

# Strike wave in Ukraine heralds 'hot summer' for Moscow leaders

by Konstantin George

The revolutionary process in what is still called the U. S. S. R. has entered a new phase. The corner was turned with the July 11 national coal miners' political warning strike, and the convening of an emergency session of the Ukraine Parliament to debate a declaration of independence for the largest of the non-Russian republics, modeled on the Baltic states. For the Russian Empire, this twin escalation of the national crisis, and the crisis of worker unrest in the Empire's Slavic core, portend an internal political crisis with dimensions comparable to those of 1903-5, or 1917.

Alongside these events, the highly publicized 28th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party ranks as a farcical non-event. Its only importance is that its proceedings have formalized what had already been the case: the end of rule by party institutions, and the total marginalization of the party's role in society.

The 24-hour national miners' strike was far more significant than the extended miners' strike of last July, because of its outright political nature, its broader geographical scope, and, unlike July 1989, the wide support it received from solidarity strikes staged by industrial and construction workers in numerous enterprises across the Soviet Union. The region-by-region panorama of what happened on July 11 shows that this was the first warning shot in what will become a hot summer and autumn of mass labor unrest.

- The Donetsk Basin, or Donbass, in eastern Ukraine: Contrary to Western media reporting, support for the strike was not confined to "more than half the miners," but was nearly unanimous. Western news services only counted the 124 mines that struck for 24 hours, ignoring an additional 110 mines that walked out for a shorter time, from one to six hours. Thus, in reality, 234 of 250 mines followed the strike call.

- The Kuznetsk Basin, in western Siberia: Here again, near unanimity, with 66 mines shut by the strike, together with 11 enterprises in the regional capital of Kemerovo, thus making the "miners' strike" a quasi-general strike in that city. The same was true in Vorkuta, in the far north of Russia, where 10 of 13 mines were shut down.

- Karaganda, western Kazakhstan: The majority of the miners followed the strike call. Eleven mines were shut for 24 hours, and 26 others for two hours. Two Karaganda enterprises struck in solidarity.

All the regions identified so far had been involved in the July 1989 miners' strike. Now, new centers of unrest have been added. Coal miners at eight mines of Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East joined the strike, along with the work force of 10 of the island's largest industrial plants. Several mines each in the Magadan and Norilsk regions of eastern Siberia, and in Siberia's Novosibirsk region also were on strike.

Warning strikes in solidarity with the coal miners were also conducted by workers in areas where there are no coal mines. According to Radio Moscow on July 12, 20,000 industrial workers went on strike in the city of Gomel, Belorussia, and "construction workers building an extension of the Leningrad Metro" (subway) staged sympathy strikes on behalf of the miners.

The strikers have demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and his government, the confiscation of Communist Party property, and the end to party organizations in enterprises, in government, in the Army, the KGB, and the Interior Ministry forces—in short, the early end to what remains of the party's relation to any institution holding power or authority.

## Ukraine breaking loose

While the delegates to the 28th Party Congress were debating the fate of a party, which, in reality, has a future perspective about equal to that of the *Titanic* after it hit the iceberg, the utter farce of their proceedings was poignantly expressed when, seemingly out of the blue, the Ukraine crisis erupted.

The Communist majority of the Ukrainian Parliament had gotten themselves dutifully "elected" as delegates to the 28th Party Congress. Back in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, the parliamentary faction of the Ukrainian national movement, Rukh, took this unique opportunity to call a session of the Ukraine Parliament to draft a declaration of independence according to which Ukraine, following what is termed the Estonian course, would be fully independent in a few years. On July 8, Ukrainian delegates hastily left the party congress in Moscow for Kiev.

The call for Ukraine to declare independence had been made that weekend by Rukh co-chairman Mihailo Horyn. He predicted that "the early end of the Soviet Union. . . .

The separation of Ukraine from the Soviet Union . . . is no longer a question of decades, but of a few years." Rukh also issued a statement denouncing Moscow's design for a "new Union" federation as a "facade," behind which Moscow would maintain its central power, unchecked.

Horyn put the matter squarely: "We are the second-largest Soviet republic, and are treated like a colony," with the lion's share of Ukraine's enormous wealth siphoned off by the Moscow Center. This is the only reason why, as recent statistics in Ukraine's main economics journal, *Ekonomika Radianskoyi Ukrainy*, document, 19 million of the 52 million Ukrainians live in impoverished conditions, with an average monthly income per working family member of between 75 and 125 rubles per month, with an additional 4 million people receiving an income below 75 rubles per month.

Gorbachov will attempt to ride out the Ukrainian storm and the storm of labor unrest by making huge concessions to forestall eruptions. For Ukraine, "federation" will be readily exchanged for "confederation," i.e., large-scale "sovereignty" over internal affairs. To appease the miners and the industrial work force, the Ryzhkov government will be sacrificed sometime this year; local and regional party organizations will be ruthlessly washed away; multi-party governments will be emerging both in the republics and at the national level. The new, post-Bolshevik form of empire being forged will become ever more flexible towards its components, in response to the rising revolutionary tide from below.

The new concessionary strategy towards Ukraine was shown by Gorbachov having recommended Ukraine's President, Vladimir Ivashko, as the party's deputy general secretary. Ivashko won with an overwhelming 4:1 margin over the pathetic 70-year-old exponent of the dying order of party rule, Yegor Ligachov. By choosing Ivashko, Gorbachov created in one stroke the option, once the storm in Ukraine erupts in full, of removing Ivashko as Ukrainian President without loss of face, and installing as a last resort, a "Yeltsin" type President to keep Ukraine still tied to the Russian empire, however loosely.

Through the summer and autumn, dramatic developments and profound internal transformations are on the agenda, in at least some ways reminiscent of what has been witnessed in Eastern Europe in the past year. The process of eliminating the ballast of the Communist Party, certainly most welcome, by no means ensures happy times. Coming in conjunction with the enormity of the economic crisis ravaging the Soviet Union, it has created the outside chance of transforming Russia for the first time since the post-1905 period of economic and political reforms that nearly succeeded in Europeanizing Russia. To a large degree, how much of such a "chance" really exists will be determined by both the political and physical economic content of assistance and development aid given to Russia and other republics by, above all, Germany, France, Japan, and Korea.

## Kremlin growing unhappy with India

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

The recent disclosure that Pakistan is acquiring state-of-the-art T-72 tanks from a Soviet ally, presumably an East European nation, has raised questions about the future shape of Indo-Soviet relations, which, only a few years ago, was considered embedded in granite. A number of utterances by senior Soviet officials in foreign countries and a host of signed articles in the Soviet media recently have helped to create a distinct impression that the anti-India lobby in the Soviet Union is on the ascendance. In addition, the vexing dispute between India and the Soviet Union over the rupee-ruble trade shows no sign of an early resolution.

The reported arms negotiations between Pakistan and an "unidentified country" for Soviet military hardware, including T-72 tanks, have caused policymakers in New Delhi to sit up and take note, especially considering the prevailing war-like situation along the India-Pakistan borders. News media close to the Indian Foreign Ministry have already indicated that the issue will be a major item on the agenda in the July 18 talks in Islamabad between the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan.

It has also been noted that no transfer of T-72 tanks can take place without a nod from Moscow. Besides the Warsaw Pact countries, India and Syria are the only other countries which possess T-72 tanks. In fact, India had earlier procured the manufacturing license for these tanks. Whether or not Moscow gave a formal or tacit approval to the sale of T-72 tanks to Pakistan, the Kremlin surely did not pay any attention to the inconvenience it would cause India under the prevailing circumstances. One can be reasonably sure that the decision is related to the series of critical comments made recently by Soviet officials concerning Indo-Soviet relations.

On Feb. 21 at "One Asia International," a reporters' jam-boree in Manila, the Philippines, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov told newsmen over a satellite hook-up from Moscow, that the Soviet Union always supported the United Nations resolution for holding a plebiscite in Kashmir—a statement which is in total opposition to the formal Soviet position on the issue. Moscow maintains that the Kashmir issue must be resolved through bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan following rules laid