

Unrest in Russian Empire multiplies: Poland and Armenia

by Konstantin George

In contrast to Gorbachov, absent from Moscow for five weeks on "vacation," the crisis of national unrest in Eastern Europe and the Captive Nations inside the Soviet Union has not taken a holiday. Moscow is simultaneously beset by the worst Polish crisis in postwar history, the most dangerous Transcaucasus explosions to date, and eruptions in the Baltic Republics, the Ukraine, and East European satellite nations.

The leading edge of the current phase of the crisis is occurring in the Transcaucasus and Poland.

Armenians denounce Moscow and Gorbachov

The crisis in the Transcaucasus is moving into its most explosive phase, with Armenia in a state of near-revolt against Moscow. The mass protest movement there, thought to have been "under control" in late July, sprang up again on Aug. 23, and has been active ever since.

On two occasions, Aug. 23 and Aug. 30, crowds of 200,000 staged anti-Moscow mass demonstrations in the Armenian capital of Yerevan. They braved Russian army units deployed in the city (disguised in police uniforms), and army helicopters, called bitterly "the swallows of *perestroika*," circling overhead. The mass rallies used the slogan, "This is not Afghanistan," and denounced the Red Army occupation of Armenia.

During the summer, the Armenian mass movement underwent a qualitative shift on two counts. 1) It moved from being a primarily anti-Turkic, anti-Azerbaijan movement, into an anti-Moscow, anti-Russian movement. 2) It has moved far beyond the original single-issue demand that the enclave of Karabakh, now governed by Azerbaijan, become part of Armenia, and adopted a strategy that strike organizers hope will move Armenia in stages toward the cherished goal of nationhood. At the late August rallies, the protests have demanded an end to Russification in Armenia, expressed in phrases like "A civilized nation is a nation which speaks its own language," and "Close Down the Russian Schools!" They are now demanding autonomy and "economic sovereignty" for the Armenian Republic.

Even should Moscow restore Karabakh to Armenia, the

mass protests will not end. This was stated to the *London Times* Sept. 5 by Levon Ter Bedrossian, one of the 11 leaders of the Karabakh Committee, which is leading the Armenian underground. "If we achieve our goal" of getting back Karabakh, detached from Armenia by Stalin in 1923, "the movement which has grown up here will remain in being to express the will of the people. There are many other topics concerning all Armenians, including our language, ecology, and the whole question of national sovereignty."

The weekly mass rallies are to occur every Friday during September and into October, until either Armenian-inhabited Karabakh joins Armenia, or, as strike leaders from the Karabakh Committee told the crowd on both occasions, Gorbachov "sends in the tanks." Plans are already being drafted for a new general strike, timed for October when the Armenian parliament convenes, should Moscow not give in by then.

Another major shift in the national unrest picture inside the Soviet Union is the growing coordination between the underground movements of the non-Russian republics.

The Armenian underground, led by the Karabakh Committee, gave statements to Western correspondents in a suburb of Yerevan Sept. 4: "Our plan is to extend informal links with other national groups who are against the central power, both in the Soviet Union and outside it in places like Poland and Czechoslovakia."

These links are already very solid. During 1988, the national independence underground organizations representing Armenia, Georgia, the Ukraine, and the three Baltic Republics have established a unified coordinating committee which has held four secret meetings, since made public: January in Yerevan; February in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital; June in Lvov in the western Ukraine, and August in a small town in Latvia.

A leading personality in the Captive Nations' movement recently stressed the importance of this new phenomenon: "We have no illusions that the goal of winning national sovereignty will not require a long and hard struggle. It will, and cannot happen overnight; it will take many, many years. But no one can underestimate the magnitude of the victory

achieved so far, in the following sense. For the first time inside the Soviet Union, you have a functioning coordinating committee representing the national independence movements of six nations, and it will soon include a seventh, Belorussia. This not only has never happened before, but was unthinkable in the past. These national movements have renounced past differences and squabbles among themselves, to unite their forces against the Russian Empire, against Moscow. Even more important, whatever happens to the protests themselves, even if Moscow succeeds in suppressing them, Moscow has already lost what I consider to be the most important part of the battle, their psychological control over these national populations. The struggle for national independence among these peoples was thought to be 'dead,' or at least dormant for decades. As we've seen, it's very much alive. The people of these nations want full independence, they want to become part of a Europe of sovereign nations. Moscow can still keep the chains on their bodies, but the chains on their minds have been broken forever. Russification has suffered a decisive defeat."

The Polish crisis

The second Polish strike wave of 1988 was brought to an end on Sept. 1, following a series of ultimatums broadcast on Polish Radio Aug. 30 and 31. The first ultimatum came from the interior minister, General Kiszczak, demanding that the strikes, "endangering national security," end on Aug. 31. The final ultimatum, the next day, in the name of the Polish General Staff, declared that the strikes "are affecting the nation's security and defense capabilities . . . and are endangering Poland's obligations to its [Warsaw Pact] alliance partners." No Pole needed any translation. This was the sort of language used in 1968 before the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia.

These ultimatums formed the setting to Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's Aug. 31 meeting with General Kiszczak, and Walesa's announcement immediately afterwards calling off the strikes. The government in return pledged to begin a "dialogue" with the Opposition, including Walesa, in September that will lead to "legalization" of the opposition.

The arrangement reached temporarily stopped the strikes, but has in no way solved the crisis. The stage is set for the next explosion to occur soon on two counts. First of all, the economic catastrophe is worsening with every passing week. Food shortages are appalling; meat has largely disappeared, along with dairy products, fruits, and vegetables. Inflation is soaring well above 50%, available goods are unaffordable, and the perennial lack of non-food essentials such as toilet paper, detergents, and soap remains. In the second half of August, even consumer durables, such as TV sets, washing machines, refrigerators and so on, have disappeared from the shops, and beginning in October, fuel shortages will be felt. These facts alone guarantee a new upsurge.

The Jaruzelski regime's only chance to avoid a collision

with the people is to agree to Walesa's demands that the "dialogue" actually lead to an opposition policy voice in Poland. But on Sept. 5 and 6, the government declared that any legalization of Solidarity is "out of the question."

Clearly, the "dialogue" is nothing more than a government tactic to buy time, but even this is failing. On Sept. 6, Walesa warned the government not to back off on its promise (which the government claims it never made) to legalize Solidarity. Walesa said to Western journalists in Gdansk, that the talks with the regime "must lead to pluralism," i.e., an opposition voice in shaping policy, "and a real role for the trade unions, for this is the last chance" for a solution through "dialogue." If the talks, scheduled for mid-September, fail, or as Walesa phrased it, if "they betray us, and undermine Walesa's authority," then Walesa announced that he would call "new strikes, very quickly," in the shipyards and factories of Poland.

The government, under immense Soviet pressure, cannot meet Walesa's demands. Solidarity cannot make any more significant compromises. An autumn confrontation, with a new strike wave, fueled by the accelerating economic collapse, is inevitable.

Moscow prepares a military solution

The crises confronting the Russian Empire pose a great danger to the West, as long as Moscow continues to enjoy its present—and steadily increasing—margin of military superiority. The tendency for Moscow to seek a "solution" to its crises by a policy of expansion and conquest, beginning with Western Europe, will grow in the months ahead. Ominously, during August and September, the Soviet media returned to the language of the Cold War, and made a central point of blaming the United States and the West for the economic crisis and the national unrest.

On Aug. 29, the party daily *Pravda* printed a full page feature on the origins of the Cold War, laying exclusive blame for all postwar problems on the United States. The authors were Valentin Falin, head of the Novosti press agency and former ambassador to West Germany, and Lev Bezymensky, an associate editor of the weekly *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*), one of the main authors of Moscow's slander campaign against Lyndon LaRouche, and prominent name in Moscow's virulent 1984 campaign against "German Revisionism."

That article was the kick-off. On Sept. 2, *Pravda* printed a lengthy interview with KGB chief and Politburo member Viktor Chebrikov. Chebrikov warned that the Soviet system is threatened by "ideological sabotage," which is directed by foreign authorities and aimed at "impairing the socialist world outlook of the Soviet people, instilling in our society foreign views and sentiments, and instigating the current anti-Soviet activities." He continued, "Certain circles of imperialism have not yet given up on a confrontation course." These "foreign authorities" are seeking to "utilize the freer atmos-

phere" now existing in the Soviet Union under *glasnost* to "undermine the system."

"Special forces [agents] are coordinating this activity, using mass information media, sending emissaries into our country. . . . These special forces and subversive ideological centers, seeking to sabotage the *perestroika*, are trying to encourage in our country the organizing of illegal, semi-legal, and even legal groupings which would operate at their command. To achieve their aims, they seek out hostile elements in our society . . . giving them moral and material support, and practically instigating them on a course of outright confrontation with the Soviet government and social system."

Chebrikov thus made it clear not only that Moscow was blaming the West for the unrest in the Russian Empire, but that, "among the intelligence services, the Cold War is on in full force."

The timing of the Chebrikov interview was also striking. Every year, in mid-September, the Soviet Union dutifully celebrates the birthday of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder and head of the KGB's predecessor, the Cheka, immediately after the Bolshevik takeover. The occasion is marked by a major address given by the current KGB chief, i.e., Chebrikov, which is dutifully printed in the newspapers. Here is striking proof of not only how grave the crisis in the Russian Empire is, but also of the speed with which Moscow wishes to begin constructing the case to justify outward expansion to eliminate those Western "centers" allegedly causing the unrest. Chebrikov could not wait even two weeks to get the message out.

The offensive blaming the West for the unrest reached its first peak in *Pravda* Sept. 6, where the West was blamed for the Polish crisis. "Imperialist forces, with the U.S.A. at the head, are seeking to exploit the strikes in Poland . . . to build up their assets." The strikes were "chosen by anti-socialist forces as a tool to undermine Poland's economic foundations." Then followed a commentary, linking past and present "imperialist" operations against the Soviet Empire:

"What have we observed in recent weeks? The 20th anniversary of the Czechoslovakia events of 1968 neared and a veritable anti-socialist Black Sabbath is organized. Strikes broke out in Poland and a furious commotion is raised about this episode as well. As is well known, imperialism has already tried more than once to use the internal problems of socialist countries to prod the forces of counterrevolution into action. . . . Their efforts failed [in the past]. But the enemies of socialism are not stopping their destructive schemes," and here, the strike wave in Poland is cited as a key example.

Pravda's conclusion, "The activities of the Western intelligence services have inflicted damage on the political, military, and economic interests of the Soviet Union."

These articles are the first warning signs of the mounting danger of military thrusts outward by Moscow to solve its deepening internal crisis.

Soviet base in Syria new offensive in the

by Selim al Khodr

A political fight is about to erupt in Western military and political circles over what should be the response to Moscow's latest challenge in the Mediterranean. According to an Aug. 27 *New York Times*, U.S. Rear Adm. William O. Studeman, director of the National Security Agency, and Norman Polmar, a U.S. Navy specialist on Soviet military affairs, warned in early August that the Soviet Union is engaged in extensive construction work at the Syrian port of Tartus, building the first major Soviet naval base of its kind in the Mediterranean since the late 1940s.

In the short term, the base will enhance Soviet naval military deployment worldwide, by allowing the Soviet fleet to bypass the Black Sea and the Dardanelles. Instead, the Soviet fleet in the Baltic could be sent through the North Sea and the Atlantic into the Mediterranean, having at their disposal major military facilities on a permanent basis. Middle Eastern military observers report that Tartus is expected to become the Cam Ranh Bay of the Mediterranean, throwing a major military challenge to the whole NATO naval deployment in the region. Not by coincidence, it comes at a time that the presence of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the region is being questioned, and that the United States is under threat of expulsion from Greece. Actually, except for Naples in Italy, the United States has no permanent naval base which could be compared to what the Soviets are getting in Tartus.

Why the U.S. silence?

Questions have been raised as to why the *New York Times* publicized the matter, and not the U.S. government. An indication was given in Norman Polmar's statement that he had advised congressional members that the "U.S. should protest to Syria." The remark underlines the fact that Washington has, to date, not done so. On the contrary, State Department officials have been quoted saying that the new U.S. ambassador to Damascus, Edward Djerejian, has been asked to quietly raise the issue with the Syrian leadership, but has so far received "no answer."

Intelligence sources report that the State Department was embarrassed by the *New York Times* article. Following a stormy session on Aug. 5 between State Department Middle