

Soviet general warns of world war

by Joseph Brewda

On Sept. 26, Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev, the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, warned in an interview with the *Washington Post* that the U.S. government's planned military action in the Persian Gulf could trigger a new world war. A military conflict in the Gulf between the U.S. and Iraq could escalate out of control, the general said. "The First World War in 1914 also started because of some minor thing. Today we should do our utmost to prevent it."

"In case of some military actions," he elaborated, "Iran will join the Iraqi side. This would not be simply some kind of conflict; this would be world war. . . . Such a war will not bring any glory either to the American people or to the people of Iraq."

Concerning the factor of incalculability, Moiseyev said, "It's very hard to imagine [the consequences of war], especially considering the sophisticated weapons systems that are concentrated on both sides." He added, "I know how high a price the American people paid in Vietnam. . . . We cannot allow bloodshed to happen."

Moiseyev called upon the United States to join with the Soviet Union in finding a political solution to the crisis. "We have quite enough political means" to find a solution, he added.

One day after the interview, General Moiseyev traveled to the U.S. on an official visit, and continued making the same warnings. "We can't view the resolution of any crisis like this by means of using arms," he told the editors of the *New York Times* in an unusual joint interview with U.S. Chief of Staff Gen. Colin Powell on Oct. 2. For his part, Powell responded by asserting "We are not eliminating any options that are available to our President." Powell's remarks were widely interpreted to mean that the United States is moving closer and closer to a military strike on Iraq.

U.S. military action 'unacceptable'

This is not the first warning of this kind coming from the Red Army leadership. On Aug. 30, Gen. Vladimir Lobov, the Warsaw Pact chief of staff, warned in a TASS interview that the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia could threaten the "strategic balance in the region," by threatening the "southern flank of the Soviet Union." He warned that should the U.S. "occupy Iraq," which is only 200 kilometers

from the Soviet border, this would create an unacceptable "arc" of U.S. military allies in the region extending from Turkey, down through Iraq, into Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, he added, should the "250,000 U.S. troops that Washington wants to station in Saudi Arabia remain," then NATO would be strengthened through troops not included in any Conventional Forces in Europe agreements.

Perhaps for such reasons, Soviet President Gorbachov, at the Sept. 9 press conference following his summit with George Bush in Helsinki, stated that any U.S. military action in the Gulf is "unacceptable."

General Moiseyev's views on the danger of war are also shared by others of different political persuasions—for example, King Hussein of Jordan. In an unusual letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*, published on Sept. 24, King Hussein stated "I fear the current course of events could be a replay of 1914 . . . when the world stumbled into a war it did not want but could not stop."

Back in Washington

Unfortunately, it appears that the Soviet military's warnings or threats have not had a sobering effect on the Bush administration.

On Sept. 29, in a *Washington Post* commentary entitled "The Dangers of Stalemate," former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recommended an October-November deadline for planned military action against Iraq. Kissinger has been closely associated with Bush since the Nixon administration. He dominates the Bush administration through such former partners and tools as National Security Council chief Brent Scowcroft, and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger.

"The administration must . . . decide at some point how long it is prepared to wait for sanctions to work and how far it is prepared to go without unanimous international support," Kissinger wrote. "I do not know whether the decision must be made in October or November. I would be very uneasy were it to be delayed into the new year, for I believe that the entire enterprise might then begin to unravel."

Arguing against political solutions "saving Iraq's face is the exact opposite of what is needed," Kissinger added, "Were Saddam Hussein suddenly to accept the U.N. terms, he would in fact preserve the essence of his power." Without war, Kissinger believes, "Iraq would still retain its chemical and nuclear capabilities. Its large standing army would still preserve the capacity to overwhelm the area."

Kissinger claimed that "The moderate Arab states would welcome a decisive American move if it were demonstrably the only alternative to Saddam's succeeding." Actually riots would topple most the regimes of most Arab "moderates," such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, within days and weeks of U.S. military action. "As for Gorbachov," Kissinger insisted, "the economic weakness of the Soviet Union requires a concentration on domestic affairs."