

## EIR Feature

# Food crisis makes Soviet leaders more aggressive

by Konstantin George

The Soviet Union is now in the midst of its worst food crisis since the dreadful early postwar years of 1946-47, although this time there is no war and occupation to blame for the disaster. The food crisis is the top item on the Soviet agenda. It is shaping the intense factional brawls in the leadership, and it has momentous strategic implications, because of the probability that Moscow will be propelled into military adventures.

The food crisis in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe marks the end-phase of the postwar Soviet empire. It has occurred as a result of the economic arrangement within that empire: long years of deliberate neglect of the Soviet civilian economy, offset by Soviet looting of Eastern Europe. This process accelerated during the 1980s, under the forced tempos of military-strategic build-up, known as the Andropov-Ogarkov War Plan.

*EIR's* founder and contributing editor, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., commented on these Soviet developments, in a Sept. 24 memorandum. "In the July 1985, first edition of *EIR's* *Global Showdown* report," LaRouche recalled, "I emphasized that the Soviets' [Marshal Nikolai] Ogarkov Plan of pre-war economic mobilization of new military potential, which had begun during 1983, would run its course after approximately five years. I forecast that if Moscow continued to follow the mobilization policy then in progress, which I identified by the label 'Plan A,' the Soviet economy would reach the threshold of a worsening physical-economic crisis about 1988-89. We have reached that point, and the first signs of a severe physical-economic crisis are in full eruption."

On the causes of the Soviet crisis, LaRouche explained: "In the Soviet lexicon, the relevant term is 'primitive accumulation,' a term which 1920s Soviet economist Yevgeni Preobrazhensky adopted from his studies of the work of Rosa Luxemburg. This term references the looting of previously accumulated physical capital as a source of wealth for capital formation, or, for military mobilization. 'Primitive accumulation' draws stored-up, previously invested physical wealth from land, basic economic infrastructure, human bodies, and even sectors of manufacturing. One analogy from Western practice, is the case of the firm which,



U.S. Department of Defense; Inset: Stuart Lewis

*Eastern Europe has been savagely looted to allow the Russian war build-up. Now, the limits of that policy are being reached. Shown here are Romanian peasants, and a Soviet T-72 tank on parade.*

by failing to spend for needed repairs, treats 'saved' costs of depletion, depreciation, and maintenance as current gross operating income of the firm; if this continues, the firm collapses into bankruptcy.

"So, during the recent five years, Moscow has intensified savagely its looting of the captive nations of Eastern Europe, has cut back on essential projects in Soviet basic economic infrastructure, has depressed the physical income and conditions of life of most of the Soviet population, and has even allowed its vital Soviet machine-tool industry to fall out of repair. All for the past five years' mad drive for absolute strategic military superiority over the West.

"The Soviet strategic plan, for achieving a state of war-readiness by the end of 1988, was the work of a team of leaders under the direction of, chiefly, former KGB chief Yuri Andropov and his long-standing crony, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. The unexpected death of General Secretary Andropov caused a lag in implementation of the Andropov-Ogarkov 'reforms' over nearly two years, until the appointment of an Andropov 'crown prince,' Mikhail Gorbachov, in March 1985. Gorbachov resumed the implementation of the Andropov-Ogarkov Plan full-force, by aid of a rather desperate game of 'catch up.' . . .

"Essentially, Moscow is caught, increasingly, in a choice between extraordinary military adventures, during 1989-1990, and dismantling the Plan's implementation, to a large degree, at least, to redirect political and economic resources to the

food crisis and related economic disasters within the Bloc. At the moment, one of the more likely prospects for a Soviet military adventure is the chain-reaction effects of a Balkan crisis akin to that which set off World War I. As I warned back during 1986, the prospect of the now-erupting crisis in Yugoslavia could be the trigger which embarks us all along the road in the direction of a threatened general war."

### **No quick fix**

The urgency of the food crisis was underscored by Gorbachov in his Sept. 14 speech in Norilsk, Siberia, where he called the food crisis "our top priority." At a Sept. 23 meeting with Soviet media leaders, Gorbachov said that a Central Committee plenum early in 1989 would deal exclusively with the agrarian problems.

The food crisis will not go away tomorrow, or even in the next few months. Leonid Abalkin, director of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Economics Institute, already predicted even worse food shortages in 1989 and 1990.

The worst Soviet food crisis since 1946-47 occurs under conditions of drastically reduced Western food production, caused by policies of underproduction, and aggravated by this year's North American drought. As the crisis worsens, Moscow will be increasingly tempted to undertake aggressive thrusts outward, to seize or otherwise guarantee food supply rights from such areas as Western Europe, which, in Moscow's eyes, are "food surplus" regions.