

## Famine looms over U.S.S.R., just as LaRouche warned

by Konstantin George and Luba George

The Soviet Union is facing the threat of a famine, perhaps as early as the coming winter, with unforeseeable human, political, and strategic consequences. The looming famine, anytime during 1990-91, could equal or surpass the calamities of the early 1930s caused by Stalin's forced collectivization, and Moscow's confiscation at bayonet-point of the harvest and food stores. This created two of the biggest genocides of the 20th century, the death of 8 million Ukrainians and 2 million Kazakhs, to name but the two most horrendous cases.

Famines in the Bolshevik police state are ugly on two counts: While the level of food shortfall would define the *number* of victims, the ethnic and geographical *location* of the mass slaughter will, as in the 1930s, be decided by the Soviet leadership.

As in the 1930s, the areas most threatened by famine are the U.S.S.R.'s two most populous non-Russian regions: the Ukraine with 50 million people, and the Central Asian Muslim republics, with a combined Muslim population of nearly 40 million, nearly 20 million of whom are in Uzbekistan.

### 'Hunger may await us'

The first public, urgent warnings of famine and accompanying destabilizations have already been issued by leading Soviet officials. The occasion was a June 16 Moscow press conference for Western journalists, whose speakers included two deputies from the new Soviet parliament: Leonid Abalkin, newly appointed deputy prime minister and chairman of the newly created State Committee for Economic Reform, and Prof. Vladimir Tikhonov, an agricultural expert. Their statements speak for themselves:

Tikhonov: "Hunger may await us. . . . If this year we don't take radical measures in agriculture, next year there

will be a real famine. I predict famine, because we don't have enough hard currency to buy food. We can expect a famine in the very near future."

Abalkin: "If we don't have the economy stabilized in one-and-a-half to two years, then a rightward swing by society is inevitable. Society will be destabilized. The estimate is one-and-a-half to two years *maximum*. Then, something unpredictable will begin. What form it will take is unpredictable, but it will be inevitable."

The same day, June 16, at a Moscow meeting of academicians to discuss the recent session of the Congress of People's Deputies, an Academy of Sciences researcher, Viktor Belkin, said: "The economic situation is worse than we can ever have imagined. Sometimes I wonder if we can survive through the autumn. The economy is becoming increasingly cannibalistic, feeding on itself to keep alive."

There was no end to the barrage of catastrophe warnings that day. The Italian daily, *Corriere della Sera* carried an interview with Russian demagogue Boris Yeltsin, the "Soviet Mussolini," who stressed the rapidly evolving calamity and the spreading chain of unrest, both in scope overall, and from the non-Russian regions into Russia itself: "The people can't put up with this state of affairs much longer. After that, a revolutionary situation will be created. Drastic measures are needed to improve people's lives immediately. I don't think they'll remain patient for more than a year longer."

The picture of a Soviet bloc-wide crisis rapidly coming to a head was also presented by "dissident" member of the new Soviet parliament, Prof. Andrei Sakharov, speaking in the Dutch city of Groningen, June 18: "The economic and social structures have collapsed. . . . There's a catastrophic loss of confidence in the leadership. . . . Decisive steps by

the leadership are necessary to restore confidence.”

Sakharov had begun sounding this theme in a speech he had tried to read to the new Supreme Soviet, only to be cut off by Gorbachov personally. The Sakharov text was printed in the West German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 14, where after stressing the depth of the crisis confronting the Soviet Union, he warned: “Should things continue to go downhill, while we lull ourselves to sleep with hopes for a step-by-step bettering in the distant future, the growing tensions in our society could explode and bring about tragic consequences.”

## Central Asia famine

The extreme food scarcities leading to the Soviet famine are the prime cause of the chain reaction of riots, featuring the plundering of cooperative food shops and warehouses in the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan in May, and in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan during June of this year. This, and not “inter-ethnic” tensions as such—let alone alleged Islamic “fundamentalism,” as Gorbachov had declared in the midst of his Bonn visit—is the true causality behind the Uzbekistan explosion, June 3-15, that resulted in hundreds of deaths, and the ongoing riots in the Kazakhstan city of Novy Uzen, that began June 16, and, had caused according to official Soviet figures, four deaths by June 21.

To the extent “ethnic” tensions played a role, it was rage by an impoverished and hungry dominant national group (Uzbeks, Kazakhs) against members of a minority ethnic group (Meskhetians in Uzbekistan, Armenians, Georgians, Caucasus Muslims in Novy Uzen) who, through their control of the lucrative cooperative markets for food and other basics, were charging outrageously high prices. The months-long chemistry of millions of hungry and impoverished native Uzbeks or Kazakhs, with high unemployment, their realization that famine is approaching, the empty state shops, and the out of reach food prices in the cooperative shops, has now produced the expected reaction.

That such a reaction was about to transpire was of course known beforehand to the Soviet KGB and Interior Ministry, both at the Moscow and at the Uzbekistan level. The channeling of the riots to target particular Muslim minority groups, such as the Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan’s Fergana region, was certainly steered by Soviet KGB in its manipulation of the riot dynamic.

## Cotton monoculture

The proto-famine situation facing Uzbekistan’s population of 20 million has been caused by the cotton monoculture imposed on Uzbekistan by Moscow. The Soviet-wide food crisis has generated the collapse of food, above all grain “imports” from the rest of the U.S.S.R., which have traditionally covered Uzbekistan’s food deficit. In Uzbekistan’s rural regions, including Fergana, where the riots occurred, meat consumption has fallen to a mere 8 kilograms annually

per person, or, some 80 grams per week. Reality is far worse than these official statistics. As one figure in the Uzbek autonomy movement, *Birlik* (“Unity”), stated by phone in early June: “People in the villages are living on the edge of poverty and subsisting on bread and water, because of the monopoly of cotton.” The working mass of Uzbeks live like slaves on Soviet cotton plantations. There is another “mass” of Uzbeks, the 1.5 million unemployed, who form over 20% of the workforce. The youth unemployment rate is about twice as high, comparable to that among black youth in U.S. ghettos.

Under the impossible Moscow-imposed cotton quota system, the fertile Fergana valley, which together with the Amu-Darya valley in Uzbekistan, used to form in the pre-Bolshevik past, the breadbasket for Central Asia, is almost exclusively devoted to cotton cultivation. Before the pogroms, the authorities simply informed by word of mouth the hungry populace that state cotton lands could not be leased for private plots to grow food, and then added that the only possible land available were the private plots being farmed by the Meskhetians. With this backdrop, one sees that Moscow’s immediate decision after the riots began, not merely to evacuate the Meskhetians to safety, but to remove them permanently from Uzbekistan, meant a corollary decision to redivide the land among Uzbek families.

The message delivered by Moscow through these actions, in these times of extreme scarcities, has been grasped by every hungry or starving indigenous group in Central Asia: Through riots and pillaging, food and land to ensure food during the coming famine, can be procured. A chain reaction of food riots was thus pre-programmed.

Famine, accompanied by bloodbath repressions is now on the agenda for Uzbekistan and other regions of Central Asia. The Soviet Big Lie campaign, initiated by Gorbachov himself in Bonn, asserting that “Islamic fundamentalists” are behind the riots and pogroms in Uzbekistan, is designed to prepare a mass slaughter, and by placing the label “Islamic fundamentalist” on it, preempt and prevent any Western outcry.

The bloodbath preparations, both physical and psychological/political, are the most advanced in the Russian Army. An interview with Gen. Eduard Didorenko, Deputy Interior Minister of Uzbekistan, in the June 21 edition of the Defense Ministry daily, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, graphically announced that unless hordes of “fundamentalists” were taken care of, no Russian would be safe in Soviet Central Asia:

“We are not talking of isolated and disconnected incidents, but about a mass campaign to draw Meskhetian Turks into the heart of a destructive national conflict. Since autumn of last year, certain elements have taken energetic measures to form a united Pan-Islamic Front, the primary aim of which was the renewal of medieval national hysteria, discrimination and the expulsion of the republic’s European [Russian] population, even if this required radical measures.”

## Specter of starvation in the Ukraine

In a recent letter that has reached Ukrainian exiles in the West, Stepan Khmara, a leading member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHU), has warned that the Ukraine is facing a "danger greater than the famine of 1933 under Stalin." He blamed the rapidly developing catastrophe as resulting from "Moscow's economic policies in Ukraine . . . threaten the survival of the Ukrainian nation. . . . In the course of the so-called *perestroika* years, the situation in Ukraine has worsened; colonial looting has risen through the increased [food delivery] quotas to the central fund. . . . A danger greater than Stalin's famine looms over our land and our people." Khmara also stressed that "a new wave of repression has been unleashed. . . . Moscow is doing everything possible to strangle the national-democratic movement in Ukraine" adding, that "to a great extent, the fate of the subjugated nations in the U.S.S.R. depends on the policies of the U.S. . . . It would be premature to remove the label of 'evil empire' from the U.S.S.R.," Khmara warned.

The dynamic described by Khmara in the letter corresponds exactly to at least the opening phase of what Stalin did in 1932-33, when, in the context of overall hunger in the Soviet Union, the harvest of the Ukraine and all stored food that could be found by the OGPU (KGB) armed search squads was shipped out of the republic, leaving the population to starve.

The "unpredictable consequences," arising out of the coming Soviet famine, to use the words of the leading Soviet officials we quoted earlier, will not be confined to the Soviet Union. The full extent of the Soviet food crisis had been foreseen last year by *EIR's* founding editor, Lyndon LaRouche. LaRouche had said in 1988 that Moscow was confronted "with an unbelievable food crisis during 1988 and a worse one for 1989 and 1990."

Again, already in 1988, LaRouche had also warned:

"The resulting, worsening shortages of food supplies in both Western nations and the Soviet bloc have already introduced a qualitative shift in the strategic situation. How far the United States, the British Commonwealth, and western continental Europe are willing, or able to go in stripping scarcer food from the tables of their own populations to meet Soviet import requirements, is already beginning to reshape the agenda in East-West relations.

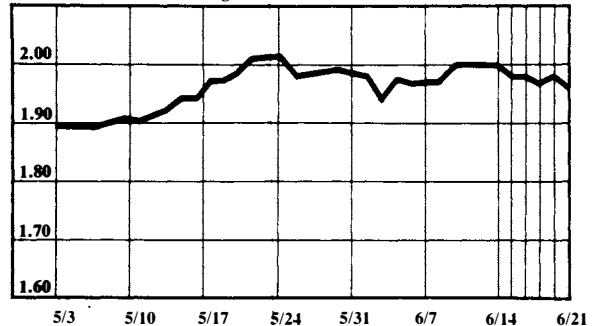
"Given the fact the combination of 'global power-sharing' negotiations and Western economic decline have delivered to Moscow a currently growing margin of military advantage, the moot proposition is, that the pressures of a savage and worsening food shortage at home will prompt Moscow to seek some sort of external military solution for its domestic crisis."

The tendency for Moscow to do precisely that will be growing in a nonlinear mode from now on, with each passing month, whether Washington has grasped this reality or not.

## Currency Rates

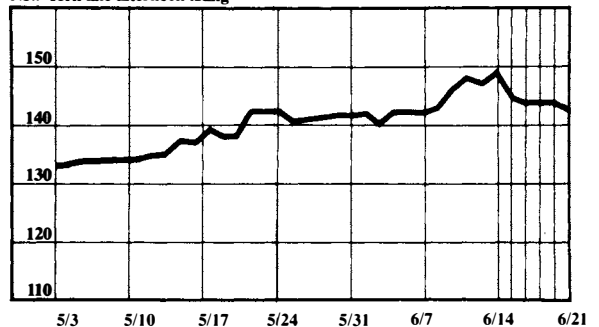
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



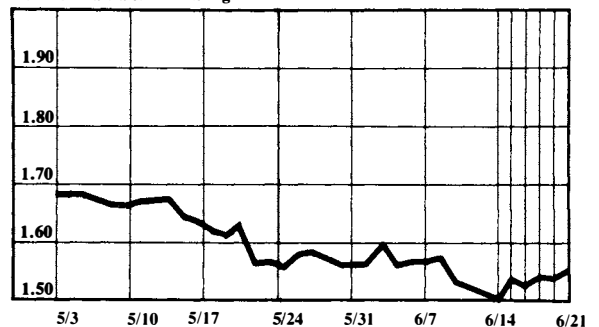
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

