Andropov's Blunder Still Haunts the Earth

by Rachel Douglas

Two current strategic military moves bring into focus once again, the blunder committed by the Soviet regime of Communist Party General Secretary Yuri Andropov in 1983, when Moscow rejected President Ronald Reagan's offer of Lyndon LaRouche's policy: cooperation by the two superpowers on the development of strategic defensive weapons, anti-missile systems based on "new physical principles" such as lasers, particle-beams, and other directed-energy technologies. With that decision against the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), "the Soviets played a trick on themselves," as LaRouche put it recently, and it was one with fatal consequences for their regime.

One of those current developments is the U.S./NATO in-your-face emplacement of anti-missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic near Russia's borders, and the other is China's experimentation with the blinding of satellites last year and destruction of one of its own in January. Each is a feature of the post-Soviet world that dramatizes, in a different way, what a lost opportunity the SDI's potential for a shift to war-avoidance, as well as generalized economic development, represented.

Neither China nor Russia intends to allow the United States to monopolize the military use of space, under the recent one-empire doctrines of the Bush-Cheney Administration. This, the Chinese test demonstrated, and the opinion of Russian First Channel TV commentator Mikhail Leontyev that "we ought to be extremely grateful to the Chinese; they showed the U.S.A. that nobody has the right to dictate his will to the world community, whereas it would probably have complicated matters if we had been the ones to make a demonstrative satellite kill," is shared by more than a couple of Moscow strategists. Meanwhile, Russian officials up to the level of President Vladimir Putin and Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov warn that Moscow perceives the forward basing of the anti-missile systems in Europe, as being geared to a U.S./NATO confrontation not primarily with Iran, but with Russia itself; and they emphasize the preparation of asymmetrical defense measures in response.

The Feb. 9 issue of the Russian government daily, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta,* covered U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's budget testimony, which cited the unpredictability of "places like Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran," under the headline, "The U.S.A. Is Prepared for War with Moscow and Beijing."

And yet, the mentality of Andropov in his fury against the SDI, and the misrepresentation of what happened in that respect during 1981-1991, lives on in leading Russian circles. It turns up often, like a bad penny, as in a Feb. 6 article in the liberal daily *Vremya Novostei,* by its military analyst Nikolai Poloskov. After summarizing official Russian anger, and countermeasures, against the eastern Europe anti-missile emplacements, Poloskov wrote: "But there is also another possibility—a very simple explanation that would make all current predictions pointless. Vladimir Shamanov, an advisor to the defense minister, says: 'All of this is just a bluff—a trial balloon launched by Washington, to see how the Russian leadership will react.' Something similar happened with the Strategic Defense Initiative, when the Soviet leadership took the bait and plunged the U.S.S.R. into ruinous arms spending."

The Ogarkov Surge

Poloskov's typical account of the SDI matter has it exactly backwards. It was not the SDI, per se, that broke the back of

the Soviet system. It was the Soviet *rejection* of SDI technology-sharing and the associated change in doctrine, away from Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), that broke the U.S.S.R. and its Warsaw Pact system, just as LaRouche had warned Soviet representatives would happen. Had the Soviet Union accepted Reagan's offer, and the U.S.A. reneged in some way later on, then it would be appropriate to blame the United States. But, it was Moscow's prideful decision to reject the offer, that turned the trick. The Soviet Union mobilized for a surge in the build-up of its strategic offensive capabilities, an effort named the Ogarkov Plan, after then-Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. The strain was too much for the U.S.S.R. and the Comecon countries, whose relatively high-technology industries were crucial to the Soviet military machine.

When Reagan spoke on March 23, 1983, the Soviets knew it was LaRouche's policy that the President had enunciated, against all the assurances of Moscow's ostensible friends in the United States. Moscow knew of LaRouche's access to Reagan's national security staff. Half a dozen Soviet representatives were present at the February 1982 *EIR* seminar in Washington, where LaRouche proposed joint development of ballistic missile defense by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.; among them was Yevgeni Shershnev, the Washington-based diplomat with whom LaRouche discussed these matters over a two-year period, with the knowledge of Reagan's team. Soviet publications later acknowledged that Reagan had taken the SDI from LaRouche, while an East German magazine called him "the direct forerunner of the doctrine pronounced by Reagan."

LaRouche recalls his last private discussion with Moscow's emissary, some time before Reagan's famous speech, when Shershnev informed him of what he had been instructed, "from the highest level," to say about potential U.S.-Soviet anti-missile cooperation: "We agree with you that what you and Reagan propose would work, but we reject it, because we believe that if we accepted the collaboration, the United States would outstrip us and take advantage." In reply, LaRouche warned that if the Soviets rejected the forthcoming offer, and went ahead with attempting a military surge to achieve so-called first-strike capability (the ability to deliver a disarming strategic strike), the Soviet Union would collapse in about five years.

As LaRouche spelled it out again in a September 1988 memorandum: "In the July 1985, first edition of *EIR*'s *Global Showdown* report, I emphasized that the Soviets' 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. . . .

"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. . . . So, during the recent five years, Moscow has savagely intensified 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."

In "On the Subject of Missile-Defense: When Andropov Played Hamlet" (*EIR,* April 21, 2000), LaRouche emphasized: "Contrary to the usual gossip, then, and now, the SDI was not a military system *per se;* it was a strategic policy for outflanking, and thus changing the dimensionality of the global strategic, political, and economic equations, and that in a fundamental way. It was the President's offer of that to Andropov, and Andropov's refusal, which is the subject of SDI."

Thus, the superpowers were locked into a regime, under which arms-control and non-proliferation agreements were supposed to serve as the pathway to greater security, in place of a shift to a lasting basis for war-avoidance and shared economic benefit. The legacy of that blunder is still with us.

Mutually Assured Destruction

In the 1950s, when Nikita Khrushchov was General Secretary of the Communist Party, Soviet leaders publicly signed on to the MAD doctrine. The process came out of Khrushchov's special relationship with London strategists, beginning with his dispatch of four Soviet representatives to a conference of Bertrand Russell's World Association of Parliamentarians for World Government, in 1955. Soviet officials were at key meetings where MAD was developed, such as the Pugwash conferences of 1957 and 1958. Khrushchov himself corresponded with Russell on the unthinkability of war in the nuclear age (the same Russell, who in 1946, had campaigned for the atomic bombing of the Soviet Union).

The Soviet military high command was in no hurry to toe the Khrushchov-Russell line. In 1962, Marshal V.D. Sokolovsky published his book, *Military Strategy,* in which he expressed the Soviet view of anti-missile defense as follows: "An anti-missile defense system for the country should obviously consist of the following: long-range detection of missiles using powerful radar or other . . . equipment to assure detection of missiles during the boost phase; . . . timely warning, and application of active measures; . . . devices to assure deflection of the missile from its target and, possibly to blow it up along its trajectory. Possibilities are being studied for the use, against missiles, of a stream of high-speed neutrons

as small detonators for the nuclear charge of the rocket. . . . Special attention is devoted to lasers; it is considered that in the future, any missile and satellite can be destroyed with powerful lasers."

It was only in the late 1960s, after the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, when the Vietnam War was well under way, and when a period of destabilizations in Western Europe had begun that ended the career of French President Charles de Gaulle—it was only then, that Moscow moved to enshrine MAD in treaty documents with the United States. Their negotiating partner was Robert Strange McNamara, Secretary of Defense under President Lyndon Johnson. At the close of 1967, he launched negotiations for a treaty to ban anti-ballistic missile systems, the ABM treaty.

As late as January 1968, after McNamara's first ABM treaty overture to Moscow, Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin said at a press conference in London, that any power that was capable of developing technical means to destroy nuclear-tipped missiles, and did *not* do so, did *not* develop such strategic defense, was clearly advocating offensive nuclear war. Two months later, Moscow signalled a shift in public posture. The shift was announced by means of a long article in *Pravda,* the Communist Party paper, which made the basic MAD argument, that general war would be unthinkable in the nuclear age. The author was a former advisor to Khrushchov and to Yuri Andropov at the Communist Party Central Committee, named Fyodor Burlatsky.

Some Russian analysts do see this 1967 moment as a fateful one, for the Soviet Union and the world. The preparations for shifting to an avowal of MAD were carried out, in part, by Johnson's National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, and KGB officer Dzhermen Gvishiani, who was Kosygin's son-in-law. Bundy and Gvishiani also launched a project that was to become the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), a channel that accelerated the importation of systems analysis methodology into the Soviet Union. In particular, IIASA and related institutions prepared the minds of a whole layer of young Russian economists to purvey the murderous, Hobbesian economic policies of "free market economic liberalism" in post-Soviet Russia—polices based on the same systems analyst's game theory, on which the calculated brinksmanship of MAD was based. The contemporary Russian writer Alexander Neklessa has studied and written about the 1966-67 Bundy-Gvishiani agreements as a historical turning point, for these reasons.

'Fundamental Realities of Our Day'

Were Soviet intelligence specialists unaware of the real nature of SDI, as LaRouche had advanced it? No, they were not. And, even at the height of attacks on LaRouche by the Soviet media under Andropov's heir, Mikhail Gorbachov, serious attention to LaRouche's ideas, from within the Soviet establishment, came to light. In 1983, Fyodor Burlatsky himself attacked LaRouche by name for the SDI, on the pages of *Literaturnaya Gazeta.* In late 1986, Soviet press outlets demanded that the U.S. government take action against LaRouche. Yet, exactly 20 years ago, an extraordinary dialogue appeared in the pages of *International Affairs,* the monthly journal of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It proved that, even during the most lurid Soviet propaganda against LaRouche, and vehement behind-the-scenes demands for his elimination, the idea remained alive within Soviet leading institutions, that they might have to deal with LaRouche on the basis of the real content of his policies.

In March 1987, *International Affairs* slandered LaRouche as a "neo-fascist," with his hand too close to the nuclear button. LaRouche sent a long letter to the editor of the journal, which, six months later, *International Affairs* published in full. Included was a passage, in which LaRouche suggested that the team around war-planner Ogarkov was likely more capable of understanding the need for a strategic shift toward SDI, than the henchmen of Gorbachov who were attacking it: "Academician Pustogarov and others may believe that publishing even the wildest fantasies against me is politically sound practice, since I am classed as a prominent political adversary of the Soviet Union. The academician overlooks the small point, on which Marshal Ogarkov might instruct him, that it is the U.S. and U.S.S.R. which are adversaries. . . . Since I am an influential voice among those U.S. figures working consistently for a constructive form of durable war-avoidance between our nations, your journal should think it most counterproductive to frighten Soviet children with the imported, obscene fantasies featured in the identified article."

In an editorial introduction, *International Affairs* wrote, "Had it only been a question of Mr. LaRouche's squabble with the journal, his letter would not really have been noteworthy. But he touches on some fundamental realities of today, and we therefore print the full text of his letter, and our answer to it."

It is now more appropriate than ever, to study the "fundamental realities" of what happened with the SDI, for which purpose we reprint articles about the content of the policy, and its history, by LaRouche and Jeffrey Steinberg, in the pages that follow.