

# Thatcher tries to save Humpty-Dumpty

by Mark Burdman

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher may have thought she was doing Soviet party boss Mikhail Gorbachov a great favor, by telling the Soviet people, in her best British nanny style, that they must support the unpopular communist dictator. In reality, Thatcher's June 7-10 visit to the Soviet Union may not have only hastened the demise of Gorbachov, but her own as well. Indeed, the British press has begun likening Gorbachov to the unfortunate Humpty-Dumpty.

On June 8, Gorbachov and Thatcher gave a joint press conference in Moscow which was broadcast live on Soviet TV. Thatcher informed her viewers that there was "no magic solution" to their economic plight. "The reforms occurring now in the Soviet Union are the biggest, most exciting, most remarkable changes of this century. They deserve our full support." Thatcher called on the Soviets to develop a "spirit to succeed."

She stood admiringly, as Gorbachov babbled on without interruption for 19 minutes about his "economic reforms." This included not only phrases about cutting subsidies, making the ruble more accessible to Western markets, etc., but also an enthusiastic account of his recent meeting in California with pseudo-economist Milton Friedman. Thatcher reflexively nodded at each of the "free-market" key-and-code phrases. The June 9 London *Guardian* commented acerbically: "She has not praised a reform program so much since the poll tax." The poll tax is the Thatcherite "tax per head" that has made Thatcher the most unpopular British prime minister in at least 50 years.

The pro-Thatcher *Daily Telegraph* headlined its June 9 account of her Moscow act, "Thatcher urges Soviets to stick by Gorbachov." The paper stated: "Mrs. Thatcher threw her weight last night behind President Gorbachov's attempts to persuade the Soviet people to accept painful economic reforms and urged them to have faith in his embattled leadership. . . . The two leaders presented a remarkably united front over the scale of the reforms needed to bring about a market economy in the Soviet Union. . . . Mr. Gorbachov, with Mrs. Thatcher beside him, used the joint press conference as a rehearsal of his crucial address to parliament next week in defense of his reforms."

On June 9, U.S. congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche pointed to the absurdity of the June 8 press conference, as Gorbachov dominated the proceedings, and Mrs.

Thatcher merely nodded, "looking worshipfully with admiring glances at her hero, Mr. Gorbachov, the falling hero." LaRouche said that Gorbachov's statements on the economy were "silly," and commented that Gorbachov and George Bush "are competitors for the silliest statesmen on economics of the current period, with Margaret Thatcher bringing up the rear, and egging them both on.

"The fact is," the Virginia candidate stressed, "Mr. Gorbachov had *nothing* to say of any significance at the conference, except these silly ideas. And that's the signal point. It is obvious that if Mr. Gorbachov had a visible successor, very soon Mr. Gorbachov would be replaced. He's shot his wad, as they say. And only the lack of someone to replace him could keep him in office much longer. The kinds of things he's talking about could not work, and only reflect a man who's absolutely desperate, who's joined a Moscow cargo cult, waiting for financial and kindred aid, from a bankrupt United States and from Western Europe."

On various occasions, LaRouche has stressed the insanity of imposing "free market" policies on a Soviet Union that is suffering from a national breakdown of transport infrastructure, food distribution, etc. To introduce "free market" measures at such a juncture, is to ensure chaos, possibly leading to world war somewhere down the line. Both Gorbachov and Thatcher would be swept out of their respective offices in the process.

## 'Group therapy for world leaders'

The verdict of much of the British press is not much more favorable. *Times* of London senior correspondent Robin Oakley commented June 11 that "Mrs. Thatcher's continued investment in Mr. Gorbachov may have been unwise." Under the heading, "Loyal Thatcher may be backing a loser," Oakley asserted that a "feeling of imminent collapse" is widespread in the U.S.S.R. He contrasted her 1987 visit to the U.S.S.R. with the current one. "This time," said Oakley, "with Mrs. Thatcher as far behind in the polls as she was then ahead, and with Mr. Gorbachov beset by troubles . . . it was low-key group therapy for world leaders running short of time."

The same day's *Times* ran a cartoon of Gorbachov as Humpty-Dumpty—after his fall from the wall—paired with an article by Bernard Levin entitled, "All in pieces, so why do we take him seriously?" Levin derided Gorbachov as a "shabby bankrupt" and said he was astonished that Western leaders, Thatcher included, take serious his "absurd and impudent demands" on the matter of Germany's relation to NATO.

The *Daily Express*'s Robert Kilroy-Silk on June 11 criticized Thatcher for having "succumbed" to Gorbachov's "charm": "He has charisma. No doubt about it. So had Lenin, Stalin and Hitler. They all also had their admirers in Britain, at one time or another. . . . It is a big mistake for the British prime minister to have gone overboard for the ex-KGB man."