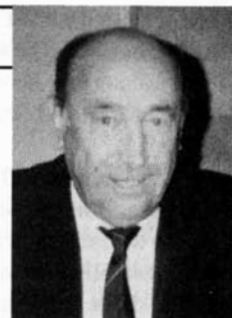


Interview: Yuri Chernichenko



Russian government broke, can't pay for winter bread

by Rachel Douglas

The president of the Farmer Party of Russia describes the grain acquisition crisis in Russia this summer as the worst since 1927 and 1928. In those years, peasants in the Soviet Union refused to sell grain to the state at prices far below what they needed to function. The dictator Josef Stalin responded by starting the forced collectivization of agriculture and the slaughter of the most productive farmers, under the banner of "de-kulakization" (elimination of the *kulak*, or prosperous peasant).

In 1992, the collapse of grain procurement would feed into an unprecedented political crisis, Yuri Chernichenko warned in a late-August discussion with *EIR*.

On Aug. 25, he reported that less than 14% of the grain harvested in Russia had been sold to the state, which is still in charge of most bread production. The rest could spoil, but the Farmer Party leader said the prevailing attitude of producers was, "Let it spoil, rather than sell it at these prices." The Yeltsin government was then offering 10 rubles per kilogram of grain (10,000 rubles per metric ton). By Sept. 4, according to *Izvestia*, 5 million tons more had been delivered to the state, or 19% of what was threshed to date, but that was still less than half of the minimum total required. The average price was up to 12 rubles.

The supply of bread, the main dietary staple in Russia, has already become erratic in Moscow neighborhoods. But if the procurement price were raised to the vicinity of 20 rubles per kilogram, which is what major grain-producing areas are believed to be holding out for, it would mean bread prices of 40 or 50 rubles per kilogram. A pensioner in Russia receives only about 1,000 rubles per month, and many salaries are in the 2-4,000 ruble range. Bread prices at that level, Chernichenko predicted, would provoke "massive dissatisfaction."

Meat and dairy producers will be slaughtering more of their herds, according to Farmer Party leaders, for similar reasons. They expressed exasperation at the incompetence of the Russian government on this vital matter. Briefed on the inability of dairymen to command a breakeven price, Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar told a Farmer Party delegation that if some dairy herds were cut in half, the laws of the market would kick in, and the price would be better. This is the advice dispensed by the head of government in a country

where per capita meat consumption has dropped to less than half the normative consumption levels of a decade ago.

'Your main task is the harvest'

Yuri Chernichenko, president of the Farmer Party of Russia, was interviewed by Rachel Douglas in Moscow on Aug. 25. Also participating in the conversation were Arnold Litvinov, Farmer Party deputy chairman, who is also a member of the Moscow City Council, and Viktor Kiryanov, chairman of the Farmer Party in Altai, in south-central Siberia.

EIR: Tell us, please, what you have to say about prices and about Yeltsin, about the similarity of the current situation to the 1920s, and what you call the centaur.

Chernichenko: The centaur, according to ancient Greek mythology, was a being that united two different natures—the nature of a horse, and that of a man. The present situation recalls the centaur, because the market economy, with the hegemony it allocates to prices, is trying to sit in combination with the structures of the chairmen's or directors' corps, which was created for the precise purpose of ensuring that there be no prices, no market relationships. There was the command, the plan, and there were bread products. That was it.

We always knew for sure: *Vasha glavnaya zadacha/uborka i khlebosdacha!* [Your main task is the harvest and delivery of grain!] Everything was clear. You brought it in, and you shipped it off.

And no one in the whole wide world could understand why people in the U.S.S.R. were such idiots, that between the field and elevator, they did not have their own storehouses. What kind of loonies are they? Are they brain-damaged? No, indeed. That was part of the system, according to which you cut the grain, and then instantaneously, the very same night, dispatched it to the elevator, even 70 or 80 kilometers away. And you were left without the grain. Because your obligation, your assignment, was to ship the grain off there. There wasn't any discussion about prices. The collective farm itself did not set them. That was not its business. The collective farm is a structure, within which people are absolutely indifferent to prices. They would receive a small salary in kind.

past, they got subsidies; today, they want to get them via the purchase prices.

Chernichenko: This is a political attempt to save the structure, the monopoly.

Litvinov: Yes, precisely a *political* attempt.

Chernichenko: Political salvation. This is not economics as such.

Litvinov: But to the extent that, in what remains of that system at various levels of power, you have ensconced the very people who earlier were in the Communist Party, we have a paradox. Or if not a paradox, then a situation you could describe this way: The top is democratic, but at the base are sitting the former party structures. And they fail to carry out the new laws, and they make the ruckus that puts a brake on all economic processes.

Kiryanov: The only person who could become director of a collective farm or state farm, was someone who had worked in the regional committee of the Communist Party. If he hadn't worked there, he would never become a leader. So the majority of those remaining are leaders who robbed the farmsteads, who went into administration, and who never knew how to lead anything. They carried out instructions that came from the Central Committee in Moscow.

Litvinov: The crux of the matter is that these are people who were trained not to think, but to carry out orders. And landing in a situation where you have to think, to find a way out, make comparisons, analyze something, they are physically incapable of doing this. And so, this political situation, where the upper levels are democratic, but below are the old structures, all these people who do not know how and do not want to think, is the most terrible. It is very difficult to change. Because all cadre questions at the lower levels are being decided by the people who decided them in the past.

EIR: What is the effect of the fact that the problem of the right to own land has not been solved?

Kiryanov: This is fundamental today. As a state farm worker, I can receive 20 hectares of land. But not my family. My wife is a teacher, my son a miller; they and the others supposedly *have* land. It's listed there on paper as part of the state farm land. But they cannot receive the land. This obstruction remains. When he was in Altai, Yeltsin said that he would remove these reservations and that everybody could receive land. But up until now, almost four months later, this question has still not been decided.

Litvinov: And it won't be. Something very clever was done here, which the democratic forces underestimated. A law on local self-management was adopted, on the *soviets*, which gave all power to the lower levels of authority. Remember, I said that we have "democracy" at the top and not at the bottom. And according to this law that was adopted, the top gave all the power to the bottom levels! And this law is now in effect. They are doing whatever they want—they seize land and they decide whether to give land or not.

Bangladeshi migrants are flooding India

by Ramtanu Maitra

India's largest opposition party in the parliaments, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has recently demanded the detection and deportation of illegal Bangladeshis residing in India. Urging the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to take up the issue on a war-footing, the chauvinist Hindu leaders of the BJP claimed that at least 15 million Bangladeshi Muslims have infiltrated into the border districts of the eastern and northeastern states of Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, and Manipur, among others.

There is little doubt that the BJP, somewhat weakened politically in recent days due to its failure to make any significant headway on the religious strife at Ayodhya—their bread-and-butter issue in the 1989 and 1991 general elections—is trying to gain some political mileage exploiting the Bangladeshi influx issue. But no one could deny that a large number of Bangladeshis have crossed over into India and made it their home. The Bangladeshi government, ostensibly afraid that an admission of such infiltration would give rise to anti-Bangladesh sentiments in India and elsewhere, has denied the existence of such an influx, while admitting that border-crossing takes place due to a thriving smuggling business.

The presence of Bangladeshis is omnipresent even in Delhi, almost 900 kilometers from the Bangladeshi borders. There are innumerable slums where the Bangladeshis can be found in force and, east of the Yamuna River, the direction in which Delhi is growing by leaps and bounds, an area which is even indentified as "Bangladesh."

An explosive situation

A recent study by journalist Sanjoy Hazarika, sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Harvard and Toronto universities, has brought to light the enormity of this migration. According to the study, a little less than the present population of the entire Australian continent had migrated from East Pakistan (1947-71) and Bangladesh (1971-91) to India. Obviously, not all the migrants are illegal residents. Many, particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s, were Hindus leaving the newly formed Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Nonetheless, Hazarika's study points to some important findings which force the question: Can Bangladesh remain a viable economic and political entity, and, if not,