

Glasnost, perestroika dead: agony of the Russian empire

by Webster G. Tarpley

“Simpleton: Gush forth, gush forth, bitter tears!/ Weep, weep, Orthodox soul!/ Soon the enemy will come and darkness will fall!/ Black darkness, unfathomable!/ Woe, woe to Russia!/ Weep, weep, Russian people, starving people!”—Modest Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov*, Act IV, Scene iii.

“Not often—only once in 15 or 20 years—is such cold weather repeated in the center of Russia. Low temperatures in the Center, North and Volga-Vyatka regions will be 13 below zero (F) and highs 5 above.”—*Izvestia* weather report, Nov. 28, 1989.

On Dec. 13, 1989 in the Kremlin, M.S. Gorbachov was forced to preside over the session of the Congress of People’s Deputies in which the reform policy he had championed, known as *perestroika* (trans-building, or restructuring) was officially liquidated in a cold coup d’état led by the Soviet military-industrial complex. The sharp anti-perestroika turn fulfilled a prediction offered from a Minnesota federal prison by political prisoner Lyndon H. LaRouche some three weeks earlier: that the Soviet empire was approaching a point of no return under Gorbachov’s disastrously failed policies, and that an anti-perestroika turn, possibly accompanied by a military crackdown, was likely for the period between Dec. 15 and Epiphany (Jan. 6).

In a landmark speech, technocratic Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, a representative of the Soviet military-industrial complex from the Urals region, reasserted traditional communist ideas of state property of the means of agricultural and industrial production, centralized planning and the five-year plan, and summarily rejected reform proposals of massive price increases by removing state subsidies on a series of

consumer and producers’ goods, legalizing private property, selling off state enterprises to foreign capitalists, and giving more autonomy to individual firms. Ryzhkov said his plan of “rigid directive measures” was designed “to carry the economy out of the crisis.” Workers in state enterprises will no longer elect their managers. The epitaph for five years of perestroika was pronounced by Ryzhkov as follows: “If, contrary to objective reason, we should try to introduce full-fledged market relations by 1991, it would bring us to serious socio-economic upheaval, a new stage in galloping inflation, falling production, mass unemployment and aggravation of social tensions.” As every delegate in the hall knew, Gorbachov’s perestroika has already brought all that and more, creating an unmitigated disaster for the Soviet economy. Perestroika was thus being dumped in favor of a reversion to the Stalinist command economy, with vague promises of consumer goods. Ryzhkov called for draconian secret police measures to curb the black market.

Yuri Maslyukov, the Chairman of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), an agency that Gorbachov’s followers had talked of abolishing, shared in Ryzhkov’s triumph. Maslyukov is another military-industrial stalwart who has made a full Politburo member last Sept. 20. He ruled out material incentives to get workers to work harder. Instead, improved technology and better political morale would suffice. It was announced that the Eastern European satellite countries would henceforth have to pay for their oil and raw materials with hard Western currency, since they were rooking Holy Mother Russia under existing arrangements. Flanking Ryzhkov was also Communist Party agricultural boss Yegor Ligachov, who announced that “small peasant holdings” were out and that collective and state farms were

in. The reform ideas of Gorbachov's right-hand man for economics, Deputy Prime Minister Leonid Abalkin, were all repudiated. Liberal reformers like Gavriil Popov of the Interregional caucus and Pavel Bunich were left lamenting that *pyatiletka* (five year plan) had vanquished perestroika.

In the previous day's session, Gorbachov had cracked the whip like a circus ringmaster in a frenzy of aggressive desperation, cutting off speakers like Yevgeni Yevtushenko, browbeating the opposition, and shouting down Dr. Andrei Sakharov when he tried to argue for inclusion on the agenda of the question of whether to abrogate Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, which guarantees the primacy of the Communist Party. Article 6 was an innovation of the stagnant Leonid Brezhnev, but Gorbachov ruthlessly ruled the question out of order, arguing that next year's Communist Party Congress would have to decide it. When the votes were counted, Gorbachov had imposed his will by a very narrow margin—only 1,138 for him, and 839 against, with 56 abstentions.

Dramatic signs of Gorbachov's weakness

During the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee Plenum that preceded the deputies' session, Gorbachov had provided dramatic evidence of his political and psychological weakness. At one point Gorbachov and the Politburo came under direct personal attack from delegate Aleksandr Melnikov of the Kemerovo Oblast (Province) in the Kuzbass coal region, who accused Gorbachov of bowing and scraping before Western capitalists and the Pope in Rome. If the capitalists and the Pope are praising us, said Melnikov, we must be doing something wrong. There was also criticism that the main ideas of perestroika had been imported from the West. At that point Gorbachov exploded that he had devoted his life to these ideas, but that he was not clinging to his post. He threatened to resign his posts. This episode, although denied by Radio Moscow and other official media, was confirmed to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* by Gorbachov's hand-picked *Pravda* editor, Ivan Frolov, who commented that Gorbachov had simply jumped out of his skin during the debate, but that it was mainly rhetorical. From the standpoint of Russian history and Russian mentality, this is an astounding episode. There is no record of J.V. Stalin ever threatening to resign. This episode is by itself the proof of Gorbachov's terminal weakness.

In a gesture to the rising tide of Great Russian chauvinism, the Central Committee reestablished a Russian Bureau, in effect a Politburo for the Communist Party of the R.S.F.S.R. The earlier Russian Bureau had fallen to one of Brezhnev's power plays. Vitali Vorotnikov, A.V. Vlasov, Maslyukov, and Lev Zaikov had all pointed to the neglect of the R.S.F.S.R. under the perestroika regime. Members of the new bureau will include Boris Gidasov, a rocket and aerospace designer who recently turned up as the anti-Gorbachov Leningrad party boss, R.S.F.S.R. President Vorotnikov, R.S.F.S.R. Prime Minister Vlasov, and Valentin Chik-

in, editor of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, a principal speaking tube for the aspirations of the Great Russian race.

Military declares war on perestroika

The stage had been set for the final defeat of perestroika by an exceptional event which occurred on Dec. 7: It was the convening in Moscow of the first post-1917 session of the Officers' Assembly of the Armed Forces. This was a momentous gathering of the entire top military leadership and over 1000 officers from all service branches. The principal speakers were Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov and Gen. A.D. Lizichev of the Main Political Directorate, the chief political commissar of the Red Army. The Politburo member present was Lev Zaikov, who had been promoted to the key post of Deputy Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Defense Council (the government organ which is superior to the Politburo) on Nov. 21. Yazov elaborated the glorious traditions of the Red Army, and denounced the hostility to the Armed Forces expressed by the population and the mass media, which have led to defections by young officers. There were bitter complaints about the 175,000 student draftees who have been allowed to return to their studies by Gorbachov. Lizichev detailed that in Lithuania, Estonia, the Transcaucasus, and Moldavia, officers have been insulted and physically assaulted. For these reasons, and perhaps most of all because of the inglorious flight of the Red Army from Afghanistan last February, where huge amounts of valuable heavy equipment were left behind, the Red Army has been increasingly hostile to Gorbachov's rule.

The other signal event that prepared the termination of perestroika was the anti-Gorbachov demonstration held on Nov. 22 in Leningrad under the direction of party boss Boris Gidasov. This demonstration demanded that Gorbachov defend the party. It called attention to the crisis of the nation and the party, and demanded the "Leninist" solution of an emergency party congress to be held in the first months of 1990. It demanded the resignation of the entire CPSU Politburo and Central Committee, including Gorbachov himself. It also called for the end of media terror against the party, which has been a card played by Gorbachov against his bureaucratic opposition.

The dominant figure of the *nomenklatura* (party apparatus) at year's end appears to be Lev Zaikov of the Politburo, the Central Committee Secretariat, the all-important Supreme Defense Council (Sovet Oborony), and the Defense Ministry Kollegium. Zaikov has spent 40 years in the defense industries (VPK). Zaikov's simultaneous tenure of all these posts marks him as a matchless powerhouse of the Soviet bureaucracy, with more real power than Gorbachov possesses at this point. His declared policy is the upgrading of Soviet military institutions and power. He was a protégé and close associate of former Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, and is a friend of the premier Soviet military planner, retired Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

A second rising star is the deputy chief of the General

Staff, General of the Army Makhmud Gareyev, whose promotion to his current rank was announced by the Defense Ministry's daily *Krasnaya Zvezda* on Nov. 16. Gareyev is a protégé and doctrinal apostle of Marshal Ogarkov.

Another recent winner is Gen. Igor Rodionov, who has been made the commandant of the Voroshilov Military Academy, which is the de facto planning staff of the Red Army.

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Rodionov was the Afghan war veteran who directed the massacre of protesters in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, on April 9. On this occasion, 8,000 Georgian nationalists were assaulted with poison gas, and sharpened spades were employed to hack the front ranks of the demonstrators to death. Tanks drove the demonstrators together, surrounded them, and deliberately crushed them. Hundreds were killed, and Tbilisi was placed under martial law. On the next morning, Red Army tanks rolled through the streets of Kiev and other Ukrainian cities at dawn in an intimidating show of force. The appointment of the war criminal Rodionov is heavy with symbolism.

At this point, Gorbachov appears as a vestigial figurehead who is being kept around for the edification of gullible foreigners like George Bush, who declared his all-out support for perestroika from Camp David on Thanksgiving eve, just when that doctrine was about to be liquidated in Moscow. By late 1989, Gorbachov was a leader who appealed to foreigners, but who had come to be hated by the majority of the nomenklatura and the quasi-totality of the Soviet people. Now the Soviet system needs a powerful and brutal leader who can be effective on the inside, in terms defined by Stalin. This would confirm the forecast of experts like Gen. Paul Albert Scherer of the Federal Republic of Germany, who have predicted that Gorbachov will be formally liquidated by the late spring or early summer of 1990.

Buying time

Ironically, a review of recent events shows that it was Gorbachov himself who initiated that return to *porядok* (order) which has found its interim culmination in the policy announced by Ryzhkov. Now it is clear that this reaction against glasnost and perestroika have overtaken their architect and will now destroy him.

By the spring of 1989, the policy of the Gorbachov group was to "gain time." This was summed up in the Lenin Day speech given last April by Vadim Medvedev: He compared Gorbachov to the Lenin of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in early 1918, sacrificing dogma and assets to buy time and survive, while ideologues and purists protested. But three crises—the ethnic nationalities of the U.S.S.R., the mass strikes among Russian and other workers breaking out in the summer, and finally the East German and Czech revolutions beginning in October-November, fatally undermined the Gorbachov combination.

1) The Russian empire, the prison house of peoples, is experiencing a revolt of the subject nationalities that has already become a shooting civil war in some areas. The revolt comprehends the three principal nations of the Transcaucasus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It is far advanced among the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and other components of the Muslim and Turkic peoples stretching into central Asia. The Romanians of Moldavia and the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians of the Baltic are demanding autonomy which they intend to lead to full national independence. Ukraine and White Russia (Belorussia) are not far behind. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Moldavia are under martial law. The Azeris have cut rail links to Armenia. The Great Russians are threatened by a replay of the 1918-20 civil war, in which Great Russian Bolshevik territory was cut down to a huge, virtually landlocked island centered on Moscow and surrounded by 8,000 kilometers of fronts where Trotsky's Red Army fought against generals Kornilov, Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel, and against the Don, Orenburg, and Ural Cossacks, and their foreign sponsors, including a Japanese-controlled "Far Eastern Republic" at the Pacific. A successful bid for freedom by the 50 million Ukrainians, in particular, would doom the superpower ambitions of the Great Russians.

On Aug. 23, two million citizens of the Baltic republics staged the largest demonstration against Communist rule since 1917 by forming a human chain that stretched from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius. They were protesting the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, under whose provisions they had been absorbed into the U.S.S.R. On Aug. 26, the Soviet Central Committee issued a genocidal threat which compared the peaceful protesters to the Nazis: "A serious danger threatens the fate of the Baltic peoples. The people must know the nature of the abyss into which they are being pushed by the nationalist leaders. The consequences for the peoples could be disastrous if the nationalists should succeed in reaching their goals. Their very existence could end up in question."

2) In 1989, the U.S.S.R. was swept by the largest wave of mass strikes since the Russian Revolution. On July 10, strikes broke out in the town of Mezhdurechensk in the Kuzbass coalfields, where workers raised demands for soap, coffee, provisions, and basic consumer goods which were all but unavailable to them, despite their monthly earnings of

500 rubles, more than twice the national average. Soon the strikes spread to the Donbass coalfields in eastern Ukraine and to central and western Ukraine (Lvov) as well. Strikes also occurred at Karaganda, in central Asia. Strike committees created a dual power situation in many areas. Prime Minister Ryzhkov was obliged to receive the Ukraine strike committee at his office in Moscow to get the workers to return to their jobs. On July 18, with at least 500,000 workers on strike, Gorbachov told members of the Central Committee that the U.S.S.R. would import 10 billion rubles worth of food, soap, and other goods. He also called for a thorough purge of the party to provide "new blood."

Although they sought to create the impression that the miners were striking for more perestroika, the Gorbachov group was terrified by the nationwide railroad strike that had been called for Aug. 1: This conjured up memories of the 1905 Revolution, when the country was paralyzed by a railroad strike. From July on, there were constant wildcats and slowdowns in rail, mining, industry, and other sectors, causing severe shortages of coal, oil, and other goods. This included stoppages in the Baltic and Moldavia. In late October, strikes, by now illegal, flared up again in the Kuzbass and in the coal-mining center of Vorkuta, north of the Arctic circle. This time the strikes were explicitly political, demanding the fulfillment of the summer agreements, but adding demands for the repeal of Article 6 and direct election of the President and the People's Deputies.

With 5 million work-days officially lost to strikes by October, Gorbachov demanded on Oct. 2 that the Supreme Soviet ban all strikes for 15 months to avoid "loss of control" and "anarchy." Significantly, the Supreme Soviet stalled more than a day before delivering a strike ban in transport, energy, raw-materials processing and manufacturing, and energy. An end to the ethnic-inspired railway blockades was also ordered. Both these bans have been continuously flouted ever since they were enacted, increasing the view of Gorbachov as an impotent blusterer.

3) The revolutions in East Germany and Czechoslovakia threaten the loss of the satellite empire. Back in February, Oleg Bogomolov had suggested "a neutral Hungary" under a "bourgeois democratic system," but within the confines of the Warsaw Pact. By August, Moscow forced Poland's Solidarnosc to enter the Warsaw government, but with defense, interior, and finance ministries still in Communist hands. The October-November developments in the German Democratic Republic (G.D.R.) and Czechoslovakia have swept away the communist parties, radically altered the state apparatus, eroded the secret police, and paralyzed conscript military units for the moment, but Moscow retains 380,000 troops in the G.D.R., 80,000 in Czechoslovakia, 62,000 in Hungary, and 40,000 in Poland.

Despite Gennadi Gerasimov's "Frank Sinatra doctrine" of national autonomy, the Brezhnev doctrine is clearly still in force, with satellite membership in the Warsaw Pact as the

red line. The Soviets regard Berlin, Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest as the prizes for which they lost 20 million dead in World War II. They wish to hold the "Elbe line" at all costs, as December's troop alerts in the G.D.R. indicate. The G.D.R. and Czechoslovakia are their only modern production sectors, besides furnishing their strategic glacis. These assets will not be surrendered without a fight. But here conflict is inevitable, since governments produced by free elections during 1990 will surely make demands that Moscow will refuse to grant.

As for glasnost, that policy was jettisoned by Gorbachov himself in an Oct. 13 tirade in which he accused Boris Yeltsin, Gavriil Popov, historian Yuri Afanasyev, and economist Nikolai Shmelyov of constituting a "power-seeking fascist clique." The editor of the weekly *Ogonyok*, Vitali Korotych, was accused of "ultra-radical demands" in violation of party discipline. Gorbachov then launched a campaign to oust Vladislav Starkov, the editor of *Argumenty i Fakty*, a weekly

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which has acquired one of the largest circulations in the country, because Starkov had published a poll unfavorable to Gorbachov. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was berated for printing "incomprehensible rubbish." By August, it was already clear that the Soviet media were suppressing vital news, especially on the strike front, and there were reports of renewed jamming of foreign broadcasts. By November, Gorbachov had written one of his few theoretical articles, a long-winded defense of the power monopoly of the Communist Party, which was published in *Pravda*.

The Soviet crisis has produced a radicalized re-emergence of the Orthodox-Byzantine cultural paradigm of the Russian people. This is the idea of the superiority of the Great Russian Master Race, much wronged but nevertheless destined to vindicate itself by conquest. It is the idea of Moscow the Third Rome, whose task it is to exalt irrationalist spirituality against the rationalist, materialist excesses of hostile and putrid Latin-Germanic Western Europe and its American offshoots. The nationalist ferment among the subject peoples of the empire has elicited a monstrous upsurge in Great Russian racist chauvinism, which is now the salient political fact of life among Russians. The center of this ferment is the Pamyat (Memory) Society, a fascist, Slavophile group which preaches the imperial mission of the Great Russians against their alleged Jewish and Western enemies.

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Pamyat is a state-sponsored outgrowth of the Rossiya Society, which was founded by Red Army Marshal Vasili Chuikov, to preserve Russian cultural treasures. Pamyat "intellectuals" include the anti-Semitic theorist V. Yemelyanov and Dmitri Vasilyev. Groups like Apollon Kuzim's military-chauvinist Otechestvo (Fatherland) in Sverdlovsk, and Spaseniye (Salvation) in Leningrad are allied to Pamyat.

There is the Yedinstvo (Unity) International Movement of Nina Andreyeva, the Leningrad chemistry teacher whose March 1988 pro-Stalin article caused a sensation. Great Russian chauvinist publications include *Moskva*, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, *Nash Sovremennik*, and *Roman Gazeta*, with *Sovetskaya Rossiya* not far behind. Pamyat co-thinkers regularly get space in the army daily *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star). The Pamyat line is that Gorbachov and his group are actually Western capitalist moles, crypto-Zionists and "rootless cosmopolitans" seeking to sell out Holy Mother Russia to her imperialist enemies. Abel Aganbegyan, who was one of Gorbachov's economic advisers, is really the Jew and Freemason "Hoffman," they claim. Also targeted are Shmelyov, Korotych, Abalkin, and other Gorbachov allies or former allies. Aleksandr Yakovlev is attacked as a representative of the "new bourgeoisie" on the Politburo who wishes to "destroy Russian ideology."

Under the impact of anti-Russian ferment in Moldavia and the Baltic, Pamyat-linked interfronts, united fronts, and intermovements have emerged among Russians in many areas, and on Sept. 8-9 the United Front of the Workers of Russia (UFWR) was founded in Sverdlovsk with Veniamin Yarin as co-chairman to fight against privately owned cooperative businesses, which are widely accused of stealing state property and sucking the blood of Mother Russia. Yarin says many People's Deputies embody a "new bourgeoisie scrambling for power." Marxist terminology, precisely because it is anti-Western, is more honored in the UFWR than in the CPSU. In September there also emerged a United Council of Russia, with many of the groups mentioned plus the artist Ilya Glazunov. In October and November, party and trade union officials supported huge UFWR rallies in the sports stadiums of Moscow and Leningrad. As the violent vanguard of the neo-Dostoevskian wave, fascist youth gangs (*fashiki*) and a Russian National Socialist Workers' Party and similar groups have appeared.

Götterdämmerung of cosmopolitans

The December attacks against Gorbachov as a stooge of Western capitalists and the Roman Pope, plus reports that the Russian intelligentsia now opposed him because he has turned his back on Russian history, culture, and traditions, illustrate why Gorbachov will not be able to fill the role of the new Stalin whose time has come. There are two schools of Russian politics: One is the cosmopolitan, pro-Trust school, including Bukharin, Khrushchov, Andropov—and Gorba-

chov and his group. Their *modus operandi* is to secure concessions from the West, but to attain these they must also grant what look like sweeping concessions to the paranoid Great Russian racists. To these latter, Gorbachov, Dobrynin (with 20 years spent in Washington), and Yakovlev (over 15 years spent abroad) seem *nouveaux riches* "straightening their ties in front of exotic foreign mirrors," as Deputy Kalinin of Rostov put it. Gorbachov has visited Britain, France, Italy, the Vatican, Germany, China, Finland, and Malta in 1989, and was often lionized, but he is virulently hated in Russia. And, despite urgent calls delivered by Gen. Yazov, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, Gen. V.N. Lobov, Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev, and even the alcoholic Boris Yeltsin during the summer, the United States and the West have not coughed up an airlift of toothpaste and pantyhose to save Gorbachov.

The other school is that of Ivan Grozny ("the Terrible") and Stalin, to which the empire tends to revert in a crisis. Here the interests of Moscow the Third Rome are uncompromisingly asserted, with bloody discipline and state-imposed order. By millennial cultural paradigm, Russian Byzantine society must tend to be a totalitarian, military autocracy with an apocalyptic program of world conquest, ruled over by an all-powerful, quasi-divine *vozhd*. Just as in the late 1920s, the crisis of the capitalist world and the crisis of the Soviet economy must accelerate the emergence of that *vozhd*. And the mission of the messianic *vozhd* can only be one, the eternal mission of the Byzantine Empire and its successors: the merciless extirpation of the "Franks," the Western heretics, the tormentors of Holy Russia.

The Russians may soon turn to military action to defend their Elbe line. Even if the departure of the Soviets from their European satellites can be peacefully secured, the prospects for indigenous development of Russia are extremely grim and threatening. A Russian imperial core shorn of satellites and some subject nationalities, plunged into exacerbated poverty, and undergoing the most acute national humiliation, would still possess abundant thermonuclear means for visiting its revanchist furors on the world. It is under such conditions that a "who lost the empire" rage psychosis would be turned outwards in the hope of seizing back food and industry. At that point, the West will wish that LaRouche's Strategic Defense Initiative had been built. Deterrence may fail: Russian *raskolniki*, after all, exhibit a well-established tendency towards mass suicide when there is no other way to assert their concept of orthodox behavior.

The only path to war-avoidance lies in LaRouche's two-part policy: Bar the path of the Muscovite to war with Western military superiority and strategic defense, but at the same time make him a generous offer of economic development, conditional on freeing the enslaved peoples, including the Russians themselves. Bush is doing the opposite: He weakens Western defense while he refuses to bail out the Russians economically, since to do so would bust his budget. The Russian crisis thus means that the danger of war is increasing.