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# **Soviet Propaganda Alert**

No. 13

April 22, 1983

## SUMMARY

(Further details of the items on this sheet  
can be found on the referenced pages)

Major Soviet propaganda themes related to the U.S. in  
January and February stressed:

Arms Control. Soviet propaganda was unchanged from  
earlier months. The U.S. was denounced for making  
START, INF, and MBFR proposals that would unilaterally  
disarm the Soviet Union and its allies while  
ignoring Warsaw Pact proposals which were fair and  
provided equal security for both sides.

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The United States. Soviet commentators focussed on  
evaluations of President Reagan's Administration  
at mid-term. Reaganomics was pronounced a failure  
and the President was accused of causing the worst  
recession in U.S. post-War history. U.S. economic  
problems were attributed to the arms buildup.

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Geographic Themes. Soviet propaganda repeated  
accusations that the U.S. encourages Israel in its  
aggressive actions and does not want peace in the  
Middle East. In South Asia, the U.S. was charged  
with attempting to draw Pakistan into its imperi-  
alist schemes and with continuing its "secret war"  
against Afghanistan. Propaganda on U.S. activities  
in Asia stressed the threat posed by renewed mili-  
tarization of Japan and U.S. attempts to turn Japan  
into its Asian gendarme.

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The basic themes of Soviet propaganda were unchanged in January and February from those of the late Brezhnev period, although some analysts believe that the tone has become more assertive. Changes have taken place in the Soviet propaganda apparatus, however:

- o Boris Stukalin, former chairman of the USSR State Committee for Publishing Houses, Printing Plants, and the Book Trade, replaced Evgenii Tiazel'nikov as chief of the CPSU Central Committee Propaganda Department.
- o The first deputy chief of the CPSU Central Committee Department of International Information, Valentin Falin, moved to the government newspaper Izvestiia as a "political observer."
- o According to unconfirmed reports in German, British and Japanese newspapers, the International Information Department will be closed down. Other rumors indicated that the chief of the department, Leonid Zamiatin, will be sent to Algeria as ambassador--a major demotion.

It is too early to judge whether or not these shifts and rumored changes represent merely a changing of the guard in the propaganda apparatus following Andropov's elevation to CPSU General Secretary or a reorganization which portends major changes in the methods and substance of Soviet propaganda.

#### SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

Soviet propagandists used their standard repertoire of themes in their January and February commentaries. They:

- o Stressed the allegedly constant preparations for war on the part of the U.S. and NATO, while contrasting this with the defensive, "peace-loving" policy of the USSR and its allies.
- o Emphasized the danger to countries which agreed to provide basing sites for Pershing II and cruise missiles.
- o Claimed that Soviet arms reduction proposals were fair and provided equal security for both sides while the West's proposals would mean unilateral disarmament for the USSR.
- o Charged that the U.S. Administration was attempting to brainwash Americans into believing that a limited nuclear war is tolerable and winnable.
- o Attempted to show that U.S. and NATO policy was opposed by all progressive peoples, and highlighted demonstrations by antiwar, antinuclear groups, especially in the U.S. and Western Europe. An especially favored propaganda technique

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was to quote approvingly from statements by well-known Western political figures who oppose current NATO policy.

- o Suggested that the U.S. had failed on almost every front --military, economic, diplomatic--in its alleged imperialist conspiracies.
- o Answered U.S. charges of Soviet wrong-doing by "exposing" alleged U.S. hypocrisy and countercharging that the U.S. was attempting to divert attention from its own actions.
- o Portrayed the Soviet Union and the socialist community as the ally and protector of Third World countries which are allegedly under pressure from the U.S. to surrender their sovereignty by joining the U.S. in its anti-communist crusade.

At the same time, Soviet propagandists were careful not to minimize the "threat" constituted by the U.S. and its allies, and warned that the West was extremely dangerous despite its supposed weaknesses, divisions, and failures.

#### ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Security themes continued to dominate Soviet propaganda in January and February. Alleged preparations by the U.S. and its allies for war--both nuclear and conventional--the putative readiness of the U.S. to launch a first strike, constant efforts by the U.S. to establish bases and "bridgeheads" in various regions of the world, and attempts by the U.S. to draw other countries into its allegedly imperialist schemes constituted the core of Soviet propaganda in recent months. A typical example was a Valentin Falin article in Izvestiia at the end of January, in which he blamed the U.S. for world tensions:

Their source lies in the unconstructive actions, hostile to peace, of a group of states headed by the United States and in attempts to use force or the threat of force to achieve unilateral advantages in relation to other countries in the military, political, and economic spheres.

War is declared to be the condition characteristic of human society from time immemorial, while violence is elevated to the rank of virtually the universal method of conducting international affairs. The main thing is to gain the upper hand and put your rival at a disadvantage....

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According to Soviet propagandists, the policy of the Soviet Union and its socialist allies could not be more different. A mid-February Pravda article by Soviet Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov asserted:

In our time--a time of steady, progressive development of mankind--the socialist countries, setting the whole world an example of great revolutionary achievements and creating and strengthening a new society in which the working person is the master of life, are today more than ever the main buttress of peace in the world. In pursuing a policy of peace, they firmly rebuff the imperialist policy of aggression and the export of counterrevolution and attempts by reactionary forces to impose their will on freedom-loving people.

...

Socialism and peace are indivisible concepts. It is only in order to live in conditions of peace and create a new society that socialist countries have armies and maintain their combat might and combat readiness at such a level as to reliably resist the strong, technically well-equipped and trained armies of the imperialist powers.

Soviet commentators were sometimes carried away by their enthusiasm. Vitalii Korionov, writing in Pravda on January 8, declared that the socialist community's "peace-loving policy is supported by the vast majority of mankind," and Izvestiia on January 7 effused that Andropov's INF reduction proposals exhibited "a principle of the most rigorous equality, brought to a mathematical exactitude."

If appeals to peace and reason were not sufficient to dissuade the West from its allegedly aggressive path, Soviet commentators were not loath to point out the military might of the Soviet Union and its allies. Falin, in the Izvestiia article cited above, ominously noted that "the USSR has its own tsar cannon--and not only the one in Ivanovskaia Square in the Kremlin." V. Sukhoi, writing in January 25 Pravda, forcefully stated that "the Soviet Union will be forced to respond to the American Administration's challenge by deploying a new ICBM of the same class, and its characteristics will not be inferior to the MX." Finally, Falin, again in Izvestiia, warned: "No matter what might an attacker possesses and no matter what method of unleashing nuclear war he chooses, he will not attain his goals. Retribution will follow irrevocably."

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Arms Control Talks

Soviet commentary on the START, INF, and MBFR talks remained essentially unchanged from previous periods. The Soviets portrayed their proposals as being balanced, fair, and resulting in equal security for both sides. By contrast, the West--mainly the U.S.--was allegedly seeking to disarm the Soviet Union or at least attain military superiority in order to be in a position to dictate terms to the Soviet Union and its socialist allies.

INF

INF deployment remained the most frequent subject of Soviet propaganda in January and February. Soviet commentators:

- o Described the deployment as unnecessary because there was no Soviet threat.
- o Charged that "Washington-inspired" rumors of progress at the Geneva talks were false because the U.S. had not budged from its "notorious" zero option.
- o Called the U.S. zero option "nothing more than a desire to one-sidedly disarm the USSR."
- o Claimed that the U.S. had begun a massive disinformation campaign to convince Europeans and Americans that INF deployment is necessary.
- o Played up Western antinuclear, antiwar, anti-INF demonstrations as evidence of massive and growing opposition to deployment and U.S./NATO policies.
- o Insisted that French and British intermediate-range forces be taken into account and rejected U.S. claims that these were independent forces.
- o Labelled as false U.S. assertions that it had no intermediate-range nuclear systems in Europe and pointed to U.S. nuclear-capable aircraft and artillery as examples.

The U.S. was frequently accused of bargaining in bad faith at Geneva. According to this argument, the U.S. has deliberately put forward unacceptable proposals in order to guarantee the failure of the talks and ensure INF deployment. By the same token, the promise by the NATO allies to study the Andropov proposals--after initially rejecting them out of hand--was

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merely a ruse to placate allegedly large segments of the West European public which found the Soviet proposals reasonable and fair.

### START

A major Pravda article just after the first of the year restated the Soviet position on START. The Soviets charged that the U.S. was not seeking agreement, that it was attempting to eliminate the strategic parity which allegedly presently exists, that the U.S. was attempting to achieve superiority, and that the U.S. was comparing apples and oranges in its comparative counts of Soviet and U.S. launchers and warheads. Soviet propagandists argued that the U.S. was totally responsible for the stalemate at the START talks and reiterated that parity, equality, and equal security are the only basis for an agreement--implying that the U.S. was attempting to undermine these principles.

### MBFR

Similar arguments were put forward in Soviet discussions of MBFR. Soviet propagandists charged that the West was not interested in reciprocity, that it aimed at acquiring unilateral advantage. Calling NATO's claims that the Warsaw Pact enjoyed superiority in troops, arms, and materiel in Central Europe "irrelevant" and "unsubstantiated," an early January TASS commentary rejected Western proposals by saying that they hampered rather than contributed to progress.

The recent Soviet MBFR proposal to limit each side to no more than 900,000 men was trumpeted as a breakthrough for the talks which had allegedly been bogged down for ten years with "fruitless discussion, imposed by the Western powers," of comparative troop strength in Central Europe.

## Other Military-Related Issues

### Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee Proposals

Another major propaganda focus in January and February was the Prague declaration of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact which repeated a number of standard proposals and suggested that NATO and the Warsaw Pact sign a mutual non-use of force treaty. Pravda, in early January, commented that the PCC declaration constituted "a real alternative to a downslide toward nuclear catastrophe." Soviet propagandists

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claimed that a clear split has developed between West Europe and the U.S. over how to respond to the Prague proposals and that they had received widespread approval in Europe.

#### Chemical Warfare (CW)

Soviet propagandists continued to charge that the U.S. was preparing for chemical warfare and that it had used CW weapons during the Vietnam war. According to these commentators, the U.S. is attempting to distract attention from its own "crimes" by charging the Soviet Union and its Asian allies with use of CW weapons in Afghanistan, Laos, and Kampuchea. A mid-February Moscow television program charged that the U.S. is even now using chemical weapons against Cuba and in El Salvador. Radio Moscow's world service in mid-January accused the U.S. of torpedoing talks on banning chemical weapons and of blocking discussions at the UN Disarmament Committee in Geneva.

#### War in Space

Soviet propagandists again accused the U.S. of preparing for space warfare and called the space shuttle part of the alleged U.S. program of "militarization of space." According to an article by a Soviet writer in the Bulgarian newspaper Zemedelsko zname in mid-January, the U.S. "attaches the same importance to this as to MX missiles, Trident submarines, and B1 bombers." The fact that the last Columbia flight carried two civilian communications satellites deceived no one, he maintained.

#### Freeze Movement

The freeze movement in the U.S. is widespread and growing, according to the Soviet media. Only by "rude blackmail and arm-twisting" did the White House manage to defeat freeze resolutions introduced in the last Congress. A sarcastic article in January 6 Pravda ridiculed the notion of Soviet involvement in the U.S. freeze movement and pointed to support from well-known U.S. politicians and former Government officials who could not be considered victims of "perfidious Russians [who] are surreptitiously inspiring the simpletons from the antiwar movement and manipulating them."



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Bush Trip to Europe

Vice President Bush's February trip to Europe was pronounced a failure. Radio Moscow's world service billed it as "a propaganda trip to sell the zero option and to play down Soviet proposals." President Reagan's message to the peoples of Europe was denounced by Pravda as "a graphic example of slandering the Soviet Union while presenting the U.S. course in a favorable light." Mr. Bush's visit to Rome was described by Radio Moscow's domestic service as a welcome relief from the "obvious failure" and "cold reception" he had received everywhere else in Western Europe.

Pentagon Plans for Nuclear War

A UPI report on the DOD and NSC directive, Fiscal 1984-88: Defense Guidance, was cited by TASS on January 17 as allegedly revealing that the U.S. is making "horrendous plans for unleashing and conducting protracted nuclear war against the Soviet Union." U.S. strategy was described as setting out plans for escalating a conflict to nuclear war and delivering a first strike, in particular by intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe.

CENTCOM

Soviet propaganda continued to attack the formation of CENTCOM as evidence of "imperialism's striving for world hegemony." A sarcastic article in Izvestiia by Melor Sturua described the command as a gift to mankind "more cutting than any practical joke played by schizophrenics and criminals" who hide razor blades and needles in Christmas gifts. A Pravda article on January 11 warned that the Soviet Union "cannot close its eyes to the fact that the region covered by CENTCOM lies at the point where three continents meet directly to the south of the USSR's border." The creation of CENTCOM caused such an upsurge of "anti-imperialist, anti-American sentiments" that some of the most rightwing regimes in the region wanted to "remain aloof from their patron" to avoid being discredited in their own people's eyes.

THE UNITED STATES

The principal nonmilitary focus of Soviet propaganda on the United States was the assessment of President Reagan's two years in office. The conclusions were predictable:

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- o Izvestiia: "Reagan's foreign policy is one of rigid, uncompromising confrontation with the USSR and the entire socialist community. ... Reaganomics is on its last legs. ... Not a single economist would say that the U.S. is approaching an era of prosperity."
- o Radio Moscow: "The Reagan Administration has not shown a sane approach on either the domestic or foreign policy scenes. ... [Its] economic policy is a fiasco resulting in twelve million people unemployed."
- o TASS: "... [The] epidemic of resignations and major reshuffles is evidence of a serious crisis in the Reagan Administration and disarray in the top echelon which is faced with ever new flops of domestic and foreign policy."

The Soviets attributed many U.S. domestic problems to the arms race. According to a TASS commentary on February 5, the Administration's emphasis on a military build-up "brought the country into the quagmire of the deepest economic crisis since the 30's." A Radio Moscow broadcast on January 5 claimed that "financial backing for Washington's five-year program of rearming might ruin the country."

According to Soviet commentators, "Reaganomics" has brought a recession unparalleled in post-War U.S. history. Stanislav Kondrashov, in a TASS item, charged that the unemployed in the U.S. were "guinea pigs of Reaganomics," and TASS analyst Aleksander Liutyi asserted that Reaganomics had become a synonym for the "totally bankrupt social and political course of the U.S. Administration which brought immeasurable suffering and privations to millions of Americans."

The result of President Reagan's allegedly failed policies was to cause the public to turn against him. Soviet propagandists were fond of citing polling results which showed a drop in the President's popularity.

#### GEOGRAPHIC THEMES

##### Trouble Spots

##### Lebanon

No new themes were found in coverage of Lebanon. Soviet propagandists kept up their drumbeat of claims that the U.S. is directly responsible for the situation and profits from it. The main themes in January and February were:

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- o The U.S. continues to encourage Israel and give it complete support.
- o The alleged chill in U.S.-Israeli relations is a trick to distract Arab attention from the collusion between the two.
- o The Lebanese-Israeli talks are foundering because Lebanon wants Israeli troops out while Israel wants a "capitulatory agreement modelled on Camp David." The U.S. is pressuring Lebanon to give in to Israeli demands.
- o Washington wants to turn Lebanon into a bridgehead for the Rapid Deployment Force.

### Afghanistan

Soviet commentary on Afghanistan also remained unchanged.

- o The U.S. was called the main organizer of the war against Afghanistan. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul is a center for training saboteurs, and U.S. diplomats guide and supply the counter-revolutionaries.
- o The rebels were denounced as mercenaries, hired and trained by the CIA, who destroy mosques, kill patriotically-minded mullahs, murder women and children, blow up hospitals, plunder, and sabotage. They are not defenders of Islam.
- o The Afghan government allegedly receives wide support from the people, and more Afghans are returning home.
- o Soviet troops will not be withdrawn until foreign interference ends and reliable international guarantees are made that it will not resume.

### Other Countries/Regions

#### Middle East

Radio Moscow and Radio Peace and Progress Arabic-language broadcasts continued to impugn U.S. motives and actions in the Middle East. An example is a Radio Moscow broadcast of February 11, where commentator Aleksander Timoshkin charged that "U.S. imperialists could be considered the ones who taught the Zionists to kill Arabs and who trained the executioners." Timoshkin went on to say that U.S. imperialism had "vast and bloody experience" in its "wars of annihilation" against Korea, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan and that U.S. imperialists

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"shared responsibility with Tel Aviv and Zionism for the latter's crimes at Sabra and Shatila ...".

Israel was accused of preparing to attack Syria, using as pretext the recent Syrian deployment of surface-to-air missiles. Israeli pilots were said to be practicing mock strikes against Syria (Izvestiia, February 14).

The USSR was portrayed as the true friend of the Arab people. Its policies purportedly coincide completely with those set forth in the declaration of Arab countries at Fez last year (Sel'skaia zhizn, January 22).

Egyptian foreign policy is said to be more balanced under Mubarak, but Egyptian leaders are faulted for wanting to maintain their special relationship with the U.S. and Israel within the Camp David framework (Radio Moscow Arabic, January 26).

#### Other Countries

The imperialist powers allegedly view Pakistan as a "minor partner" and seek to enmesh it in military and political commitments and turn it into a tool for their plans in Asia. According to Soviet propagandists, Pakistan has been acquiring military offensive hardware, has become a destabilizing factor in the region, and has given the U.S. rights to establish air and naval bases in the country (TASS, January 3).

Japan was accused by Soviet propagandists of building up its military strength in violation of its constitution. Japan's alleged buildup goes far beyond its defensive needs. The basing of U.S. F-16's near Soviet territory poses a threat which cannot be disregarded. The U.S. is stationing nuclear weapons on Japanese territory. A new military bloc, Tokyo-Seoul-Washington, is being formed. Japan's neighbors feel threatened and recall their experiences in World War II.

Honduras was charged with being a tool of U.S. imperialism. The U.S.-Honduran "Big Pine" military exercise was a prelude to large-scale aggression against Nicaragua. The Honduran army is to be the U.S.' main gendarme in Central America (TASS, February 1), and "Somozaist gangs," trained and armed by the CIA, are mounting operations against Nicaragua.

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