

## Editorial

### *Russia: Lady Thatcher's debacle*

The war in Chechnya, while it represents a major blunder on President Yeltsin's part, is merely the result, not the cause, of the crisis in Russia.

To understand what is going wrong there, we must go back to 1989, when Britain's Margaret Thatcher—with full backing from George Bush—decided against developing the areas of Eurasia which were overthrowing communist rule. Instead of offering these countries a development package, which would have meant underwriting major infrastructure projects and would have created a worldwide economic boom, along with retraining and upgrading the labor force, they decided to loot eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Thatcher and company instituted a de facto banker's dictatorship over the Yeltsin government. As a result, the standard of living of the majority of the population is now at or below a bare subsistence level, with no hope for improvement in sight. Worse yet, Thatcher and company supported the growth of organized crime, to act as an enforcement arm for the criminal austerity which they were imposing.

For awhile, this swindle allowed the West to buy up the assets of Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, at bargain basement prices. For awhile, this was a bonanza for western financial interests; but of necessity, this was short-lived. If you don't feed a cow, its milk supply will dry up, and that is the real story of the Russian collapse. The basis no longer exists for maintaining the bubble in ruble trade speculation on the world markets,

The Russian reform is dead, and the Yeltsin government is beginning to smell like a corpse. It is in this context that Yeltsin, and his dwindling base of supporters, began their desperate gamble in Chechnya. Were it not for the fact that there is no clearly established leader to replace Yeltsin, he would already be gone from the scene.

A point of comparison for the present situation in Russia is the period of the Kerensky government, from February through September of 1917. No leader came

forward to take control, and by a process of elimination, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party were able to grab power. The important development in the Chechnya situation, is the fact that the military has put its hands on the sword. They have no interest in supporting Yeltsin's policies, and so there is an appearance of a military debacle; but it would be foolish to conclude that the military adventure there—or the failure of that adventure—gives us a basis for estimating the strength of Russian military capabilities. Until there is a credible replacement for Yeltsin, whom the military can support, the situation in Russia and its environs can only deteriorate further.

Unless people wake up soon to the vicious folly of Margaret Thatcher and George Bush, history may record that this *western* policy failure was the opening moment of World War III. To be more precise, historians will identify the turning point, well before 1989, in the Thatcher-Bush sabotage of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

Lyndon LaRouche's SDI policy, which President Reagan accepted in his famous March 23, 1983 speech, entailed a collaborative U.S.-Soviet effort to develop an SDI based upon the most advanced physical principles. Like LaRouche's later proposals of massive infrastructure investment intended to link Russia and the surrounding nations to the most productive region of Europe, the SDI was intended to foster the transformation of the Soviet Union from a communist dictatorship, to a functioning industrial nation, cooperating with the United States and its allies.

Chechnya is a sideshow which didn't work; a bloody sideshow, but a sideshow nonetheless. The lesson to be learned is that of Stalin's war against Finland, back before the German onslaught against Russia: If you had tried to interpret the Soviet military of 1940 on the basis of the Leningrad National Guard's war against the Finnish forces, you would have misestimated what the Russian capabilities were entirely, for the coming war with Germany. This is the point to be emphasized in viewing the current war in Chechnya.