

It Is People, Not Things, That Are Decisive

THE recent defection of top-flight Soviet air force pilot Lieutenant Viktor Ivanovich Belenko in a Mig-25, "the most sophisticated Soviet fighter plane," and of another Soviet pilot, Lieutenant V.I. Zasimov, in an An-2 plane has been the subject of much comment throughout the world and provides much food for thought.

Trying to whitewash Belenko's defection, TASS hurriedly claimed that it was a "totally unforeseen" occurrence brought about by "an unforeseen concatenation of events." According to TASS, "a plane piloted by airman V.I. Belenko lost its bearings" and "lacked enough fuel for a return flight."

In other words, it was just an isolated accident, a matter of things and not of people; a technical mishap, not a political incident. Clearly, the Kremlin's attempts to gloss things over can only accentuate what it has intended to cover up.

The defection of the two Soviet flyers is only the latest episode in a whole series of incidents that have repeatedly taken place in the Soviet armed forces. Developments over the years prove that these incidents were the expressions of the sharp contradictions plaguing Soviet society today. They were eruptions in an inexorable process of unrest and disintegration following the radical changes that have taken place in the Soviet armed forces as regards their character and the role they play. Therefore, these are manifestations of an acute political problem.

Following is a cursory review of such incidents which occurred in various branches of the Soviet armed forces in recent years:

The Mig-25 fighter piloted by Lt. V.I. Belenko on September 6, 1976, is believed to be "an ultra-modern fighter plane, the favourite of the Soviet military." Its construction and sophisticated equipment are jealously guarded as "top secret." Mig-25 pilots are chosen after strict screening and investigation. Belenko refused to be repatriated, and asked for asylum in the United States. Replying to questions about his reasons for defecting, Belenko said, among other things, that "the Soviet Union today resembles tsarist Russia."

Then on September 23 came the defection of Lieutenant V.I. Zasimov who flew an An-2 plane from Tbilisi in the Soviet Union to Iran. Zasimov reportedly said in Iran that he "could not put up with the (Soviet) system any longer."

In November 1975, the crew of the Soviet missile-carrying destroyer, *Watch (Storozhevoi)*, called "one of the up-to-date craft in the Soviet fleet," mutinied. The Soviet authorities immediately sent aircraft and warships to put down the mutiny. According to the Swedish paper *Express* "the immediate cause of the mutiny was the Angolan war" because "the crew resented the prospect of further extension of their service." The French paper *Le Figaro* pointed out that this was because "there were deep-rooted causes for hidden discontent in some military units, including naval units." The armed intervention in Czechoslovakia "had left its stamp on all of the Soviet armed forces."

In November 1972, a mutiny broke out on a Soviet submarine in a Norwegian fjord.

One senior and two junior officers on a nuclear submarine of the Soviet Baltic Fleet were arrested in the summer of 1969. They had clandestinely distributed in 1968 copies of a letter accusing the privileged strata in the country of oppression and exploitation, denouncing great-Russian chauvinism and protesting the armed intervention in Czechoslovakia.

The crew of a Riga-based Soviet nuclear submarine rose in mutiny in 1969.

In August 1968, a number of the Soviet troops invading Czechoslovakia deserted and sided with the unarmed Czechoslovak people who were protesting against Soviet invasion. Some Soviet divisions were called back home only a few days after the invasion because their men had voiced disapproval of the armed intervention.

In places inhabited by the minority peoples in the Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Baltic states, soldiers in some units refused to carry out the orders of the Soviet authorities to crack down on popular struggle.

Notwithstanding the differing circumstances, the above gives the lie to the Brezhnev clique from various

angles and reveals to some degree the fundamental weaknesses of Soviet social-imperialism.

The Soviet revisionist leading clique is a pack of militarists and advocates of the theory that weapons decide everything. Since the clique's usurpation of Party, government and military power, the Soviet armed forces have been turned into an instrument for maintaining the fascist regime at home, carrying out aggression and expansion abroad and scrambling for world hegemony. The new tsars have plunged the country headlong into a mad arms drive. Their military spending surpasses that of the other superpower, the United States; their armaments can match those of the United States; the total number of Soviet servicemen is double that of the United States, and Soviet armed forces stationed in other countries outnumber U.S. forces overseas.

With the rapid inflation of Soviet arms, the momentum of Soviet social-imperialist aggression and expansion abroad increases. The Kremlin overlords have declared that they are on "a historic offensive" "on the entire front of global confrontation" and are "prepared to fight a war with any kind of weaponry."

However, it is a historical fact that all reactionaries who suppress the people at home and launch aggression and expansion abroad have ended in ignominious failure. Lenin said: "In the final analysis, victory in any war depends on the spirit animating the masses that spill their own blood on the field of battle. The conviction that the war is in a just cause and the realization that their lives must be laid down for the welfare of their brothers strengthen the morale of the fighting men and enable them to endure incredible hardships." (*Speech at an Enlarged Conference of Workers and Red Army Men in Rogozhsko-Simonovsky District of Moscow.*) Chairman Mao pointed out: "Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive. The contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale. Military and economic power is necessarily wielded by people." (*On Protracted War.*)

These brilliant theses bear out a law of history that a just war of the people against aggression is bound to win, while an unjust war of aggression against the people is doomed to defeat. This truth also is proved by the history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

In World War I, tsarist Russia brutally ordered its army to suppress in blood the people's revolutionary movement at home and to fight a war with other imperialist powers for world hegemony. It failed, however, to avert the miserable doom that awaited it.

When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in World War II, the latter was numerically far behind Nazi Ger-

many in weaponry and steel. Yet the Soviet people and armed forces fighting against aggression and for the defence of their socialist motherland under the leadership of Stalin defeated the armed-to-the-teeth Hitler hordes.

The Brezhnev clique today is going down the same road the tsar and Hitler took. It can be said with certainty that they can never evade the objective law which inexorably sent both the tsar and Hitler to their extinction.

The Brezhnev clique keeps its army under very rigid control. The Soviet revisionists educate their soldiers in fascism and militarism and force them to obey orders blindly and absolutely. They keep watch on Soviet soldiers and persecute them in undisguised fascist ways, asserting that soldiers must be put under "twofold and even threefold surveillance." Their military courts and espionage organ, "the committee of state security" (K.G.B.) keep close watch on the remarks and behaviour of ordinary officers and men.

But weapons must be used by man after all. Whatever means the Brezhnev clique may use, it cannot long shackle the ideas of the Soviet people, including the ordinary Soviet officers and men.

Is the rank and file of the Soviet army willing to put down in blood on orders from above the masses of Soviet workers and peasants who rise in resistance against oppression and exploitation by the new tsars?

Do Soviet soldiers believe they are "discharging an internationalist obligation" when they face the wrathful denunciation and resistance of the Czechoslovak people, men and women, old and young, under Soviet occupation?

Do the looks of hatred encountered by Soviet soldiers in Poland, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria and Mongolia wherever they go have no effect on them?

Did Soviet armymen feel honoured after they were driven out of Egypt amid shouts of "Russians, go home!"?

Will Soviet sailors sent to remote oceans throughout the world to carry out aggression and expansion and seek maritime hegemonism really believe they are "defending" their Soviet frontiers?

An army whose major task is to carry out aggression and expansion and suppress the people can never maintain high morale. With the development of the revolutionary struggle of the Soviet people, the discontent and resistance of the rank-and-file Soviet soldier against the new tsars will certainly increase in intensity. This is a knotty problem the Brezhnev clique cannot solve with the help of any sophisticated weapon!

(A commentary by Hsinhua
Correspondent, September 26)