
Book Review

Russia's 1991-2001 Descent Into Hell

by Antony Papert

The Anatomy of Russian Capitalism

by Stanislav M. Menshikov

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The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

—Lear

Author Stanislav Mikhailovich Menshikov brings unique qualifications to this painstaking dissection of the realities of the Russian economy of today. Born the son of Mikhail Sergeievich Menshikov, the highly regarded Soviet Ambassador to Washington of the Khrushchov era, Stanislav Menshikov celebrated his 80th birthday in Moscow earlier this year, at an event at the Russian Academy of Sciences, attended as well by foreign guests including Lyndon LaRouche and his wife Helga Zepp-LaRouche. In between times, Menshikov served his country as a leading analyst of the U.S. and other Western economies, then spent six years in the UN Secretariat studying Third-World development, and finally turned his skills to the problems of the Comecon economies. He has written more than 20 books, many published in English translation.

Immediately before the Great Crash of October 1987, the late, venerable John Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard sought out Menshikov, whom he called “a remarkably informed scholar,” for ten days of discussion in Vermont. The transcript was published simultaneously in the Soviet Union and the U.S., under the title, *Capitalism, Communism and Coexistence*. Galbraith, quondam economic advisor to Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy, spoke for both Menshikov and himself when he wrote there, “But it was not our purpose, ... to score points in our conversations. We did not see them as a debate which either of us won or lost. We saw them rather as a contribution to the larger victory which equally we hope to share.”

Vast and sudden world-political changes which few then foresaw (LaRouche one of those few), have cleanly split the past 20-year period into two parts. And so, on one level, the terms of Galbraith's and Menshikov's 1987 exchange might appear to be obsolete. What a surprise how very current and

relevant much of it is! Galbraith, for example, noted there that the U.S. economy had had 25 good years from 1945 to 1970, but “the good fortune didn't continue.” He at first blamed this on the replacement of his generation of economists by “a younger and less able generation,” but then immediately turned around to try to claim that this explanation had only been a joke.

Galbraith indicted monetarism and the shift to a services economy, for weakening our real wealth-producing industries, such as steel and automobiles. As for trade unions, “instead of winning wage increases, they have to negotiate give-backs.” Menshikov, for his part, stressed the need to find new sources of natural resources to maintain a growing world population. He countered ignorant popular prejudices on modern U.S.-Russian relations by noting that Russia was consuming fully 40% of all U.S. machinery exports during some periods of the 1930s.

The reason for the excellence of their discussions was that each man was at once an able patriot of his own nation and “system,” while simultaneously dedicated to what Galbraith, in his dedication to *The Affluent Society*, called “the ultimate aims of man.”

For Menshikov, what this means to me is that he is one of the best exemplars of the best of the Russian *intelligentsia*. Since at least some time in the 18th Century, the best of the Russian intellectuals have somehow combined an unyielding compassion and a powerful underlying optimism, on the one hand, with that readiness to look without blinking and without consoling illusions, into the very face of the most unimaginable horrors,—the same readiness as one finds in a competent military commander. All this in a peculiarly Russian manner.

I have tried to explain to myself these qualities of the Russian intelligentsia, by trying to conceive of that awful sense of responsibility, before God and man, of each one of a mere tiny handful of educated persons, amidst the sea of illiteracy and ignorance which was Russia before the effects of the 1918 revolution.

In any case, this is Stanislav Menshikov.

The importance of these qualifications centers around something which very few Americans have even begun to grasp. That all the death and destruction wreaked upon the Soviet Union by the greatest part of the Nazi war machine, 1941-44-45, was outdone, in every respect, material, moral, and psychological, by the “reforms” of 1991-2001.

No one who doesn't understand this, knows anything about Russia or Putin. Nothing previously published in English gives any sense of it to compare with Menshikov's *The Anatomy of Russian Capitalism*.

Translator Rachel Douglas has been intimately associated with Lyndon LaRouche for decades as an intellectual and political leader and a Russia and Russian-language specialist. The wide knowledge of LaRouche's work in Russia owes much to her untiring dedication, and her translation of Professor Menshikov's work speaks for itself.