

# Cold war is not over, Europeans fear

by Mark Burdman

Returning to Vienna in March after almost a year's absence, one finds a change in mood among diplomats and strategists involved in international arms control negotiations. In early 1990, the predominant focus was a search for what experts like to call "new security structures," which would build upon the dramatic new realities brought about by the downfall of the communist regimes and the collapse of the Berlin Wall at the end of 1989. But now there is anxiety, an atmosphere of foreboding, as insiders view the prospect of a new era of confrontation and tension in Europe, an emerging "cold war two" that could involve shooting conflicts in one or another part of Europe.

The more publicized reason for the mood change, is that the Soviets have thrown some cold water on the "peace is here" euphoria. They have transferred several thousand tanks beyond the Urals, in violation of the protocols of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty. They have reclassified three large divisions as "naval infantry," thereby circumventing some of the protocols of the treaty. Third, they have put new restrictions on international inspection of their military hardware.

These moves are coherent with the general hardline shift in Soviet politics, including those processes which led to the resignation of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in December 1990. The American and British governments have issued various protests about such Soviet activity, including the reported content of a March 25 letter from President George Bush to President Mikhail Gorbachov.

## Effect of the Gulf war

The Bush démarche is symptomatic of a second aspect of the changed reality, and one that is perhaps more dangerous to the "Vienna arms-control process." This is the consequence of the Persian Gulf war and the crude Bush administration attempt to impose a "new world order" on Europe, the Mediterranean, and West Asia. What one hears from Viennese circles favorable to Bush, is that the war against Iraq has proven that there is only one viable "security structure" for the Western world, namely NATO, and that the complicated search for using the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to create a new strategic

reality, is now obsolete.

Imagine how that grates against the prevailing mentality now in Moscow. At a March 8 background briefing given by several leading CSCE or CFE diplomats to an international peace conference in Vienna, a renewed dynamic of confrontation could be seen. Beyond the technocratic language of arms control, confidence building, etc., several of the Western European speakers warned of the "unthinkable" occurring in Europe, should the CFE treaty, which was signed amid great fanfare in Paris in November 1990 by heads of state, not be ratified in the coming months by the national parliaments of the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A., and others. The basic line of the American representative was that the viability of the CSCE institutions was now in question, in the aftermath of the Gulf war. Why talk about limitations on new military technologies, when the recent war "proved that new technologies saved lives?" he asked rhetorically, to the amazement of not a few in the audience.

Following an impassioned appeal by the Polish ambassador, that the Central European nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary not be ignored by the rest—the Soviet representative calmly dropped a few bombs. In the style of what Gorbachov calls "the old thinking," he blamed all the rest of the countries present, and others not present, for not having responded positively to a wide range of "reasonable" Soviet proposals. One German arms control expert present commented: "This time you didn't see Khrushchov's shoe on the table, but you heard it!"

## Political, economic crises in Europe

But it is not only arms-control feuds, as problematic as they may be, which concerns those in the know in the old capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. People are acutely aware of the potential of crises erupting along a wide swathe, extending from the Balkans, through Central Europe, and into the Soviet Union, all driven by economic crises that expedite the reemergence of atavistic tribalisms and old grievances. If the main focus of concern was the immediate outbreak of crises in Yugoslavia and Albania, *EIR* was being advised by those in a position to know, to look very carefully at the situation in Czechoslovakia as well.

More important, though, is the receptivity among representatives from Eastern and Central European and the Balkans, to the notion that economic development is the prerequisite for the avoidance of war. It is startling to hear such individuals virtually plead for a more active role on the part of both Germany and Austria, as well as other European countries, in providing the necessary aid to prevent disaster. For this reason, Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" proposal for European infrastructure development has, here, a very tangible reality. If this program, or something like it, does not come to pass, then the rupture of the "Vienna process" will likely become irreversible. And that, many think, would mean looking into the abyss.