” in Hungary to crack down against the burgeoning national unrest at home.

The Kissinger plan

How far advanced the global condominium is, was proven when the Feb. 12 *Washington Post* disclosed a plan by Henry Kissinger for a “U.S.-Soviet Compact” to neutralize Germany and destroy the Atlantic Alliance. The plan is being “seriously studied” by the Bush administration, after a Jan. 28 White House meeting between Kissinger—freshly returned from Trilateral Commission visits in Moscow with Gorbachov—President Bush, and Secretary of State Baker.

In early February, no less clear “New Yalta” signals in accordance with the Kissinger plan emanated from Moscow. On Feb. 8, hosting a dinner for all European ambassadors from Economic Community countries, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze called for “an All-European

Reykjavik"; a summit of all European heads of state, along with President Bush and Gorbachov, to be held in 1989, to "strengthen trust, security, and cooperation in Europe," and, to accomplish "in the realm of conventional arms reductions," what Reykjavik had done in launching the INF treaty. Shevardnadze said that in the forefront of such a summit must be the question: "How to break the present vicious circle and secure the transition from words to deeds in conventional disarmament."

The "All-European Reykjavik" proposal was first made July 7, 1988 by Gorbachov in a speech to the Polish Parliament. Then, it all but vanished from the Soviet media, until the Jan. 28 White House meeting of Kissinger, Bush, and Baker.

European observers were struck by the fact that Moscow's decoupling offensive directed at Europe came 24 hours after a "New Yalta" announcement by President Bush on Feb. 7. He said that the United States has "vital interests" in the Western Hemisphere, whereas Moscow "has no substantial interests there," and that on this basis, an accommodation could be reached governing Ibero-America. Bush had proposed what amounts to a spheres-of-influence deal along the lines defined by the late Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, in a 1983 interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine. Moscow would recognize U.S. "vital interests" in the Western Hemisphere, and Washington would grant Eurasia to Moscow—the goal of the "All-European Reykjavik."

Soon after Shevardnadze's speech came a Soviet psychological warfare stroke, designed to make more palatable the idea of "neutralizing" Germany. Timed with the Feb. 10 opening of the Hungarian Central Committee plenum and the launching of the "multi-party system," the Hungarian press carried a commentary by Oleg Bogomolov, the director of the Moscow Research Institute for the Socialist World System. Bogomolov stated that "a neutral Hungary" would not be deemed "a security risk for the Soviet Union," and that he could not exclude Hungary moving toward "a bourgeois-democratic system of a Western type similar to Austria or Sweden."

There's a catch to every such "sensational" Soviet move. Bogomolov was quick to add that such a development "would not prevent Hungary from remaining a member of the Warsaw Pact." That should be read to mean, in the context of the "All-European Reykjavik," that membership in the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet sphere of influence is open to neutral countries like Austria or Sweden, and to countries Moscow trusts will be "neutrals" in the near future—starting with West Germany.

The crackdown

In typical Soviet fashion, the crackdown on national unrest in the Soviet Union was announced Feb. 10, the same day that the Hungarian Central Committee convened to approve a "multi-party system," and the same day that Polish

Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski was interviewed by the French daily *Le Monde*, and announced a "multi-party system," in which the Communist Party is to "give up its monopoly of power." That's the day when a *Pravda* editorial denounced "attacks on our system" by "more than 60,000 independent associations" now operating in the U.S.S.R. *Pravda* singled out "nationalist" groups, with whom "no compromise can be struck," as they are trying "to lead Soviet citizens onto the path of lawlessness, anarchy, and destabilization."

The editorial was backed up by a TASS interview with the chief state prosecutor for Latvia, Dsenitis, who attacked nationalist organizations in Estonia and Latvia for raising "illegal demands," which would lead to "anarchy." His targets included the National Independence Party of Estonia, the Movement for an Independent Latvia, and, notably, the Popular Front, which until now has enjoyed official support. For good measure, Dsenitis added that his views enjoy the full support of the KGB and Interior Ministry in Latvia.

A few days earlier, the Estonian Communist Party paper, *Sovetskaya Estonia*, which had been handling the nationalist ferment with kid gloves, came out in a scathing attack on Estonian nationalism. The commentary, datelined Moscow, was authored by Pashayev, a Russian, who denounced "appearances of extremism," "adventurism," and a "lack of political culture in Estonia."

Notably, the first Soviet calls for a crackdown in the Baltic had appeared during January in articles in the Defense Ministry daily, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, denouncing the "Popular Front" and hailing the Russian chauvinist "International Front," the mass organization for Latvia's Russian majority and Estonia's large Russian minority.

Thus, between Feb. 10 and 12, the Soviet leadership as a whole had decided that the time was ripe to implement what the military had been demanding. That decision was reflected in the *Pravda* editorial and a speech of Feb. 12 by KFB chief Viktor Chebrikov, violently denouncing "nationalist extremists," above all in Moldavia, who pretend to be "supporting perestroika."

Up to the present turn, the label of "extremists" had been applied to Armenian nationalists, and it was under the "anti-extremist" propaganda against the Armenian Karabakh Committee that committee members were arrested and brought to prisons in Moscow. And, over the months of 1988, the Transcaucasian republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, a strategic region bordering on Turkey and Iran, were placed under military rule, and a vast military buildup there has occurred.

The same program is now being planned for Moldavia. On the pretext of dealing with "extremists" and national unrest, Moscow will pour troops into Moldavia, bordering on Romania, and the adjacent Odessa and Carpathian regions of the Ukraine, and thus be prepared to exercise military options in the face of a Balkan crisis and the coming dissolution of Yugoslavia.