

Gorbachov endorses Solzhenitsyn

by Konstantin George

All but lost in the flood of managed "news" as U.S. troops were driving deep into Iraq, was a landmark speech delivered on Feb. 25 by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov in the Belorussian capital of Minsk. The speech proclaimed the onset of an irreversible drive to crush national and political opposition, and restore internal order in the U.S.S.R., whatever the cost. This drive has been mandated by the humiliating shock of the Gulf war, and the rise of a dangerous phenomenon, what Soviet media are terming "the Iraq syndrome . . . a syndrome of American invincibility" in the American elite, following the slaughter in the Gulf.

Speaking in Minsk, Gorbachov emerged in his true colors as "tsar-defender" of the Russian Empire and of Russian state interests, against what he portrayed as a foreign-directed conspiracy to weaken and destroy the U.S.S.R. His arch-rival, Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, was castigated for "forging an alliance with separatist and nationalist movements," to plot the "violent overthrow" of the government. Repeatedly using the term "so-called democrats," to mock the followers of Yeltsin, Gorbachov accused them of behaving like the "Right Opposition," an extremely significant term in the lexicon of Soviet polemics.

The term "Right Opposition" refers to the faction of the Bolshevik Party during the 1920s, led by Nikolai Bukharin, which had promoted a program of opening up the country to light- and consumer industry-centered foreign investments and takeovers, and against plans for the rapid expansion of the country's heavy industry and war industry—in a nutshell, an opposition which served foreign interests and threatened the military security of the Russian Empire, in a period which the Russian elite judged, correctly, as a pre-war period.

The accusation of "Right Opposition" has thus pinned the label of Nikolai Bukharin on Boris Yeltsin, a label, which unless Yeltsin can prove through deeds that is groundless, will ultimately doom him, just as Bukharin was doomed for promoting policies which sabotaged the military security of the Empire.

In Minsk, for the first time, Gorbachov accused the new "Right Opposition," led by Yeltsin, of working for foreign interests—in all but name branding the opposition to himself as traitors. Gorbachov declared that the "so-called democrats," then as now, are "hiding behind correct" slogans, but only as a "cover for extensive plans, which in some cases

have been worked out in foreign centers. . . . These 'democrats' are allying with separatist and nationalist groups. . . . They have a common goal, to weaken the Union, and where possible, to destroy it."

The opposition was charged with promoting "chaos, disintegration and instability," and conducting a "most intensive power struggle," which could "lead to a civil war." Gorbachov emphasized that this "power struggle" was the cause for the ineffectiveness of all measures taken during the past "12-18 months" to stabilize the internal crisis.

No more leeway

Gorbachov went the furthest yet in showing that his policy and that of the Russian institutional triad now ruling—the KGB, the military and military-industrial complex, and the imperial Russian national political elite—is a transition to a post-Bolshevik form of empire. This was signaled through Gorbachov's extensive praise for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian exile author, known as the literary exponent of pre-Bolshevik Russian grandeur, the same Solzhenitsyn whom Gorbachov only last year had attacked. Notably, Gorbachov coupled his praise for Solzhenitsyn with a denunciation of Yeltsin and non-Russian "separatists" for engaging in what he termed "neo-Bolshevik," illegal, extraparliamentary tactics.

The military security imperatives posed by the post-Gulf war situation allow no leeway for the policy enunciated by Boris Yeltsin of a loose confederation, let alone fragmentation, especially concerning the empire's strategic core, consisting of the three Slavic republics and Kazakhstan, which dominated the land mass of Central Asia.

The onset of an extended period of regional wars and conflicts presenting all sorts of dangers to Russia has also been reflected in the composition of the new inner ruling group, the "Security Council" of 10 men, appointed by Gorbachov on March 7, and forming the core of the new presidential cabinet. A solid majority are drawn from the KGB, military and military-industrial, and Russian national apparatus. The appointees, confirmed by the Soviet Parliament include: U.S.S.R. Vice President Gennadi Yanayev, a Russian stalwart with close KGB links; KGB Chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov; U.S.S.R. Interior Minister Boris Pugo, a KGB career man; Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, a leading spokesman for the nation's war and heavy industry complex; Defense Minister Marshal Dmitri Yazov. Others confirmed were new Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, and Gorbachov's special envoy and Near East troubleshooter, Yevgeni Primakov, another figure drawn from the "unofficial" part of the KGB apparatus.

Perhaps the most striking feature of all concerning this new ruling group is that, with the sole technical exception of Boris Pugo, a thoroughly Russified nominal Latvian, the members of the new Security Council are exclusively Russians.