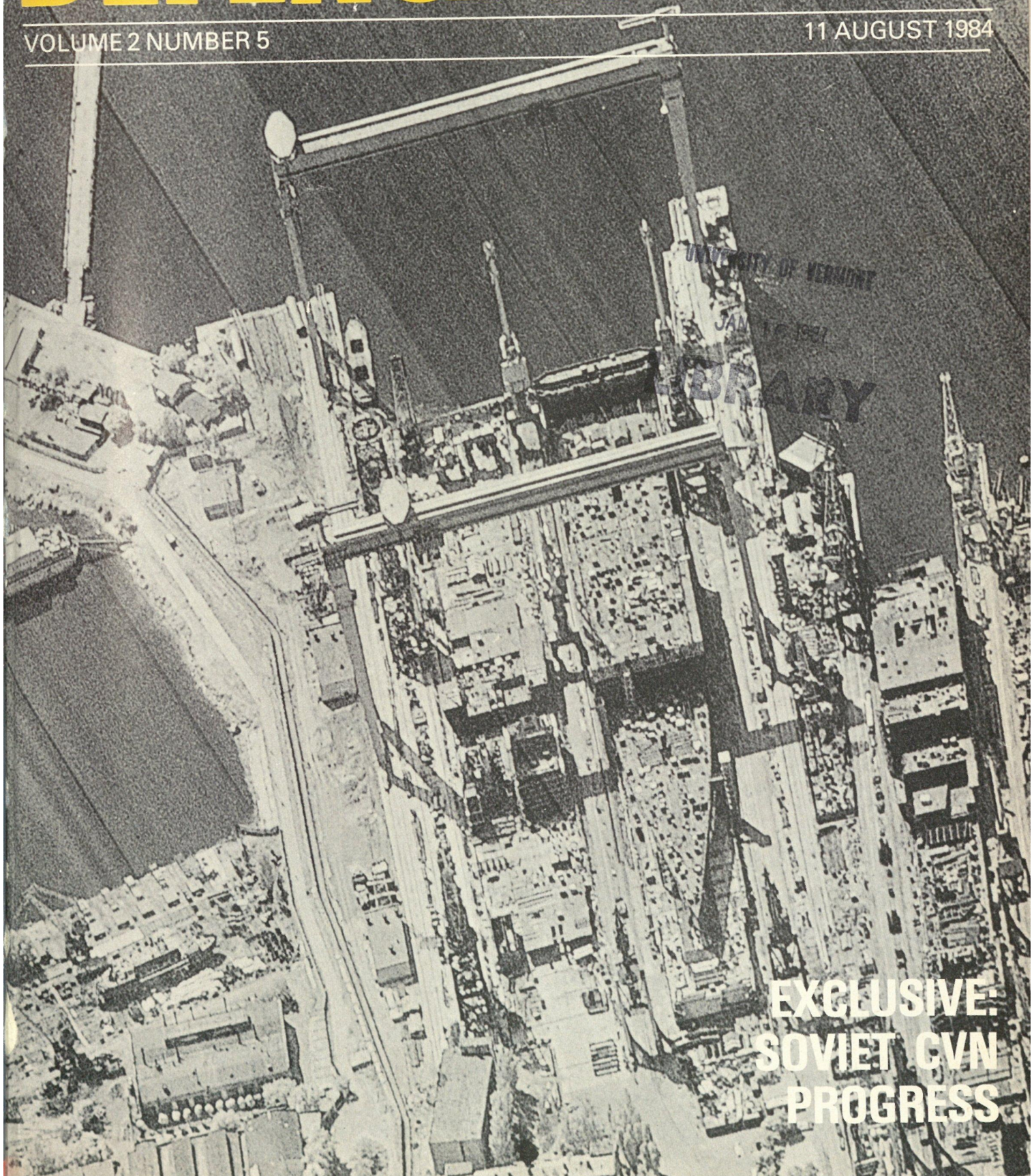


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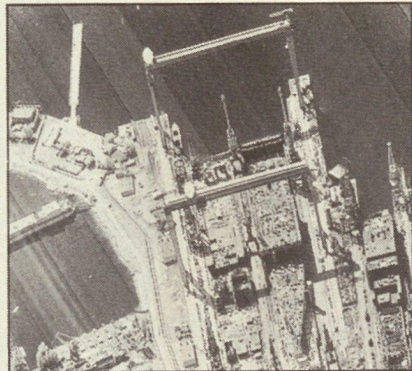
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Front cover

Exclusive satellite picture of the 75 000 ton Soviet nuclear carrier under construction at Nikolaiev 444 shipyard in the Black Sea. See pages 171-173



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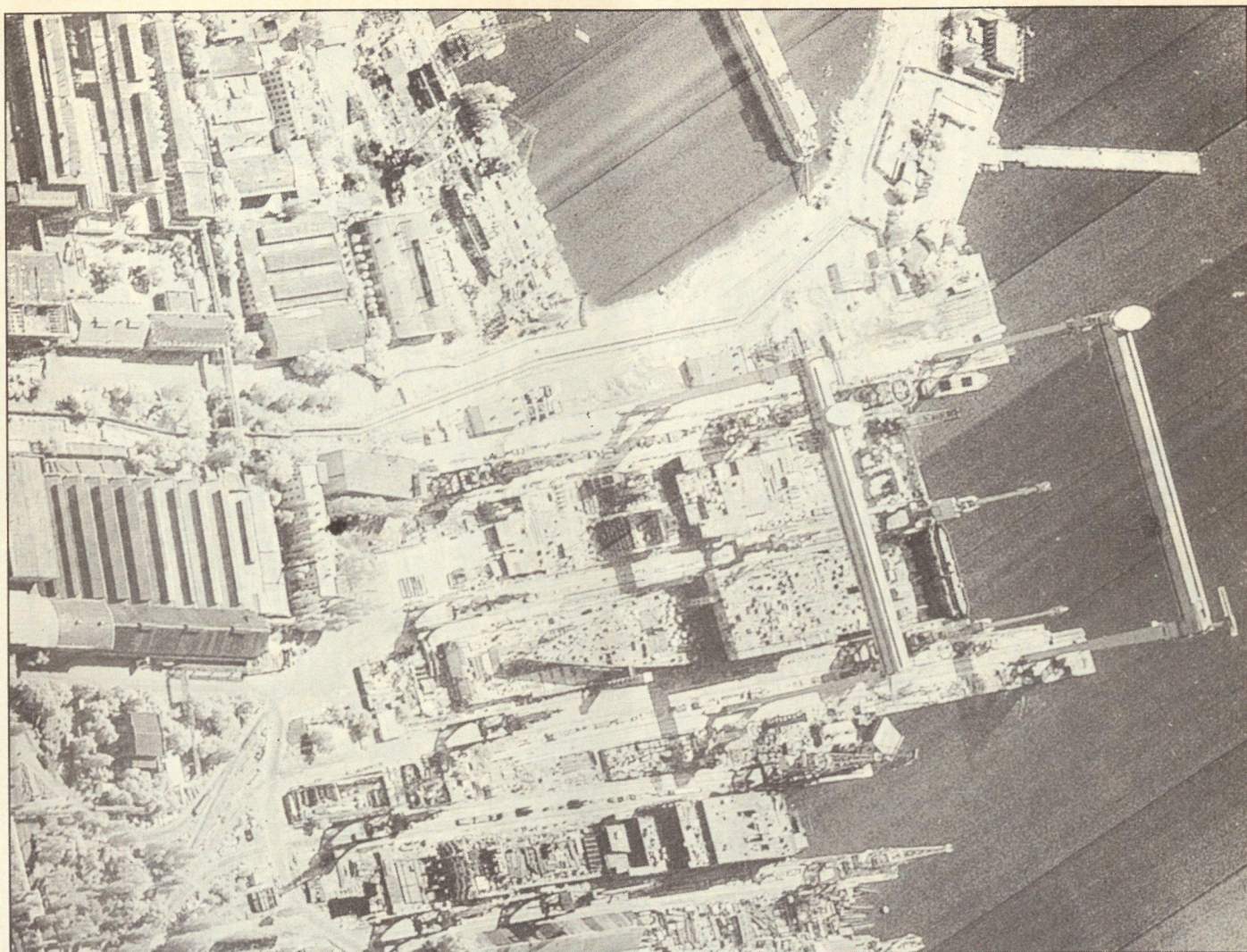
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Satellite pictures show Soviet CVN towering above Nikolaiev shipyard

THREE EXCLUSIVE PICTURES, taken by a satellite only last month, show the Soviet Navy's 75 000 ton nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, codenamed BLACK COM 2 by NATO, under construction at Nikolaiev shipyard 444 on the Black Sea.

The photographs on pp 172-3 also show an amphibious landing ship of the *Ivan Rogov* class under construction in a nearby dock, and the fourth 43 000 ton *Kiev* class conventional carrier, *Kharkov*, continuing to be fitted out.

The pictures clearly indicate that the CVN is being built in two parts: the major portion, measuring 264 m in length, lies beneath the shipyard's two giant overhead gantry cranes which have a combined lift of more than 1000 tons.

The stern section, 73 m in length, is under construction on a slipway alongside. Analysts believe that this section will be floated out stern first and mated to the remainder of the carrier by September/October 1985.

The amidships section of the flight deck is nearing completion. One of the pictures indicates the position of vertical silo-launched SAM missiles forward of the superstructure.

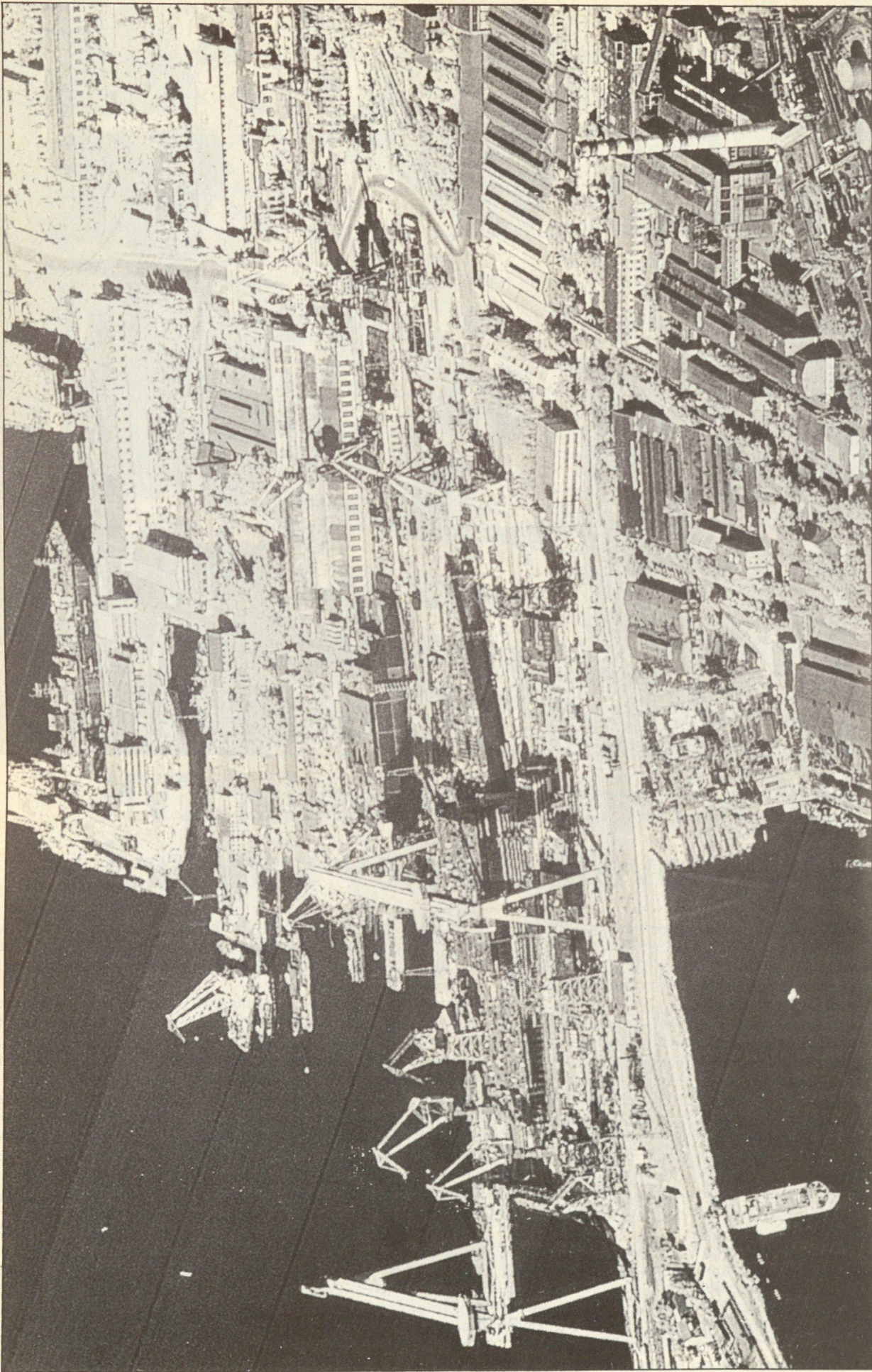
These silos were shown on the artist's impression of the completed CVN, apparently named *Kremlin*, published in *Jane's Defence Weekly* on 28 July. Despite this, it seems unlikely, given the Soviets' preference for heavy armament, that the carrier will not be fitted

with some SSM capability. The drawing also showed two deck lifts, three steam-operated catapults, and phased arrays, similar to the SPY 1A paired arrays on the US Navy's *Ticonderoga* class cruisers, on the superstructure.

Work on the ship began in January 1983 in the dock where the four *Kiev* class carriers were built. However, the pictures suggest that earlier reports that work on her has been speeded up are correct: clearly the CVN has been accorded priority by the C-in-C Soviet Navy, Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union, Sergei Gorshkov. The pictures show railway lines carrying heavy material to the dockside and a profusion of heavylift cranes and scaffolding towers.

The latest estimate by *JDW* sources for sea trials for the CVN are 1988-9 with entry into full operational service around 1994. Tests with a full-scale CVN flight deck in concrete at an air base "in the Black Sea area" have been going on for three to four years, using arrester wires and an angled deck.

It seems likely that a navalised variant of the MiG-23 Flogger will initially operate off this carrier as a trial squadron, with the Sukhoi Su-27 Flanker all-weather counter-air fighter, carrying eight beyond-visual range AA-10 radar-homing missiles, on later ships of the class. It is believed that up to four and possibly eight strike carriers are planned, each with 75 aircraft on board, with the emphasis on fixed-wing interceptor/attack aircraft, making them potentially formidable adversaries for the US Navy's Carrier Battle Groups.



▲ This computer-enhanced satellite photograph, taken at an oblique angle, shows the general layout of the Nikolaiyev 444 yard in the Black Sea, with what appears to be a foundry in the foreground and assembly shops behind. Buildings housing technical staff lie alongside the dry dock where the 75 000 ton nuclear carrier is under construction. This dock, with twin mobile overhead gantry cranes, was where the four 43 000 ton Kiev class conventional carriers were built: it was,

however, too small for the CVN, so the shipyard had had to resort to the unusual practice, for such a large vessel, of building in two sections. At the top of the picture, the stern section of Kharkov, the fourth Kiev, can be seen with work continuing on her fitting out. Nearby, an amphibious landing ship, apparently of the 13 000 ton Ivan Rogov class, is under construction.



▲ A more detailed photograph of the CVN dry dock. Analysts believe that the flight deck amidships has been completed, as has the hangar deck in both the bow and stern sections of the ship. The stern section, seen in the upper right-hand corner of the photograph, is due to leave her slipway in autumn 1985, floated out into the river stern first and then mated to the larger portion of the ship. It

is thought the carrier will have two aircraft lifts, one aft of the island on the starboard side, and will have 75 aircraft when operational, with heavy emphasis on fixed-wing counter-air and strike attack aircraft. The ship will begin sea trials in 1988/9 and enter full operational service some time in 1994, it is thought.