

were problems with that census, however, and I think it was less. I take the average figure, slightly less than 14 million. So, it is out of that, that we see 1.2 million killed, and 5 million living in exodus, 3 million in Pakistan, 2 million in Iran.

**EIR:** What has happened to the village populations?

**Sliwinski:** The villages have been depopulated. Around 1979, 85% of the population lived in villages, now it's about 23%.

**EIR:** In view of everything you're documenting, do you think any settlement of Afghanistan, should it be reached, should include insistence on reparations paid by the Russians? There is all this talk these days of "war crimes," shouldn't there be consideration of *Soviet* war crimes?

**Sliwinski:** That depends not on the Soviets, but on the attitude of Western countries. With the interest of Western countries in relations with the Soviet Union, I am afraid this question will not be discussed. Certainly not in the United Nations. When we present such figures, these things are censored by the U.N. So, it is difficult to hold the Soviets responsible for what has happened in Afghanistan.

**EIR:** What other data would you want to draw attention to?

**Sliwinski:** What happened in the villages. Before the war, 15% of the Afghan population was urban, 85% village, rural. Since 1979, 33% of the population has left for the outside. 11% are refugees inland; 9% are dead. The urban population has increased from 15 to 24%. Rural has gone from 85 to 23%. The problem is one of vast social disintegration, a problem greater in magnitude even than the civilian losses. This will be the overwhelming problem if there is a Soviet withdrawal, a postwar Afghanistan. But there is another complication, an ethnic complication. *Before* the war, among the Afghans, 40% of the population were Pathans, 26% were Tadzhiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks were each about 10%, and there were others. But, among the refugees, 85% are Pathans. So, the population in Afghanistan is now about 20% Pathans, and Tadzhiks have become the predominant ethnic group, followed by the Hazaras and Uzbeks. This is absolutely conscious Soviet policy, to make the population of Afghanistan as similar as possible to that of the Soviet Central Asian republics. As people in Europe would see, this becomes an argument for territorial annexation, as happened after World War II. Then, there is the Wakhan corridor, at the extreme east of Afghanistan, on the way from Afghanistan to China. It was annexed by the Soviets, because it is so strategically crucial. Annexed *de facto*. The Kirghiz population was expelled, and now live in Turkey. The Wakhan corridor is now occupied absolutely by KGB forces.

This restructuring of the country, ethnically, by the Soviets, is the most important problem that we face *if* the war stops.

## East bloc nations near to explosion

by Konstantin George

National unrest and unbearable economic conditions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, especially Poland, pose the question: Will Gorbachov be out before Reagan? The growing internal crisis in the Soviet Union is destroying the image of glasnost and perestroika. However, welcome these developments are, there can be no illusions of a "Crumbling Empire." The Russian Empire will move to suppress the Captive Nations within the Empire proper, and, should revolts erupt in Eastern Europe, militarily intervene.

Russia's leaders are obsessed with plans for an early seizure of Western Europe—whether by military or other means—as the "solution" to the economic-political crisis afflicting the Empire. In this regard, aggressive power projections outward can be expected, and an escalation of the stick-and-carrot offensive against West Germany.

Internally, Russian chauvinism will be promoted more than ever. The signal was given at the Feb. 17 Central Committee Plenum by Politburo member Yegor Ligachov, who called for a crackdown against non-Russian nationalist manifestations.

The near-revolt in the East bloc provides a tool to shatter prevailing illusions in the West concerning the Russian Empire. Even as corrupt, liberal elites in the West are in the advanced phase of negotiating a "New Yalta" with the Russian Empire, the victims of the old Yalta and Potsdam agreements are delivering an indelible message to the West, as to what it means to live under Russian hegemony. The East bloc unrest will soon force the Russians to show their true colors. Europeans and Americans will no longer have the psychological buffer of distance to block out Russian atrocities, as has been the case concerning faraway Afghanistan.

The crackdown will not be possible in a short, condensed period. The events in Armenia and Azerbaijan (see page 48) are paralleling eruptions in the Baltic and Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, Romania, and Hungary. Soviet-dictated looting and austerity policy have produced a collapse of living standards unimaginable to most in the industrial West.

Things will only keep getting worse. In the Baltic nations, popular anger is not only directed at the severe economic deterioration, but against the cumulative effects of 40 years of forced Russification, and Russian immigration, which, particularly in Estonia and Latvia, threatens to literally wipe out the indigenous populations by early next century.

### **The Baltic unrest**

On Feb. 16, the 70th anniversary of Lithuania's independence, a crowd of 15,000 assembled before the main cathedral in Vilna, the Lithuanian capital, singing the national anthem. On Sunday, Feb. 14, hundreds of thousands had packed the Catholic Churches, to commemorate independence and to protest Russian occupation. The Feb. 16 demonstration was held despite blunt Soviet warnings that repression would be ugly. The Soviet authorities kept their word.

The KGB and Militia (Interior Ministry), including units brought in from neighboring Belorussia, brutally attacked the crowd, arresting and injuring hundreds, of whom at least 160 were hospitalized. Many sustained severe injuries when police dogs were turned on a crowd of 2,000 youth demonstrating in a park near the cathedral. For the occasion, Moscow had flown in crack airborne troops from the Belorussian Military District, headquartered in Minsk, who were outside Vilna on standby.

Undaunted by the KGB terror tactics in Lithuania, on Feb. 24, the 70th anniversary of Estonia's independence, a crowd of 20,000 demonstrated in the capital city of Tallinn. Like Lithuania and Latvia, Estonia was invaded and illegally annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, by virtue of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939.

The crowd remained before the town hall till midnight, despite repeated orders to disperse, and threats that if such demonstrations continued, TV broadcasting in the Estonian language would cease, leaving only Russian.

The KGB crackdown in Estonia has also been severe. The KGB has been spreading an "imperialist coup" rumor; Tallinn has been blocked to Western correspondents; deals were made with Western correspondents to spread disinformation on the situation; and, since the summer of 1987, forty-two leading Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian activists have been deported to the West. The Feb. 24 Tallinn demonstration was held without the remaining national leaders, who had been placed under house arrest.

### **Poland close to exploding**

Poland is on a short fuse, waiting to explode in a crisis that will surpass that of 1980-81. The coming Polish crisis will soon be Gorbachov's big East European headache. In the 1980-81 crisis, a Russian invasion was narrowly averted through a takeover by General Jaruzelski's Polish military. But that meant that the last Polish card in the situation had been played. Any future "solution" would have to come from a Russian military intervention.

This is exactly what informed sources now foresee. The Polish people suffered recent astronomical price increases, creating a situation in which the stores are full of goods, because no one can afford to buy. The result is the lowest food consumption levels since the postwar period. Poland continues to experience shortages of basic consumer goods like soap, laundry detergent, and toilet paper, as well as repeated breakdowns in transportation and energy supply, and an almost complete collapse in housing construction.

East bloc food shortages are only partly the result of production problems. Poland, Romania (where the population is living on subsistence rations), and Hungary all export large volumes of meat, such as ham, ducks, turkey, and other poultry, and in the case of Romania, large quantities of grain, to the West to earn foreign exchange to pay debt, and to the Soviet Union, in order to receive marginal increases in Soviet energy exports to keep their industries running.

The Polish food price increases in January were only the beginning. On April 1, the next round of price increases takes effect. Electricity and fuel prices will double, as will rents. These measures reflect a pattern throughout the East bloc, where prohibitive prices on electricity are designed to drastically reduce private consumption, to allow more electricity allocations to industrial plants which export to the Soviet Union.

The joint Soviet and International Monetary Fund stranglehold on Poland has produced another horror: a collapsed health service. Basic medicines, including antibiotics, are largely nonexistent. The most basic items that one would expect to find in hospitals are in desperately short supply. Some hospital wards have no beds. The patients are on the floor, and cases of patients forced to stay on the floor in corridors are not uncommon.

In Romania, the only surprise to date is that no uprising has occurred. How much longer this can continue is a question mark. Romanians are living through a winter where the average daily use of electricity per apartment has been limited to one 40-watt light bulb. Meat and fish have disappeared from the diet, and thanks to forced grain exports to Russia, for the first time since the postwar years, even bread is in very short supply.

Another situation approaching critical mass is Hungary, the supposed "economic miracle" land of Eastern Europe. The December Hungarian Central Committee Plenum adopted an austerity package for 1988 that could well cause an explosion. Seventy-five percent of 1988 hard currency export earnings have been earmarked for debt repayment. The Jan. 1 introduction of a 15% value added tax on food and consumer goods, together with termination of state price subsidies for 80% of all consumer items by April 1, will guarantee a 1988 inflation rate of at least 20%, a postwar record. The same package, which will end state subsidies to unprofitable enterprises, will generate, by official Hungarian estimates, at least 200,000 unemployed by 1990.