

Editorial

The Raskolniki are restless

We were most amused at the report that, over a period of not less than months, the Kremlin leadership was seriously considering naming Ambassador to Sweden Boris Pankin to the post of Minister of Culture of the Soviet Union. After much delay, however, they gave the job to another man, in the belief that Pankin would not make a "credible" Minister of Culture.

Boris Pankin is a Major-General in the KGB. He's good at dirty-tricks, murder, lies on the grand scale ("disinformation")—that sort of thing. Minister of Culture? Well, it is Russia.

Our amusement reminded us of a joke: The Czechoslovakian military attaché visited the Kremlin in search of funding for his country's projected Ministry of the Navy. "But Comrade," said his Russian interlocutor. "You are a landlocked country. What need have you of a Ministry of the Navy?" "Why not?" retorted the Czech. "You are Russian, and you have a Ministry of Culture!"

Seriously, folks: With a nod to Pushkin and other "Westernizers" of Russia's past, there is nothing racialist in reporting that the Russians, thanks to the barbaric, blood-and-soil religious matrix on which their society has developed over the past thousand years, have a real cultural inferiority problem. That problem has potentially great practical bearing on their chosen course of confrontation with their cultural superiors in the West.

Mikhail Gorbachov himself put on an angry display of recognition of this fact, in a speech before science academicians in Moscow in early October. He denounced lack of "discipline" and the bureaucracy that is blocking his program of "economic renewal," that is, war mobilization. Only a week earlier, his Central Committee had drafted a resolution, printed in *Pravda* the day of his speech, denouncing the same thing.

The Russian is a peasant—not a farmer, a *peasant*. Innovation and initiative are not his forte. Progress is not in his lexicon. Ordered to run, he will run in place, until kicked. Gorbachov is kicking.

The Russian leaders, faced with the exigencies of a

military buildup, one that requires industrial upgrading and must be technology-vectored to achieve its goal—decisive strategic superiority over the West in the near-term—rightly fear that, as so often in Russia's historical past, the *Raskolniki*, the "Old Believers," will rise up out of the holy mud of Mother Russia in bloody rebellion—or at least, in quiet sabotage of needed change.

It is some such thing, at the level of the government and industrial bureaucracy, that Gorbachov is now denouncing. The *Raskolniki* are restless.

Let there be no doubt that this, not any stated fear of American military intentions, is the real key to the Russians' continued antipathy to the Strategic Defense Initiative. The Russians continue to reject President Reagan's generous offer that, in any "technology race" to achieve strategic defense systems, America will be happy to ensure that both sides arrive at and deploy defense systems at the same, agreed-upon time. But the Russians want the program stopped, not because they think we don't mean it, but because of the implications that a mobilization of industry and technology for SDI will have for civilian economy and culture.

Gorbachov is already having problems with a steady-paced build-up. What happens if the U.S. SDI imposes on Russia the need for a "real crash program"? One can already hear the *Raskolniki*'s groans of pain and anguish.

Let us not fear their *Raskolniki*'s howling. What is bad about the Soviet Union stems from that cultural inferiority. We must, precisely through policies like SDI, impose on them a very deep-felt sense of that inferiority, by surrounding them with economic progress, and their need, therefore, to "imitate" their Western superiors. It is an historic effort to induce them to "Westernize" themselves.

President Reagan only need hold firm to SDI. Gorbachov's "discipline" problems are just beginning. On second thought, that KGB lout, Maj.-Gen. Boris Pankin, might make a good Minister of Culture.