

# Gorbachov heralds 1986 as the year of 'major changes'

by Rachel Douglas

On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, Gorbachov succeeded in appearing on nationwide television in both the United States and the Soviet Union. It was an appropriate accomplishment: U.S. policy had been taken over by the Gramm-Rudman bill—Soviet austerity policy for the United States. By contrast, Gorbachov told the Russian people of the great economic and military buildup that would continue in the Soviet Union.

As Gorbachov told the Soviet population, "major changes" were coming in the Soviet Union in the new year, which would see vast increases in productive output, very hard work, and a technological revolution in the Soviet economy—all of it directed to maximize the growth of the Soviet war machine. And, the Kremlin's new bureaucracy would ride roughshod over the Russian people's obstinately backward peasant-outlook to accomplish this goal. As *Pravda's* New Year's message to the Russian people said coldly: "1986, the first year of the 12th Five-Year Plan . . . must begin with an increased work tempo."

work . . . and sharpened discipline and order."

Gorbachov stated: "We are still at the beginning of the road, defined by the April Plenum [the first party meeting after Gorbachov took over—ed.] . . . at the very beginning of difficult work and major changes, which demand from us still greater steadfastness, self-sacrifice, and fearless repudiation of everything that has outlived its day, of mental inertia, of habitual, but today useless, schemas and approaches."

Looking to the West, Gorbachov is hungrily anticipating "major changes" such as the collapse of the industrialized economies and spread of the AIDS epidemic. But at home, he has personally taken charge of an agenda that is shaking the Soviet bureaucracy from top to bottom. The roster of officials purged and the sheaves of party documents issued in recent weeks, both at a dizzying pace, point to two areas of action plotted by Gorbachov and his cohorts in the Soviet military:

population to make sacrifices for Mother Russia.

## Pre-congress purges

At the late November sessions of the party Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet, Gorbachov rounded off his purge of the upper echelons of the Soviet government, particularly those posts responsible for the economy. Having already installed a new prime minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov, two first deputy prime ministers, and two deputy prime ministers—just in the month of November (*EIR*, Nov. 29, 1985: "Gorbachov's purges signal gear-up of the war economy")—the Soviet boss assaulted a bastion of backwardness in the economy—the agriculture sector.

In one fell swoop, four ministries, one state committee, and sections of three other ministries, all dealing with various aspects of food production, were fused into a single agency called *Gosagroprom*, short for Union-Republic State Agroindustrial Committee of the U.S.S.R., under the supervision of First Deputy Prime Minister Vsevolod Murakhovskii. Like the party Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture, Viktor Nikonov, Murakhovskii hails from Gorbachov's political base in the North Caucasus region, the so-called Stavropol

Not stopping with this overhaul, Gorbachov and Ryzhkov proceeded, in the month of December, to replace the leadership of the coal and pharmaceuticals industries. Veteran Finance Minister Vasili Garbuzov, perhaps with a sense that his time was up, died in the midst of the Supreme Soviet session and was succeeded Dec. 15 by Boris Gostev, an associate of Ryzhkov. On Dec. 21, labor expert Yuri Batalin replaced old Brezhnevite Veniamin Dymshits in another of the deputy premier slots.

Politburo member and Central Committee Secretary Yegor Ligachov and his henchmen from the Party Organizational Work Department, meanwhile, have wiped nearly two dozen more regional and provincial party leaders from the scene. The most prominent victim was Viktor Grishin, long-time chief of the Moscow municipal communist party organization and a member of the Politburo since 1971. But the purge has encompassed far-flung *oblasti* (provinces) of So-

viet Russia, the Ukraine, and, in this latest round, Central Asia.

Immediately following the Supreme Sovet session, Gorbachov convoked a meeting of party leaders from around the country, in which he defined the purpose of this mammoth leadership turnover as just one thing: "to speed up the economic development" of the country. For Moscow, this is a central military-strategic problem, posed in the writings of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov and other Soviet strategists, on achieving a state of war mobilization before war actually commences.

In accord with this purpose, Gorbachov's campaign for discipline and these purges are no mere administrative rejuvenation, but a visibly brutal affair.

The former minister of light industry of the Russian Republic and his deputy for transport, it was announced Dec. 15, have been sentenced to 10 years of hard labor for corruption. In the public discussion of the new economic policy for 1986 and thereafter, economic sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya has hinted at very wide application of sanctions, not only for crimes, but for under-par performance.

Zaslavskaya, a Siberian "reformer" linked to the industrial managers being elevated in these purges, complained in a Jan. 6 article for the daily *Sovetskaya Rossiya*: "Economic conditions up to now have allowed unconscientious and irresponsible workers to live comfortably." It is not sufficient to grant bonuses for excellence, she urged, but these must be supplemented by penalties for shoddy work, in order to instill a sense of responsibility. The destiny of some slackards was foreshadowed by Zaslavskaya, as she also leaked a plan for large-scale population resettlement in the 1986-90 period, during which time she said the population of Siberia and the Soviet Far East must receive a net increase of one million workers. Siberia, in Ogarkov's military-economic strategy, must serve as a semi-autonomous industrial powerhouse and strategic reserve for the U.S.S.R.

### Psychological changes for the Motherland

What Gorbachov is doing, according to Marshal Ogarkov's blueprint for the war-economy, confronts him with an even bigger problem than finding the ruthless personnel to manage Soviet industry. The drive for what Moscow calls the "scientific and technological revolution" runs up against the obstinance of the Russian peasant-based population, rooted in the cult of the blood and soil of Mother Russia.

Taking stock of the serious resistance to new technologies and efficient methods, Gorbachov and Ligachov have launched the big propaganda and organizing campaign for "major changes," indicated in the party chief's New Year's message. So far, however, the core of their campaign is nothing other than the cult of Mother Russia and an appeal to bring technology on line as rapidly as possible, in defense of the Motherland.

The direction of this mobilization of the population was evident at the mid-December VI Congress of Writers of the

RSFSR (Russian Republic). In his keynote, RSFSR Writers Union president Sergei Mikhalkov asked, "Is man morally prepared for the headlong acceleration of technical progress by leaps and bounds, and is the writer himself up to date with with the current state of the scientific-technological revolution and its future?"

Yevgenii Yevtushenko, the one-time "angry young poet" of the 1950s, developed this theme: "We literary people will not be worth a straw if we only record and extol social transformations taking place independently of us. It is incumbent on us not only to help these transformations, but to prepare them. Truly civic-minded works not only reflect historical events, but are themselves events in history; the acceleration of scientific and technical progress is inconceivable without the acceleration of spiritual progress."

This means, Yevtushenko explained, having the courage of Lenin, "to attack the new Soviet bureaucracy and communist arrogance . . . [to] fearlessly put the country onto the footing of the New Economic Policy." But it also would mean for "the people . . . to analyze its own errors and tragedies," so as to become "spiritually invincible." Russian writers should be both nationally oriented, and "worldwide" in their approach—"But for us, mankind begins with the Motherland."

Valentin Rasputin, the Siberian star of the "village" prose movement, took up that theme without restraint, saying, "If you imagine our common [literary] field not in an abstract but a concrete picture, then it will be Russia. For us there is no destiny, no word, except Russia." The values of the Russian soil must be carried into the space age, he concluded: "The 'village' prose of the '60s and '70s repaid an essential debt to our parents' Russia, not merely through memories of the past, but also through living, grateful memory, and showed how the national soul was strengthened and what it has carried from the depths of history, and indicated the spiritual and moral values which, if we intend to continue to remain a people and not just a population, will do us no harm in the concrete city either."

Rasputin's ideas on protecting Mother Russia from the ravages of pollution and mining may come into conflict with the Fortress Siberia build-up mandated by Ogarkov, but that is no problem for the Moscow leadership, taking his paeans to blood and soil as the keynote for mass propaganda. According to the *Sunday Times* of London (Jan. 5), Ligachov has given his stamp of approval to a confidential manual for Soviet editors, which instructs them to play up the "patriotic, heroic" Soviet military as the best exemplar of "the great tradition of unquestioning service to the Motherland."

On Dec. 24, Gorbachov himself paid a visit to an art exhibit called "Soviet Russia," featuring works by artists from the RSFSR done in honor of the upcoming 27th Congress. He was accompanied on the tour by RSFSR Culture Minister Melentyev, a person who, 15 years ago, was disciplined and demoted from a high party rank, for excesses of Russian chauvinism.